

Le poème de Parménide

I

Ἴπποι ταί με φέρουσιν, ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἰκάνοι,
πέμπον, ἐπεὶ μ' ἐς ὁδὸν βῆσαν πολύφημον ἄγουσαι
δαίμονος, ἣ κατὰ πάντ' ἄστη φέρει εἰδότα φῶτα·
τῇ φερόμην· τῇ γὰρ με πολύφραστοι φέρον ἵπποι

[5] ἄρμα τιταίνουσαι, κοῦραι δ' ὁδὸν ἡγεμόνευον.
Ἄξων δ' ἐν χνοίῃσιν ἱεὶ σύριγγος αὐτῇν
αἰθόμενος - δοιοῖς γὰρ ἐπείγετο δινωτοῖσιν
κύκλοις ἀμφοτέρωθεν -, ὅτε σπερχοῖατο πέμπειν
Ἥλιάδες κοῦραι, προλιποῦσαι δώματα Νυκτός,

[10] εἰς φάος, ὥσάμεναι κράτων ἄπο χερσὶ καλύπτρας.
Ἐνθα πύλαι Νυκτός τε καὶ Ἥματός εἰσι κελεύθων,
καὶ σφας ὑπέρθυρον ἀμφὶς ἔχει καὶ λαίνος οὐδός·
αὐταὶ δ' αἰθέριαι πλῆνται μεγάλοισι θυρέτροις·
τῶν δὲ Δίκη πολὺποινος ἔχει κληίδας ἀμοιβούς.

[15] Τὴν δὴ παρφάμεναι κοῦραι μαλακοῖσι λόγοισιν
πεῖσαν ἐπιφράδέως, ὥς σφιν βαλανωτὸν ὀχῆα
ἀπτερέως ὥσειε πυλέων ἄπο· ταὶ δὲ θυρέτρων
χάσμι' ἀχανὲς ποίησαν ἀναπτάμεναι πολυχάλκους
ἄξοντας ἐν σύριγγιν ἀμοιβαδὸν εἰλίξασαι

[20] γόμφοις καὶ περόνησιν ἀρηρότε· τῇ ῥά δι' αὐτέων
ἰθὺς ἔχον κοῦραι κατ' ἀμαξιδόν ἄρμα καὶ ἵππους.
Καί με θεὰ πρόφρων ὑπεδέξατο, χεῖρα δὲ χειρὶ
δεξιτερῇν ἔλεν, ὥδε δ' ἔτος φάτο καί με προσηύδα·
ὦ κοῦρ' ἀθανάτοισι συνάορος ἡνιόχοισιν,

[25] ἵπποις ταί σε φέρουσιν ἰκάνων ἡμέτερον δῶ,
χαῖρ', ἐπεὶ οὐτὶ σε μοῖρα κακὴ προὔπεμπε νέεσθαι
τήνδ' ὁδόν - ἣ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου ἐστίν·-,
ἀλλὰ θέμις τε δίκη τε. Χρῶ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι
ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμεῖς ἦτορ

[30] ἥδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἐν πίστις ἀληθής.
Ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσεται, ὥς τὰ δοκοῦντα
χρῆν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντός πάντα περῶντα.

II

Εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐγὼν ἐρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας,
αἵπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι·
ἣ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὥς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,
Πειθοῦς ἐστὶ κέλευθος - Ἀληθείῃ γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ -,

Poem of Parmenides : on nature

I

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.

II

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] ἢ δ' ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὥς χρεῶν ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,
τὴν δὴ τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν·
οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἔόν - οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν -
οὔτε φράσαις·

III

... τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι.

IV

Λεῦσσε δ' ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόῳ παρεόντα βεβαίως·
οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἔόν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχεσθαι
οὔτε σκιδνάμενον πάντη πάντως κατὰ κόσμον
οὔτε συνιστάμενον.

V

Ξυνὸν δέ μοί ἐστιν, ὀππόθεν ἄρξωμαι· τόθι γὰρ πάλιν
ἴξομαι αὖθις.

VI

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

[5] πλάττονται, δίκρανοι· ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν
στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλακτὸν νόον· οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται.
κωφοὶ ὁμῶς τυφλοὶ τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φῦλα,
οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταῦτόν νενόμισται
κοῦ ταῦτόν, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπὸς ἔστι κέλευθος.

VII

Οὐ γὰρ μήποτε τοῦτο δαμῇ εἶναι μὴ ἔόντα·
ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ διζήσιος εἴργε νόημα·
μηδέ σ' ἔθος πολύπειρον ὁδὸν κατὰ τήνδε βιάσθω,
νωμᾶν ἄσκοπον ὄμμα καὶ ἠχήεσσαν ἀκοιήν

[5] καὶ γλῶσσαν, κρῖναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον
ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα.

VIII

Μόνος δ' ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο
λείπεται ὥς ἔστιν· ταύτῃ δ' ἐπὶ σήματ' ἔασι
πολλὰ μάλ', ὥς ἀγέννητον ἔόν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἔστιν,
ἔστι γὰρ οὐλομελές τε καὶ ἀτρεμές ἡδ' 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

VI

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' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πᾶν,
ἓν, συνεχές· τίνα γὰρ γένναν διζήσεαι αὐτοῦ;
πῇ πόθεν αὐξηθέν; οὔτ' ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος ἑάσσω
φάσθαι σ' οὐδὲ νοεῖν· οὐ γὰρ φατὸν οὐδὲ νοητὸν
ἔστιν ὅπως οὐκ ἔστι. Τί δ' ἂν μιν καὶ χρόος ὥρσεν

[10] ὕστερον ἢ πρόσθεν, τοῦ μηδενὸς ἀρξάμενον, φῦν;
οὕτως ἢ πάμπαν πελέναι χρόων ἔστιν ἢ οὐχί.
Οὐδὲ ποτ' ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος ἐφήσει πίστιος ἰσχύς
γίγνεσθαι τι παρ' αὐτό· τοῦ εἵνεκεν οὔτε γενέσθαι
οὔτ' ὀλλυσθαι ἀνήκε Δίκη χαλάσασα πέδησιν,

[15] ἀλλ' ἔχει ἡ δὲ κρίσις τούτων ἐν τῷδ' ἔστιν·
ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν· κέκριται δ' οὖν, ὥσπερ ἀνάγκη,
τὴν μὲν ἂν ἀνόητον ἀνώνυμον - οὐ γὰρ ἀληθὴς
ἔστιν ὁδός - τὴν δ' ὥστε πέλειν καὶ ἐτήτυμον εἶναι.
Πῶς δ' ἂν ἔπειτα πέλοιτο ἓν; πῶς δ' ἂν κε γένοιτο;

[20] εἰ γὰρ ἔγεντ', οὐκ ἔστι, οὐδ' εἴ ποτε μέλλει
ἔσεσθαι.
Τὼς γένεσις μὲν ἀπέσβεσται καὶ ἄπυστος ὀλεθρος.
Οὐδὲ διαιρετόν ἔστιν, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἔστιν ὁμοῖον·
οὐδὲ τι τῇ μᾶλλον, τό κεν εἴργοι μιν συνέχεσθαι,
οὐδὲ τι χειρότερον, πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεόν ἔστιν ἐόντος.

[25] Τῷ ξυνεχὲς πᾶν ἔστιν· ἐὼν γὰρ ἐόντι πελάζει.
Αὐτὰρ ἀκίνητον μεγάλων ἐν πείρασι δεσμῶν
ἔστιν ἀναρχον ἄπαστον, ἐπεὶ γένεσις καὶ ὀλεθρος
τῇλε μάλ' ἐπλάχθησαν, ἀπῶσε δὲ πίστις ἀληθῆς.
Ταυτὸν τ' ἐν ταυτῷ τε μένον καθ' ἑαυτό τε κεῖται

[30] χοῦτως ἔμπεδον αὐθι μένει· κρατερὴ γὰρ Ἀνάγκη
πεύρατος ἐν δεσμοῖσιν ἔχει, τό μιν ἀμφὶς ἔεργει,
οὔνεκεν οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον τὸ ἐὼν θέμις εἶναι·
ἔστι γὰρ οὐκ ἐπιδέξ· μὴ ἐὼν δ' ἂν παντὸς ἐδεῖτο.
Ταυτὸν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὔνεκεν ἔστι νόημα.

[35] Οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐν ᾧ πεφασισμένον ἔστιν,
εὐρήσεις τὸ νοεῖν· οὐδ' ἦν γὰρ <ἦ> ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται
ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐπεὶ τό γε Μοῖρ' ἐπέδησεν
οὔλον ἀκίνητόν τ' ἔμμεναι τῷ πάντ' ὄνομ' ἔσται,
ὅσσα βροτοὶ κατέθεντο πεποιθότες εἶναι ἀληθῇ,

[40] γίγνεσθαι τε καὶ ὀλλυσθαι, εἶναι τε καὶ οὐχί,
καὶ τόπον ἀλλάσσειν διὰ τε χροά 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 πείρας πύματον, τετελεσμένον ἐστὶ
πάντοθεν, εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλίγκιον ὄγκῳ,
μεσσόθεν ἰσοπαλὲς πάντῃ· τὸ γὰρ οὔτε τι μείζον

[45] οὔτε τι βαιότερον πελέναι χρεόν ἐστι τῇ ἢ τῇ.
Οὔτε γὰρ οὐκ ἔδον ἔστι, τό κεν παύοι μιν ἰκνεῖσθαι
εἰς ὁμόν, οὔτ' ἔδον ἔστιν ὅπως εἴη κεν ἑόντος
τῇ μᾶλλον τῇ δ' ἥσσον, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἐστὶν ἄσυλον·
οἱ γὰρ πάντοθεν ἴσον, ὁμῶς ἐν πείρασι κύρει.

[50] Ἐν τῷ σοι παύω πιστὸν λόγον ἡδὲ νόημα
ἀμφὶς ἀληθείης· δόξας δ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε βροτείας
μάνθανε κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων.
Μορφὰς γὰρ κατέθεντο δύο γνῶμας ὀνομάζειν·
τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεῶν ἐστὶν - ἐν ᾧ πεπλανημένοι εἰσὶν -·

[55] τὰντία δ' ἐκρίναντο δέμας καὶ σήματ' ἔθεντο
χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, τῇ μὲν φλογὸς αἰθέριον πῦρ,
ἡπιον ὄν, μέγ' ἐλαφρόν, ἐωυτῷ πάντοσε τωῦτόν,
τῷ δ' ἑτέρῳ μὴ τωῦτόν· ἀτὰρ κακέينو κατ' αὐτό
τὰντία νύκτ' ἀδαῆ, πυκινὸν δέμας ἐμβριθὲς τε.

[60] Τόν σοι ἐγὼ διάκοσμον ἑοικότα πάντα φατίζω,
ὥς οὐ μὴ ποτέ τις σε βροτῶν γνῶμη παρελάσσει.

IX

Αὐτὰρ ἐπειδὴ πάντα φάος καὶ νύξ ὀνόμασται
καὶ τὰ κατὰ σφετέρας δυνάμεις ἐπὶ τοῖσι τε καὶ τοῖς,
πᾶν πλέον ἐστὶν ὁμοῦ φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου
ἴσων ἀμφοτέρων, ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρῳ μέτα μηδέν.

X

Εἶσθαι δ' αἰθερίαν τε φύσιν τὰ τ' ἐν αἰθέρι πάντα
σήματα καὶ καθαρὰς εὐαγέος ἡελίοιο
λαμπάδος ἔργ' αἰδηλα καὶ ὀππόθεν ἐξεγένοντο,
ἔργα τε κύκλωπος πεύση περίφοιτα σελήνης

[5] καὶ φύσιν, εἰδήσεις δὲ καὶ οὐρανὸν ἀμφὶς ἔχοντα
ἔνθεν ἔφυ τε καὶ ὥς μιν ἄγουσ' ἐπέδησεν Ἀνάγκη
πεύρατ' ἔχειν ἄστρον.

XI

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

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' ἄστρον θερμὸν μένος ὠρμήθησαν
γίγνεσθαι.

XII

Αἱ γὰρ στεινότεραι πλῆντο πυρὸς ἀκρήτοιο,
αἱ δ' ἐπὶ ταῖς νυκτός, μετὰ δὲ φλογὸς ἵεται αἴσα·
ἐν δὲ μέσῳ τούτων δαίμων ἢ πάντα κυβερνᾷ·
πάντα γὰρ <ῆ> στυγεροῖο τόκου καὶ μίξις ἄρχει

[5] πέμπουσ' ἄρσενι θῆλυ μιγῆν τό τ' ἐναντίον αὐτίς
ἄρσεν θηλυτέρῳ.

XIII

Πρώτιστον μὲν Ἔρωτα θεῶν μητίσατο πάντων...

XIV

Νυκτιφάες περὶ γαίαν ἀλώμενον ἀλλότριον φῶς...

XV

αἰεὶ παπταίνουσα πρὸς αὐγάς ἡελίοιο.

XVa

ὕδατόριζον εἶπεν τὴν γῆν

XVI

Ὡς γὰρ ἕκαστος ἔχει κρᾶσιν μελέων πολυπλάγκτων,
τὼς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παρίσταται· τὸ γὰρ αὐτό
ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώποισιν
καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί· τὸ γὰρ πλεον 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 pugnent
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

XVII

On the right boys; on the left girls.

XVIII

XIX

Οὕτω τοι κατὰ δόξαν ἔφν τάδε καί νυν ἔασι
καὶ μετέπειτ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε πελευτήσουσι τραφέντα·
τοῖς δ' ὄνομ' ἄνθρωποι κατέθεντ' ἐπίσημον ἑκάστω.

XIX

Thus, according to men's opinions, did things comp 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.