

VII.—Parmenides' Theory of Knowledge

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Parmenides' frag. 16 has been taken for a general statement of his theory of knowledge. I argue that it is no more than his doctrine of sense-perception, since it views thought as a passive record of the "much-wandering" ratio of light to darkness in the frame. Theophrastus' report that Parmenides explains "better and purer" thinking by the preponderance of light must refer to the active phases of thought, memory and judgment. When these are perfect the ratio of light to darkness must be one to zero, and the knowledge of Being must represent a state of unmixed light.

I. THE PROBLEM

Ὡς γὰρ ἐκάστοτ'¹ ἔχει κρᾶσις² μελέων πολυπλάγκτων,
τὼς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παρίσταται· τὸ γὰρ αὐτό
ἐστὶν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώποισιν
καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί· τὸ γὰρ πλεον ἐστὶ νόημα.³

"For men's mind comes to them at each time in accordance with the mixture of their much-wandering frame.⁴ For to all men and to each the nature of the frame is the same as what it thinks.⁵ For what preponderates⁶ (sc. in the frame) is the thought."⁷

That this is at the very least a doctrine of sense-perception is clear both from Theophrastus' commentary in *De Sensu* 3, and by comparison with Empedocles.⁸ The main principles of the doc-

¹ "Ἐκάστος in Diels-Kranz, *Vors.*⁵ 28.B.16. 'Ἐκάστοτ' is "the best attested reading of Theophrastus," W. D. Ross on Arist. *Met.* 1009B.22-25; it is now adopted by Verdenius (*Parmenides* [Groningen, 1942] 6) and Fränkel (*CPh* 41 [1946] 168). To Verdenius' study I shall refer hereafter by the author's name.

² Following Stephanus' emendation, κρᾶσις for κρᾶσιν of the ms. Cf. Verdenius and Fränkel, *loc. cit.*

³ Parmenides B.16. (All Pre-Socratic fragments are cited here as in *Vors.*⁵)

⁴ Fränkel argues that μέλεα here refers to the organism as a whole, "since there is no special word at this time for the living body, but only expressions like 'members' " ("Parmenidesstudien," *Goettinger Nachrichten* [1930] 153-192, at 172, note 3. I shall refer to this study hereafter by the author's name).

⁵ Following Verdenius' rendering of this sentence (15), which incorporates Fränkel's insight that τὸ αὐτό should be connected with ὅπερ, rather than with πᾶσιν καὶ παντί in the traditional renderings.

⁶ Literally, "the more."

⁷ For the translation of the fragment as a whole and for a masterly demonstration of the logical connection of the three sentences, see Verdenius, 6-18.

⁸ Verdenius rightly compares Emp. B.108 and B.106.

trine are (i) the perception of like by like and (ii) the identity of percipient and percept. "We see earth with earth, water with water," says Empedocles (B.109). Similarly Parmenides holds that the light and dark forms in our frame think respectively light and darkness in the world. Thus my thought of the earth is identical with the dark form in me that does the thinking.⁹

Trouble begins when we press the analogy with Empedocles one step further. Perception, as Parmenides speaks of it here, occurs through the forms in mixture. Similarly in Empedocles: the percipient is the blood, a mixture of the four "roots"; and the formula of the mixture is equality.¹⁰ Given the equality of the four roots in the cosmos,¹¹ this formula would follow directly from the identity of percipient and percept: to perceive the world as it really is, our blood must contain the four roots in equal proportions. Parmenides' cosmos is drawn to the same design of *isonomia*.¹² Would it not then follow by analogy with Empedocles and by the same logic that to think this equal mixture in the world we would need the same equal mixture in our frame? Yet we gather from Theophrastus that no such conclusion was ever drawn in Parmenides' poem.¹³

A second and graver difficulty is in store for us if we take the fragment as a physical account not only of sense-perception but also of the knowledge of Being itself. It has been so taken by many modern commentators.¹⁴ Yet the objections are insuperable.

⁹ Theophr. *De Sensu* 4. The dead man "because of the loss of fire" perceives "the cold and silence and the opposite (*sc.* of light)"; i.e. he thinks the attributes of earth because he *is* earth. The conception of the dead as earth is one of the oldest ideas in Greek literature. Cf. Rohde, *Psyche* (Eng. tr., London, 1925) 460, note 142: "As early as *Il.* 24.54 the body deserted by soul and life is called *κωφή γαῖα*."

¹⁰ Emp. B.105 and B.98; Theophr. *De Sensu* 8 and 11.

¹¹ Emp. B.17.27.

¹² Parm. B.9.4.

¹³ *De Sensu* 3: "But what if they (*sc.* the hot and the cold) are equal in the mixture? Will thought then occur, or not? And what will be its disposition? Concerning this he has determined nothing." One could discount this as no more than a stupid misunderstanding of the last sentence of frag. 16: if hot and cold are equal, then there is no *πλέον* of either in the mixture, hence no thought. But though Theophrastus was not above unimaginative literalism, his report of what was or was not in his (presumably full) text of Parmenides' poem must be taken as final.

¹⁴ Notably Fränkel (170 and 174). Verdenius (9–10 and 65) rightly rejects Fränkel's interpretation of *νόος*, *νόημα* in frag. 16 as "insight into Truth," but still thinks of the fragment as a doctrine of knowing in the double sense of sense-perception and knowledge of Being. See the criticism of Fränkel's view in Von Fritz, "Νόος, νοεῖν, etc., Part I," *CPh* 40 (1945) 223–242, at 239, note 90, and 241, note 95.

For the identity of subject and object of thought applies no less to the knowledge of Being than to the knowledge of sensible things: "to think (*sc.* Being) and to be are the same thing."¹⁵ It follows that only a being can think Being, while the "much-wandering" frame is only too obviously a chunk of Becoming. Moreover, Being is "all alike,"¹⁶ while the frame is a mixture of diametrically unlike elements.¹⁷ A mere preponderance of light could not possibly meet the difficulty. For if the thought is as the mixture, then even the tiniest bit of darkness in the frame would still produce a "mixed" thought, which would certainly not be the thought of Being.

II. SUGGESTED SOLUTION

Let us begin by asking what Theophrastus could have had in mind when he said that "better and purer (*sc.* thought) will be due to the hot."¹⁸ It could not be fragment 16 by itself: there is not a word here about the preponderance of the hot as such. Our best clue to the answer comes a few lines later in Theophrastus, when he tells us that "memory and forgetfulness are due to these (*sc.* the hot and the cold) through the mixture." What this means becomes clearer if we recall that sleep, old age, and death¹⁹ — all of which figure in Greek thought as states of partial or total forgetfulness²⁰ — were all explained by Parmenides as recessions of the light form in the frame. Here then is one mental function which depends entirely on the predominance of the hot: memory. When the light form loses its predominance, as in sleep and old age, there is a corresponding fading of memory. At death memory blacks out altogether; but perception does not. Thus memory and sense-perception are independent variables. Memory is a power of the living, wide-awake soul; as such it depends on the excess of light. Sensation, on the other hand, depends on light and darkness in any ratio whatever. An excess of darkness ruins memory, but leaves intact the sensitiveness of the dark form. All that the dark

¹⁵ B.3, translated literally. Cf. also B.8.34 (the sense as in Von Fritz, *loc. cit.* 238).

¹⁶ Πάν ὁμοῖον, B.8.22.

¹⁷ B.8.55–59.

¹⁸ *De Sensu* 3.

¹⁹ Parm. A.46a (*Aet.* 30.4); A.46b (Tertull. *De Anima* 45); Theophr. *De Sensu* 3.

²⁰ Death: λήθης ὁδός, Simon. 184.6; λήθης πεδίον, Ar. *Ran.* 186, etc. Old age: τὸ λήθης γήρας, Plato *Phaedr.* 276D. Sleep: Heracl. A.16 (Sext. *Adv. Math.* 7.129). For *lethe* as evidence of *pro tanto* recession of the active powers of the mind, see the theory of Diogenes of Apollonia (Theophr. *De Sensu* 44–45): the same physical condition which explains *lethe* explains also τὸ ἥττον φρονεῖν in sleep and drunkenness.

form perceives in the living frame it continues to perceive after death.

This extraordinary notion of the corpse-like passivity of sense-perception should surprise no reader of Parmenides' poem. To see this matter in perspective we may go back²¹ to Heraclitus, who taught that the truth "hides"²² and that without it the senses are worthless: "fools, though they hear, are like the deaf."²³ Ears and eyes are only "witnesses";²⁴ mind must be the judge. *Krisis*, *krinein* do not occur in any Heraclitean fragment.²⁵ But they are favourite words with Parmenides. The "knowing man" is charged by the goddess to "judge by reasoning the much debated proof she utters":²⁶ even in the presence of her divine revelation his judgment must not lapse into quiescence, but must remain active and alert to scrutinize her argument. The "know nothings," on the other hand, are "unjudging hordes" (B.6.7), whose senses are senseless, their "eye sightless, their hearing full of noise."²⁷ Heraclitus pictures such people as sleep-walkers.²⁸ Parmenides conveys the same impression of aimless, helpless passivity: "borne along, deaf and blind, stupefied," "forced" by "custom" down a road not of their own choosing.²⁹

When Parmenides speaks of the thinking frame in fragment 16 as "much-wandering," he links it unmistakably with the "wandering" mind of the "know nothings."³⁰ "Wandering" is the best

²¹ I cannot examine here Reinhardt's (*Parmenides*, Bonn, 1916) reversal of the traditional relation of Heraclitus to Parmenides, except to note that (i) his argument rests on a chronology which has not carried conviction, and (ii) the main thesis of Parmenidean physics — that each of the opposites is "in every way the same as itself and not the same as the other" (B.8.57–58) — makes proper sense only against the Heraclitean doctrine that things "turn" into their own opposites and thus opposites are "the same thing."

²² As Reinhardt observed (*op. cit.* 222–23) *physis* in B.123 (as also in B.112) has the force of "the true disposition of things." Cf. B.54, B.45.

²³ B.34; cf. B.17, B.72.

²⁴ B.107.

²⁵ But Heraclitus does use *γνώμη* (B.78, B.41), which also means "judgment," including the judicial sense of the word, as, e.g., in the dicastic oath, *γνώμη τῇ ἀριστη, τῇ δικαιοτάτῃ*.

²⁶ B.7.5. Cf. *κρίσις, κέκριται*, B.8.15–16.

²⁷ I combine here B.6.7 with B.7.4. Cf. the first sentence in Heracl. B.34.

²⁸ Cf. B.89 with B.2 and B.1.

²⁹ B.6.5–7 with B.7.3. Coxon ("The Philosophy of Parmenides," *CQ* 28 [1934] 134–44 at 134, note 10) rightly contrasts the aimless "know nothings" with the "knowing man's" purposefulness: he "is already *ειδώς* because he knows the goal . . . on which his will is already set (B.1.1 — *ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἰκάνει*)."

³⁰ *Πλάττονται, πλακτὸν νόον*, B.6.5–6.

sense-perception can produce, for in it our thoughts are not ours to command; they "come to us" through the body, passively recording its changing ratio of darkness to light. But there is another dimension of thought in which the mind has the power of initiative; it can recollect, judge, and reason. Heraclitus had identified this thinking soul with fire; through the "turning" of this fire into water he had explained the defection of reasoning-power and loss of self-control, as in the case of the drunken man who "doesn't know where he is going."³¹ Parmenides re-casts this theory in the mould of his own physics. For him there could be no question of fire "turning" into its own opposite; a Parmenidean form is unalterably itself.³² He therefore solves the problem by assuming that both fire and its opposite are present in the soul. Variations in the strength of fire can now be explained by the increase or reduction of either opposite, absolutely or relatively to the other. These opposites in mixture provide Parmenides with something Heraclitus never had: a physical theory of sense-perception as distinct from a physical theory of judgment.

It was Empedocles who developed to the full this new theory, and we can now see where and why he diverged from the Parmenidean base. Empedocles did not share Parmenides' harsh estimate of sensation. If used aright the senses are "openings for understanding";³³ there is no necessary conflict between their reports and the highest truth that the mind can discover.³⁴ When we see "earth with earth" what we see is, not "deceitful" appearance, but Being. Perception and judgment can thus be in perfect harmony. Therefore, the same physical condition is appropriate to both, and the formulae for "most accurate sense-perceptions" and "wisest thoughts" coincide.³⁵ In Parmenides, on the other hand, the physical formulae for sense-perception and judgment could not be the same, for the logical results of the two processes are at loggerheads. The senses must report the duality of light and darkness; judgment must insist that this duality is only "seeming," "custom," and "name,"³⁶ since Being is "all alike." If "the

³¹ B.117; cf. B.36, B.77, B.118.

³² See above, note 21.

³³ Emp. B.3.12, *πόρος νοῆσαι*.

³⁴ *Οὐκ ἀπατηλόν* in Emp. B.17.26 has been often compared with *ἀπατηλόν* in Parm. B.8.52.

³⁵ Theophr. *De Sensu* 11.

³⁶ *Τὰ δοκοῦντα*, B.1.32. "*Ὄνομα, ὀνομάζειν*, B.8.38 and 53; B.9.1; B.19.3. *Νομίζειν*, B.6.8. *Ἔθος*, B.7.3. Cornford ('Parmenides' Two Ways," *CQ* 27 [1933] 97-111, at

nature of the frame is the same as what it thinks," then the frame should certainly be half light, half darkness, exactly like the universe. This, we may assume, Parmenides took for granted. But in view of Theophrastus' remarks³⁷ we must think of it as an implication that was never made explicit in the poem. Given his doctrine of the "deceitfulness" of the world of the senses, we could scarcely expect him to attach any weight to a formula for correct sensation. It would thus be left to Empedocles to exploit the epistemological uses of the symmetry of microcosm and macrocosm. For Parmenides the only source of truth is judgment; hence the one important question in the physiology of knowledge would be the physical formula for right judgment. For this we must take Theophrastus' report:³⁸ it was the preponderance of light.

Yet it would be wrong to jump to the conclusion that this preponderance provides also the physical formula for the knowledge of Being. No such formula could be given without translating Being into terms of Becoming. We are here face to face with the central paradox of Parmenides' theory of knowledge. The mortal frame, *qua* mortal, cannot think Being.^{38a} Yet the "knowing man" can and does think it. Two radically different entities answer to the same name: the "wanderer," who thinks Becoming, and the "unshaken heart,"³⁹ that thinks Being. To resolve the

100) rightly observes that "opinions" or "beliefs" is "too narrow a rendering" for *δόξα*, τὰ δοκοῦντα (B.1.30–31; B.8.51; B.19.1) which include not merely opinions but also the physical appearance on which this opinion is based. *Doxa* in Parmenides is judgment enslaved to the senses, deprived of its distinctive power of initiative.

³⁷ See above, note 13.

³⁸ Though Theophrastus himself was far from clear about the precise reference of this formula. His confusion is evident in the context: after saying that "the better and purer thinking will be due to the hot," he continues, "and yet this too requires a certain symmetry," then cites the fragment, as though this could explain the need for "a certain symmetry," and then caps the series of anacoloutha with the remark, "for he speaks [where? in this fragment only? or generally?] as though sense-perception and thought (τὸ φρονεῖν) are the same thing." On *any* interpretation this last remark is thick-headed; cf. Theophrastus' statement (*De Sensu* 25) that Alcmaeon *did* distinguish sense-perception from τὸ φρονεῖν: would anyone suggest that this distinction was less clear in Parmenides than in Alcmaeon?

^{38a} Hence the contrast of *βροτῶν δόξαι* with knowledge of Being (B.1.30, B.8.39, 51; cf. B.8.61, B.19.1). I agree with Verdenius (56, note 3) that Coxon's idea (*op. cit.* [see above, note 29] 134) that there is a systematic distinction between *ἄνθρωποι* (men in general) and *βροτοί* (philosophers) is "quite arbitrary." Everybody has *δόξας βροτίας* in sense-perception, and the "knowing man" is in the same boat with other people: he can't help *seeing* change, though he *knows* it isn't real (and see further below, near note 48).

³⁹ B.1.29; *ἀτρεμές* here is a strict counterpart of *ἀτρεμές* as asserted of Being in B.8.4.

paradox is impossible, for it is only the epistemological counterpart of the ontological dualism of Being and Becoming. But though this dualism is never broken down, it is nevertheless mediated. For we know that each of the physical opposites is endowed with the essential attribute of Being: absolute self-identity.⁴⁰ Here, it seems to me, is the clue to the problem.

If thinking were identified with one of the two forms to the absolute exclusion of the other, then so far the thinking soul would be exempt from change. Parmenides envisaged the state of death as just such a release from one of the opposites. The dead man is all darkness and, therefore, thinks darkness unalterably. Here is an end to "wandering"; but it is the stability of death. Could there not be a diametrically opposite state, all light, as death is all darkness? The mind's power to think Being must imply⁴¹ just such a power to divest itself completely of the darkness in the frame, merge itself wholly with the light, and thus be as changeless as light, "on all sides the same with itself." So immovable a thought could only have Being as its object: not the "seeming" light of the senses, whose apparent qualities depend on the felt contrast with darkness, but the purely logical object, whose every attribute can be deduced from its known self-identity. It would think light as pure Being.

That there is a measure of conjecture and reconstruction in this conclusion is obvious. It is only a guess at a riddle which the surviving fragments leave unsolved. Yet it can be confirmed indirectly along two independent lines.

First of all, we can return to Theophrastus' saying that the "better and purer" thinking depends on the predominance of the hot. As appraised above this refers to the active aspect of the mortal mind, memory and judgment. If there were a state of perfect memory and flawless judgment, a state from which forgetfulness and error were absolutely excluded, then the ratio of light to darkness should be as one to zero. But this is just what the knowledge of Being is intended to be. Here one can "see securely

⁴⁰ See above, note 21, and cf. the description of light (*ἑωρτῇ πάντοσε ταῦτόν*, B.8.57) with that of Being (*ταῦτόν*, etc., B.8.29 and *οἱ πάντοθεν ἴσον*, B.8.49).

⁴¹ This conclusion does not (and could not) rest on empirical evidence. Cf. Parmenides' injunction: "You will not discover the thinking (*sc.* of Being), except through Being in which it (*sc.* the thinking of Being) is revealed" (B.8.35–36); i.e. our only clue to the nature of the thought of Being is Being itself.

with the mind things absent as though they were present";⁴² what ordinary memory attains only uncertainly and fitfully is here enjoyed continuously with a lucidity unbroken by a single gap or fissure. Judgment too is similarly transfigured. It is no longer as we know it in the mortal frame, hesitating between alternatives, making false starts, and then being forced to double back on its own tracks. In the doctrine of Being it has found at last the true road and can follow it to the very end of all truth. So infallibly secure, judgment must have for its base not merely "more" light, but all light.

Secondly, we may look to the allegory of the Proem, which associates the revelation of Being with unmixed light. The realm of night, where Parmenides' journey begins,⁴³ is not unmixed darkness. The chariot with its "blazing" axle,⁴⁴ and the Sunmaids, its charioteers, symbolize the light that mixes here with the dark. But the emissaries of light are handicapped in the darkness: the faces of the Sunmaids are veiled. They cannot bring their revelation into the dark world. They can only take the "knowing man" out of this dark world altogether, past the great gates, into the realm of light. Here with unveiled faces they can lead him at last to the goddess who reveals the Truth. Translated into physical terms this can only mean that though the quest for Truth begins with a mere preponderance of light, it can only be completed in a state of mind which is free from any darkness whatever.

It remains to add that this account rehabilitates certain items of evidence which have been ignored or explained away in some recent interpretations. Aristotle's repeated statement that Par-

⁴² B.4.1. Cf. Arist. *De Mem.* 450A.26, πῶς ποτὲ τοῦ μὲν πάθους παρόντος τοῦ δὲ πράγματος ἀπόντος μνημονεύεται τὸ μὴ παρόν; Parmenides' words here have obviously a wider reference; they envisage not only memory but all mental functions in which the νόος transcends the immediately presented data (τὰ παρόντα) to which the frame is always tied in sense-perception (cf. Emp. B.106).

⁴³ For the interpretation of the symbolism I am largely indebted to Fränkel, 157. With Fränkel I take δώματα Νυκτός to mean the world in which the "knowing man's" journey begins. Kranz (*SPAW* [1916] 1161) and Bowra ("The Proem of Parmenides," *CPh* 32 [1937] 97-112, at 102) take it to refer to another region *from* which the Sunmaids enter our world. But this seems an unnecessary complication of the symbolism: why should the Sunmaids have to start their journey in "mansions of night" before entering our world? Hes. *Th.* 744 does not cover the point. The imagery in the two instances is quite different, in spite of some obvious similarities. Parmenides envisages two different roads, belonging to Night and Day respectively; Hesiod, a common thoroughfare, travelled alternately by Night and Day.

⁴⁴ Αἰθόμενος, B.1.7. See Bowra, *op. cit.* 104.

menides associates the hot with Being, the cold with non-being, can now be accepted.⁴⁵ And the natural sense can now be restored to the much disputed clause in the introduction to the cosmology:

"For mortals have made up their minds to name two forms,
 Τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεὼν ἔστιν" (Parm. B.8.53-54).

If one translates faithfully and without *a priori* commitments to theory, one can only get from the last clause, "one of which should not be named." To render instead with Cornford, "of which so much as one should not be named,"⁴⁶ or else with Verdenius, "of which only one should not be named"⁴⁷ is to take liberties with the text which should surely be avoided if the literal translation makes sense. It does make sense on the present interpretation which, incidentally, has been reached quite independently of this particular text. One of the two forms, the dark, should *not* be named, because non-being is unthinkable and unutterable, and darkness is the non-being of light and is twice described in negative terms: "invisible night" and "unknowing night."⁴⁸ Yet to a frame which is itself a mixture of darkness and light, darkness will necessarily appear as something positive, "compact and solid" (B.8.59). Even the "knowing man" will, as man, continue to think and name the form which ought not to be named. That is why he must study physics. His only defence, as man, against the deceitfulness of appearance is to master the deceitful order which produces it.

III. SOME CONCLUSIONS

Bowra's fine study of the Proem⁴⁹ concludes with these words: "Parmenides regarded the search for truth as something akin to the experiences of the mystics, and he wrote it with symbols taken

⁴⁵ Of the two references (*De Gen. et Cor.* 318B.6, *Met.* 987A.1) the second is more exact: "he ranges (τάττει) the hot with Being," rather than "he says that Being is fire." As noted above, near note 41, not the sensible properties of fire in contradistinction to night, but the positive self-identity of fire, is Being. Verdenius appeals to the equality of fire and night in Parmenides to discredit Aristotle's testimony. But this equality holds only within the world of appearance; it explains the "deceitful" order of *this* world, and has no bearing on the relation of either light or darkness to Being.

⁴⁶ *Plato and Parmenides* (London, 1939) 46.

⁴⁷ Verdenius 62, following Aug. Diès, and H. Diels' earlier view.

⁴⁸ B.9.3; B.8.59. As Fränkel observes (177, note 4) ἀδαῆ cannot mean "dark" (so in *LSJ*, s.v., 11) but only "unknowing." This expression, incidentally, provides good confirmation of the status of the dark element in the present interpretation of Parmenides' theory of knowledge.

⁴⁹ See above, note 43.

from religion because he felt that it was itself a religious activity." If the foregoing interpretation is correct, not only the Proem, but the logic and the physics as well, bear out Parmenides' affinity to mystical religion. The goal of this religion was to build a bridge across the traditionally impassable gulf that separates the human from the divine.⁵⁰ Parmenides' logic must have seemed to him just such a path beyond the limits of mortality. "A mortal must think mortal, not immortal, thoughts,"⁵¹ had been the common belief. And mortal thoughts never strike certainty;⁵² by common consent this was the privilege of the gods. Yet in his doctrine of Being, Parmenides found certitude and security such as no god could surpass.⁵³ He must have felt as did Galileo two thousand years later: that there is knowledge in which "the human understanding equalleth the divine as to the objective certainty, for that it arriveth to comprehend the necessity thereof, than which there can be no greater certainty."⁵⁴ Unlike Galileo, Parmenides believed in the identity of thinker and thought. He would therefore conclude that he who thinks Being is what he thinks, and thus partakes of the agelessness and immortality of Being itself.^{54a}

Mystical religion thought of man as a mixture of earth and aether.⁵⁵ These are the familiar Ionian opposites, the dark and the light, the cold and the hot. But as religious symbols they belong to a different universe of discourse:

"Greatest Earth and Aether Divine,
One the father of men and of gods;
The other . . . breeds mortals . . ."⁵⁶

Parmenides' physics materialize this fantasy. Here too man is made up of two forms, the one aethereal,⁵⁷ the other earthy. The

⁵⁰ "I go about you an immortal god, no mortal now," Emp. B.112.4. Cf. the promise of the Thourioi tablet, "Thou shalt be god instead of man" (*Vors.*⁵ 1.B.18.10; cf. *ib.* 20.4).

⁵¹ Epicharmus B.20.

⁵² Hdt. 7.50.2, εἰδέναι δὲ ἀνθρώπων ὄντα ὡς χρὴ τὸ βέβαιον;

⁵³ And he did so with perfect confidence that there is no *hybris* in this venture, but "*themis* and *dike*" (B.1.27-28).

⁵⁴ Cited from the *Dialogue of the World Systems* by De Santillana, *Problems of Empiricism and Rationalism* (Chicago, 1941) 2.

^{54a} Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 79D.

⁵⁵ "I am the child of Earth and starry Sky," Petelia tablet (*Vors.*⁵ 1.B.17.6); cf. the epitaph on the Athenians fallen at Potidaea, *IG* 1.442, and also Epich. B.9; Eur. *Suppl.* 533-34, frag. 839.8-11, etc.

⁵⁶ Eur. frag. 839.1-4.

⁵⁷ Fire is αἰθέριον, B.8.56.

first, if wholly detached from all association with its opposite, is the form that knows Being and has Being. The other can neither know Being nor be. The first is the symbol of eternal life, the other the symbol of death.

Thus the philosophy of Parmenides is a strange blend of mysticism and logic. It is mysticism, for its goal is not the gradual and cumulative correction of empirical knowledge, but deliverance from it through the instantaneous and absolute grasp of "immovable" truth. This is not the way of *techne*, but the way of revelation: it lies "beyond the path of men" (B.1.27). Yet this revelation is itself addressed to man's reason and must be judged by reason. Its core is pure logic: a rigorous venture in deductive thinking, the first of its kind in European thought. This kind of thinking could be used *against* the world of the senses. It was so used by Zeno. But fortunately for philosophy Parmenides found a better use for it. His grounding in Ionian physics got the better of his contempt for the mock-world of the senses, and he gave to his doctrine of Being a physical application, attributing the self-identity of Being to each component of the "deceitful" duality of Becoming. This, with the added assumption that the components are equal, would assure the order of the sensible world as mere sense-perception never could.⁵⁸ This projection of the logic of Being upon the alien world of Becoming was Parmenides' most important single contribution to the history of thought, though it is seldom recognized as such. Without it, his doctrine of Being could have remained a speculative curiosity. With it, he laid the foundations for the greatest achievement of the scientific imagination of Greece, the atomic hypothesis.

But the resulting unity between Parmenidean logic and physics should not be over-estimated.⁵⁹ His theory of knowledge, as here interpreted, is a warning against this. It shows the dualism between the two forms of knowing, one of which has a monopoly of truth, while the other is only a borrower and remains, for all its

⁵⁸ The postulate of equality can be traced back to Anaximander. What Parmenides contributes is the logical insight that equality is meaningless without the still more fundamental assumption of identity: one thing cannot equal another, unless each be self-identical.

⁵⁹ As, e.g., in Verdenius (59). The qualitative variety and change of the sense-world are not, as Verdenius would have it, "relative reality" but absolute unreality. That sense-qualities have "relative reality" is precisely the atomistic solution, which cannot be attributed to Parmenides without anachronism.

borrowings, perpetually insolvent. Parmenides could find no way out of this predicament. So long as logic is set up as a kind of super-physics, the contradiction between logic and physics remains insoluble. The solution requires the recognition of the physical world itself as Being. This was left for Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and the atomists.

In Democritus, Parmenides found his best pupil, for it was he who succeeded in conserving the essential truth of Parmenides' theory of knowledge while purging it of its fantastic denial of sense-experience. Unlike both Empedocles and Anaxagoras, Democritus recognizes that sense-qualities are precisely what Parmenides had said they are, *doxa*;⁶⁰ they belong to things in perception, not to things in themselves; they "come to us in accordance with the mixture of our wandering frame."⁶¹ But they are not "deceit," for all that. In Democritus the physical world is real; the frame has Being, and the objects it encounters have also Being. Hence sense-qualities can be explained in terms of the true properties of objects in interaction with the true properties of the percipient. They are not appearance *against* reality, but the appearance *of* reality.

⁶⁰ Δόξαι ἐπιρυσμῆ, Democr. B.7. Cf. Democritus' insistence that sensible qualities are νόμῳ with Parmenides' view that they are only "name" (see above, note 36).

⁶¹ A statement with which Democritus would agree perfectly (cf. μεταπίπτον κατὰ σώματος διαθήκην in his B.9), though with the proviso that for him (as for Empedocles and the medical writers) *all* knowledge depends on the "mixture" of the frame (Theophr. *De Sensu* 58). The puzzling sayings of Democritus that we know nothing ἀτρεκές or ἐρεῖη are best explained as opposition to Parmenides, who did believe in knowledge exempt from physical change and mixture. Cf. οὐδὲν ἀτρεκές συνίεμεν in Democr. B.9 with ἀτρεμές ἥτορ in Parm. B.1.29 which, as I have tried to show (note 39), is quite literally meant.