

Ἴπποι ταί με φέρουσιν, ὅσον τ' ἐπί θυμὸς ἵκάνοι,  
πέμπον, ἐπεί μ' ἐς ὁδὸν βῆσαν πολύφημον ἄγουσαι  
δαιμόνος, ἦ κατὰ πάντ' ἀστη φέρει εἰδότα φῶτα·  
τῇ φερόμην· τῇ γάρ με πολύφραστοι φέρον ἵπποι

[5] ἄρμα τιταίνουσαι, κοῦραι δ' ὁδὸν ἡγεμόνευον.  
Ἄξων δ' ἐν χνοίησιν ἔει σύριγγος ἀντήν  
αἰθόμενος - δοιοῖς γὰρ ἐπείγετο δινωτοῖσιν  
κύκλοις ἀμφοτέρωθεν -, ὅτε σπερχοίατο πέμπειν  
Ἡλιάδες κοῦραι, προλιπούσαι δώματα Νυκτός,

[10] εἰς φάος, ὥσάμεναι κράτων ἀπὸ χερσὶ καλύπτοας.  
Ἐνθα πύλαι Νυκτός τε καὶ Ἡματός εἰσι κελεύθων,  
καὶ σφας ὑπέρθυρον ἀμφὶς ἔχει καὶ λάινος οὐδός·  
αὐταὶ δ' αἰθέραι πλῆνται μεγάλοισι θυρέτροις·  
τῶν δὲ Δίκη πολύποινος ἔχει κληῖδας ἀμοιβούς.

[15] Τὴν δὴ παρφάμεναι κοῦραι μαλακοῖσι λόγοισιν  
πείσαν ἐπιφράδέως, ὡς σφιν βαλανωτὸν ὄχῆα  
ἀπτερέως ὕσειε πυλέων ἀπὸ ταὶ δὲ θυρέτρων  
χάσμ' ἀχανές ποίησαν ἀναπτάμεναι πολυχάλκους  
ἄξονας ἐν σύριγξιν ἀμοιβαδὸν εἰλίξασαι

[20] γόμφοις καὶ περόνησιν ἀρηρότε· τῇ ὃα δι' αὐτέων  
ιθὺς ἔχον κοῦραι κατ' ἀμαξιτὸν ἄρμα καὶ ἵππους.  
Καὶ με θεὰ πρόφρων ὑπεδέξατο, χεῖρα δὲ χειρὶ  
δεξιτερὴν ἔλεν, ὥδε δ' ἔτος φάτο καὶ με προσηγόρισε  
ὦ κοῦρ' ἀθανάτοισι συνάροδος ἡνιόχοισιν,

[25] ἵπποις ταὶ σε φέρουσιν ἵκάνων ἡμέτερον δῶ,  
χαιρ', ἐπεὶ οὕτι σε μοῖρα κακὴ προύπεμπε νέεσθαι  
τήνδ' ὁδὸν - ἦ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου ἐστίν-,  
ἀλλὰ θέμις τε δίκη τε. Χρεώ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι  
ἡμέν Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμεῖς ἦτορ

[30] ἡδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής.  
Αλλ' ἔμπης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσεαι, ως τὰ δοκοῦντα  
χρῆν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα.

Εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐγὼν ἔρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας,  
αἴπερ ὁδοὶ μούναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι·  
ἥ μὲν ὄπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ως οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,  
Πειθοῦς ἔστι κέλευθος - Αληθείη γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ -,

The steeds that bear me carried me as far as ever my heart  
Desired, since they brought me and set me on the renowned  
Way of the goddess, who with her own hands conducts the man  
who knows through all things. On what way was I borne

5 along; for on it did the wise steeds carry me, drawing my car,  
and maidens showed the way. And the axle, glowing in the socket  
- for it was urged round by the whirling wheels at each  
end - gave forth a sound as of a pipe, when the daughters of the  
Sun, hasting to convey me into the light, threw back their veils

10 from off their faces and left the abode of Night.  
There are the gates of the ways of Night and Day, fitted  
above with a lintel and below with a threshold of stone. They  
themselves, high in the air, are closed by mighty doors, and  
Avenging Justice keeps the keys that open them. Her did

15 the maidens entreat with gentle words and skilfully  
persuade to unfasten without demur the bolted bars from the  
gates. Then, when the doors were thrown back,  
they disclosed a wide opening, when their brazen  
hinges swung backwards in the

20 sockets fastened with rivets and nails. Straight through them,  
on the broad way, did the maidens guide the horses and the car,  
and the goddess greeted me kindly, and took my right hand  
in hers, and spake to me these words: -  
Welcome, noble youth, that comest to my abode on the car

25 that bears thee tended by immortal charioteers! It is no ill  
chance, but justice and right that has sent thee forth to travel  
on this way. Far, indeed, does it lie from the beaten track of  
men! Meet it is that thou shouldst learn all things, as well  
the unshaken heart of persuasive truth, as the opinions of

30 mortals in which is no true belief at all. Yet none the less  
shalt thou learn of these things also, since thou must judge  
approvedly of the things that seem to men as thou goest  
through all things in thy journey.

Come now, I will tell thee - and do thou hearken to my  
saying and carry it away - the only two ways of search that  
can be thought of. The first, namely, that *It is*, and that it is  
impossible for anything not to be, is the way of conviction,

[5] ή δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεών ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,  
τὴν δή τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν·  
οὐτε γὰρ ἄν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἐὸν - οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν -  
οὐτε φράσαις·

III

... τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸν νοεῖν ἔστιν τε καὶ εἶναι.

IV

Λεῦσσε δ' ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόῳ παρεόντα βεβαίως·  
οὐ γὰρ ἀποτιμήξει τὸ ἐὸν τοῦ ἔοντος ἔχεσθαι  
οὐτε σκιδνάμενον πάντη πάντως κατὰ κόσμον  
οὐτε συνιστάμενον.

V

Ξυνὸν δέ μοί ἔστιν, ὄππόθεν ἄρξωμαι· τόθι γὰρ πάλιν  
ἴξομαι αὖθις.

VI

Χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι,  
μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν· τά σ' ἐγὼ φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα.  
Πρώτης γάρ σ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ ταύτης διζήσιος <εἴργω>,  
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ τῆς, ἦν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδέν

[5] πλάττονται, δίκρανοι· ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν  
στήθεσιν ιθύνει πλακτὸν νόον· οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται.  
κωφοὶ ὄμως τυφλοί τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φῦλα,  
οἵς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταύτὸν νενόμισται  
κού ταύτον, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπός ἔστι κέλευθος.

VII

Οὐ γὰρ μήποτε τοῦτο δαμῆ εἶναι μὴ ἔοντα·  
ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ διζήσιος εἴργε νόημα·  
μηδέ σ' ἔθος πολύπειρον ὁδὸν κατὰ τήνδε βιάσθω,  
νωμᾶν ἀσκοπον ὄμμα καὶ ἡχήεσσαν ἀκουήν

[5] καὶ γλῶσσαν, κρῖναι δὲ λόγω πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον  
ἔξ ἐμέθεν όγηθέντα.

VIII

Μόνος δ' ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο  
λείπεται ὡς ἔστιν· ταύτη δ' ἐπὶ σήματ' ἔασι  
πολλὰ μάλ', ὡς ἀγένητον ἐὸν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἔστιν,  
ἔστι γὰρ οὐλομελές τε καὶ ἀτρεμές ἥδ' ἀτέλεστον·

5 for truth is its companion. The other, namely, that *It is not*, and that something must needs not be, - that, I tell thee, is a wholly untrustworthy path. For you cannot know what is not - that is impossible - nor utter it;

III

For it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be.

IV

V

V

It needs must be that what can be thought and spoken of is; for it is possible for it to be, and it is not possible for, what is nothing to be. This is what I bid thee ponder. I hold thee back from this first way of inquiry, and from this other also,

5 upon which mortals knowing naught wander in two minds; for hesitation guides the wandering thought in their breasts, so that they are borne along stupefied like men deaf and blind. Undiscerning crowds, in whose eyes the same thing and not the same is and is not, and all things travel in opposite directions!

VII

For this shall never be proved, that the things that are not are; and do thou restrain thy thought from this way of inquiry. Nor let habit force thee to cast a wandering eye upon this devious track, or to turn thither thy resounding ear or thy

5 tongue; but do thou judge the subtle refutation of their discourse uttered by me.

VIII

One path only is left for us to speak of, namely, that *It is*. In it are very many tokens that what is, is uncreated and indestructible, alone, complete, immovable and without end. Nor was it ever, nor will it be; for

[5] οὐδέ ποτ' ἡν οὐδ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πᾶν,  
ἔν, συνεχές; τίνα γὰρ γέννων διζήσει αὐτοῦ;  
πῇ πόθεν αὐξηθέν; οὐτ' ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος ἐάσσω  
φάσθαι σ' οὐδὲ νοεῖν οὐ γὰρ φατὸν οὐδὲ νοητόν  
ἔστιν ὅπως οὐκ ἔστι. Τί δ' ἀν μιν καὶ χρέος ὠρσεν

[10] ὑστερον ἡ πρόσθεν, τοῦ μηδενὸς ἀρξάμενον, φῦν;  
οὐτῶς ἡ πάμπαν πελέναι χρεών ἔστιν ἡ οὐχί.  
Οὐδὲ ποτ' ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος ἐφήσει πίστιος ἰσχύς  
γίγνεσθαι τι παρ' αὐτό τοῦ εἶνεκεν οὔτε γενέσθαι  
οὐτ' ὥλλυσθαι ἀνῆκε Δίκη χαλάσσα πέδησιν,

[15] ἀλλ' ἔχει ἡ δὲ κρίσις τούτων ἐν τῷδ' ἔστιν·  
ἔστιν ἡ οὐκ ἔστιν κέκριται δ' οὖν, ὥσπερ ἀνάγκη,  
τὴν μὲν ἐᾶν ἀνόητον ἀνώνυμον - οὐ γὰρ ἀληθής  
ἔστιν ὄδος - τὴν δ' ὥστε πέλειν καὶ ἐτήτυμον εἶναι.  
Πῶς δ' ἀν ἐπειτα πέλοιτὸ έόν; πῶς δ' ἀν κε γένοιτο;

[20] εἰ γὰρ ἔγεντ', οὐκ ἔστι, οὐδ' εἴ ποτε μέλλει  
ἔσεσθαι.  
Τὰς γένεσις μὲν ἀπέσβεσται καὶ ἀπυστος ὥλεθρος.  
Οὐδὲ διαιρετόν ἔστιν, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἔστιν ὁμοῖον·  
οὐδέ τι τῇ μᾶλλον, τό κεν εἰργοι μιν συνέχεσθαι,  
οὐδέ τι χειρότερον, πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεόν ἔστιν ἔόντος.

[25] Τῷ ξυνεχές πᾶν ἔστιν· ἐόν γὰρ ἐόντι πελάζει.  
Αὐτὰρ ἀκίνητον μεγάλων ἐν πείρασι δεσμῶν  
ἔστιν ἄναρχον ἀπαυστον, ἐπεὶ γένεσις καὶ ὥλεθρος  
τῆλε μάλ' ἐπλάχθησαν, ἀπῶσε δὲ πίστις ἀληθής.  
Ταῦτον τ' ἐν ταῦτῷ τε μένον καθ' ἔαυτό τε κεῖται

[30] χούτως ἔμπεδον αὖθι μένει κρατερὴ γὰρ Ανάγκη  
πείρατος ἐν δεσμοῖσιν ἔχει, τό μιν ἀμφὶς ἔέργει,  
οῦνεκεν οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον τὸ ἐόν θέμις εἶναι  
ἔστι γὰρ οὐκ ἐπιδεές; μὴ ἐόν δ' ἀν παντὸς ἐδεῖτο.  
Ταῦτὸν δ' ἔστι νοεῖν τε καὶ οῦνεκεν ἔστι νόημα.

[35] Οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐν ᾧ πεφατισμένον ἔστιν,  
εύρησεις τὸ νοεῖν οὐδ' ἡν γὰρ <ἢ> ἔστιν ἡ ἔσται  
ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐπεὶ τό γε Μοῖρ' ἐπέδησεν  
οὐλον ἀκίνητον τ' ἔμεναι τῷ πάντῃ ὄνομ' ἔσται,  
ὅσσα βροτοὶ κατέθεντο πεποιθότες εἶναι ἀληθῆ,

[40] γίγνεσθαι τε καὶ ὥλλυσθαι, εἶναι τε καὶ οὐχί,  
καὶ τόπον ἀλλάσσειν διά τε χρόα φανὸν ἀμείβειν.

5 now it is, all at once, a continuous one. For what kind of origin  
for it, will you look for? In what way and from what source  
could it have drawn its increase? I shall not let thee say nor  
think that it came from what is not; for it can neither be  
thought nor uttered that what is not is. And, if it came from

10 nothing, what need could have made it arise later rather than  
sooner? Therefore must it either be altogether or be not at  
all. Nor will the force of truth suffer aught to arise besides  
itself from that which in any way is. Wherefore, Justice does  
not loose her fetters and let anything come into being or pass

15 away, but holds it fast.

"Is it or is it not?" Surely it is adjudged, as it needs must  
be, that we are to set aside the one way as unthinkable and  
nameless (for it is no true way), and that the other path is real  
and true. How, then, can what is be going to be in the future?

20 Or how could it come into being? If it came into  
being, it is not; nor is it if it is going to be in the future.  
Thus is becoming extinguished and passing away not to be heard  
of  
Nor is it divisible, since it is all alike, and there is no more  
of it in one place than in another, to hinder it from holding  
together, nor less of it, but everything is full of what is.

25 Wherefore all holds together; for what is; is in contact with  
what is. Moreover, it is immovable in the bonds of mighty chains,  
without beginning and without end; since coming into being  
and passing away have been driven afar, and true belief has cast  
them away. It is the same, and it rests in the self-same place,  
abiding in itself.

30 And thus it remaineth constant in its place; for hard necessity  
keeps it in the bonds of the limit that holds it fast on every side.  
Wherefore it is not permitted to what is to be infinite; for it is in  
need of nothing; while, if it were infinite, it would stand in need  
of everything. It is the same thing that can be thought and for the  
sake of which the thought exists;

35 for you cannot find thought without something that is, to  
which it is betrothed. And there is not, and never shall be, any  
time other, than that which is present, since fate has chained it  
so as to be whole and immovable. Wherefore all these things are  
but the names which mortals have given, believing them, to be  
true –

40 coming into being and passing away, being and not being,  
change of place and alteration of bright colour.

Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πεῖρας πύματον, τετελεσμένον ἔστι πάντοθεν, εὐκύκλου σφαιρίης ἐναλίγκιον ὅγκω, μεσσόθεν ἰσοπαλὲς πάντη· τὸ γὰρ οὔτε τι μεῖζον

[45] οὔτε τι βαιότερον πελέναι χρεόν ἔστι τῇ ἡ τῇ. Οὔτε γὰρ οὐκ ἐὸν ἔστι, τό κεν παύοι μιν ἵκνεισθαι εἰς ὄμόν, οὐτ' ἐὸν ἔστιν ὅπως εἴη κεν ἐόντος τῇ μᾶλλον τῇ δ' ἥσσον, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἔστιν ἀσυλον· οἱ γὰρ πάντοθεν ἴσον, ὄμῶς ἐν πείρασι κύρει.

[50] Ἐν τῷ σοι παύω πιστὸν λόγον ἡδὲ νόημα ἀμφὶς ἀληθείῃς· δόξας δ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε βροτείας μάνθανε κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων. Μορφὰς γὰρ κατέθεντο δύο γνώμας ὄνομαζειν· τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεών ἔστιν - ἐν φῷ πεπλανημένοι εἰσίν -

[55] τὰντία δ' ἐκρίναντο δέμας καὶ σήματ' ἔθεντο χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, τῇ μὲν φλογὸς αἰθέριον πῦρ, ἥπιον ὄν, μέγ' ἐλαφρόν, ἔωστῷ πάντοσε τωύτον, τῷ δ' ἑτέρῳ μὴ τωύτον· ἀτὰρ κάκεινο κατ' αὐτό τὰντία νύκτ' ἀδαῆ, πυκινὸν δέμας ἐμβριθές τε.

[60] Τόν σοι ἐγὼ διάκοσμον ἐοικότα πάντα φατίζω, ὡς οὐ μή ποτέ τίς σε βροτῶν γνώμη παρελάσσῃ.

## IX

Αὐτὰρ ἐπειδὴ πάντα φάος καὶ νὺξ ὄνόμασται καὶ τὰ κατὰ σφετέρας δυνάμεις ἐπὶ τοῖσι τε καὶ τοῖς, πᾶν πλέον ἔστιν ὄμοῦ φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου ἵσων ἀμφοτέρων, ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρῳ μέτα μηδέν.

## X

Εἴσῃ δ' αἰθερίαν τε φύσιν τά τ' ἐν αἰθέρι πάντα σήματα καὶ καθαρὰς εὐαγέος ἡελίοιο λαμπάδος ἔργ' ἀίδηλα καὶ ὀπτόθεν ἐξεγένοντο, ἔργα τε κύκλωπος πεύση περίφοιτα σελήνης

[5] καὶ φύσιν, εἰδήσεις δὲ καὶ οὐρανὸν ἀμφὶς ἔχοντα ἐνθεν ἔφυ τε καὶ ὡς μιν ἄγουσ' ἐπέδησεν Ἀνάγκη πείρατ' ἔχειν ἀστρων.

## XI

πῶς γαῖα καὶ ἥλιος ἡδὲ σελήνη αἰθήρ τε ξυνὸς γάλα τ' οὐράνιον καὶ ὄλυμπος

Where, then, it has its farthest boundary, it is complete on every side, equally poised from the centre in every direction, like the mass of a rounded sphere; for it cannot be greater or

45 smaller in one place than in another. For there is nothing which is not that could keep it from reaching out equally, nor is it possible that there should be more of what is in this place and less in that, since it is all inviolable. For, since it is equal in all directions, it is equally confined within limits.

50 Here shall I close my trustworthy speech and thought about the truth. Henceforward learn the opinions of mortals, giving ear to the deceptive ordering of my words. Mortals have settled in their minds to speak of two forms, one of which they should have left out, and that is where they go astray from the truth.

55 They have assigned an opposite substance to each, and marks distinct from one another. To the one they allot the fire of heaven, light, thin, in every direction the same as itself, but not the same as the other. The other is opposite to it, dark night, a compact and heavy body.

60 Of these I tell thee the whole arrangement as it seems to men, in order that no mortal may surpass thee in knowledge.

## IX

Now that all things have been named light and night; and the things which belong to the power of each have been assigned to these things and to those, everything is full at once of light and dark night, both equal, since neither has aught to do with the other.

## X

And thou shalt know the origin of all the things on high, and all the signs in the sky, and the resplendent works of the glowing sun's clear torch, and whence they arose. And thou shalt learn likewise of the wandering deeds of the round-faced

5 moon, and of her origin. Thou shalt know, too, the heavens that surround us, whence they arose, and how Necessity took them and bound them to keep the limits of the stars . . .

## XI

How the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the sky that is common to all, and the Milky Way, and the outermost Olympos,

ἔσχατος ἡδ' ἄστρων θεῷμὸν μένος ὥρμήθησαν  
γίγνεσθαι.

XII

Αἱ γὰρ στεινότεραι πλὴντο πυρὸς ἀκρήτοι,  
αἱ δὲ ἐπὶ ταῖς νυκτός, μετὰ δὲ φλογὸς ἵεται αἴσα·  
ἐν δὲ μέσῳ τούτων δαιμῶν ἡ πάντα κυβερνᾷ·  
πάντα γὰρ <ἢ> στυγεροῦ τόκου καὶ μίξιος ἄρχει

[5] πέμπουσ' ἄρσενι θῆλυ μιγῆν τό τ' ἐναντίον αὗτις  
ἄρσεν θηλυτέρω.

XIII

Πρώτιστον μὲν Ἔρωτα θεῶν μητίσατο πάντων...

XIV

Νυκτιφαὲς περὶ γαῖαν ἀλώμενον ἀλλότριον φῶς...

XV

αἰεὶ παπταίνουσα πρὸς αὐγὰς ἡελίοιο.

XVa

ύδατόριζον εἶπειν τὴν γῆν

XVI

Ως γὰρ ἔκαστος ἔχει κρᾶσιν μελέων πολυπλάγκτων,  
τὰς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παρίσταται· τὸ γὰρ αὐτό  
ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώποισιν  
καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντὶ· τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἔστι νόημα.

XVII

δεξιτεροῖσιν μὲν κούρους, λαιοῖσι δὲ κούρας...

XVIII

Femina virque simul Veneris cum germina miscent,  
Venis informans diverso ex sanguine virtus  
Temperiem servans bene condita corpora fingit.  
Nam si virtutes permixto semine pugnant  
Nec faciant unam permixto in corpore, dirae  
Nascentem gemino vexabunt semine sexum.

and the burning might of the stars  
arose.

XII

The narrower circles are filled with unmixed fire, and those surrounding them with night, and in the midst of these rushes their portion of fire. In the midst of these circles is the divinity that directs the course of all things; for she rules over all painful birth and all begetting,

5 driving the female to the embrace of the male, and the male to that of the female.

XIII

First of all the gods she contrived Eros.

XIV

Shining by night with borrowed light, wandering round the earth.

XV

Always straining her eyes to the beams of the sun.

XVa

XVI

On the right boys; on the left girls.

XVII

XVIII

Οὕτω τοι κατὰ δόξαν ἔφυ τάδε καί νῦν ἔασι  
καὶ μετέπειτ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε πελευτήσουσι τραφέντα·  
τοῖς δ' ὄνομ' ἀνθρωποι κατέθεντ' ἐπίσημον ἔκάστω.

Thus, according to men's opinions, did things come into being,  
and thus they are now. In time (they think) they will grow up and  
pass away. To each of these things men have assigned a fixed  
name.