CHAPTER X

PARMENIDES OF ELEA

DATE

337 Plato *Parmenides* 127A ἔφη δὲ δὴ ὁ Ἀντιφῶν λέγειν τὸν Πυθόδωρον ὅτι ἀφίκοιντό ποτε εἰς Παναθήναια τὰ μεγάλα Ζήνων τε καὶ Παρμενίδης. τὸν μὲν οὖν Παρμενίδην εὖ μάλα δὴ πρεσβύτην εἶναι, σφόδρα πολιόν, καλὸν δὲ κἀγαθὸν τὴν ὄψιν, περὶ ἔτη μάλιστα πέντε καὶ ἑξήκοντα· Ζήνωνα δὲ ἐγγὺς ἐτῶν τετταράκοντα τότε εἶναι, εὐμήκη δὲ καὶ χαρίεντα ἰδεῖν· καὶ λέγεσθαι αὐτὸν παιδικὰ τοῦ Παρμενίδου γεγονέναι. καταλύειν δὲ αὐτοὺς ἔφη παρὰ τῷ Πυθοδώρῳ ἐκτὸς τείχους ἐν Κεραμεικῷ· οἷ δὴ καὶ ἀφικέσθαι τόν τε Σωκράτη καὶ ἄλλους τινὰς μετ' αὐτοῦ πολλούς, ἐπιθυμοῦντας ἀκοῦσαι τῶν τοῦ Ζήνωνος γραμμάτων—τότε γὰρ αὐτὰ πρῶτον ὑπ' ἐκείνων κομισθῆναι—Σωκράτη δὲ εἶναι τότε σφόδρα *νέον*. (Cf. Plato *Theaetetus* 183E and *Sophist* 217C (both DK28A5), each of which refers briefly to the meeting of the young Socrates with the old Parmenides.)

338 Diogenes Laertius IX, 23 (DK28A1) ἤκμαζε δὲ (*sc.* Parmenides) κατὰ τὴν ἐνάτην καὶ ἑξηκοστὴν ὀλυμπιάδα (i.e. 504–501 B.C.).

Whether or not Parmenides and Zeno ever visited Athens and met there the young Socrates, Plato need not have been so precise about their respective ages. The fact that he gives these details strongly suggests that he is writing with chronological accuracy. Socrates was just over seventy when he was put to death in 399 B.C., which means that he was born in 470/469. If we assume that the words σφόδρα *νέον*, 'very young', mean that he was under twenty-five, then the meeting might have taken place between 450 and 445 B.C. This places Parmenides' birth at about 515–

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337 *According to Antiphon's account, Pythodorus said that Parmenides and Zeno once came to Athens for the Great Panathenaea. Parmenides was well advanced in years—about sixty-five—and very grey, but a fine-looking man. Zeno was then nearly forty, and tall and handsome; he was said to have been Parmenides' favourite. They were staying at Pythodorus' house outside the city-wall in the Ceramicus. Thither went Socrates, and several others with him, in the hope of hearing Zeno's treatise; for this was the first time Parmenides and Zeno had brought it to Athens. Socrates was still very young at the time.*

338 *Parmenides flourished in the sixty-ninth Olympiad.*

510 B.C. and Zeno's at about 490–485. It is of course true that the date given by Diogenes, which he probably derived from Apollodorus, does not nearly square with this; but, as Burnet points out (*EGP* 170), 'the date given by Apollodorus depends solely on that of the foundation of Elea (540 B.C.), which he had adopted as the *floruit* of Xenophanes. Parmenides is born in that year, just as Zeno is born in the year when Parmenides "flourished".' Unsatisfactory as a late Platonic dialogue may be as evidence for chronology, it can hardly be doubted that it is more reliable than this. But in any case what really matters is not so much Parmenides' precise dates as his relation to the other Presocratics. We shall see as we proceed that his poem certainly contains references to Anaximenes (see p. 275) and perhaps also to Heraclitus (see pp. 183 and 272), while both Empedocles and Anaxagoras refer often and obviously to Parmenides (cf. **414–416**, **497**).

LIFE

339 Diogenes Laertius IX, 21–3 (DK28A1) Παρμενίδης Πύρητος Ἐλεάτης διήκουσε Ξενοφάνους. (τοῦτον (*sc.* Xenophanes) Θεόφραστος ἐν τῇ Ἐπιτομῇ Ἀναξιμάνδρου φησὶν ἀκοῦσαι.) ὅμως δ' οὖν ἀκούσας καὶ Ξενοφάνους οὐκ ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ. ἐκοινώνησε δὲ καὶ Ἀμεινίᾳ Διοχαίτα τῷ Πυθαγορικῷ, ὡς ἔφη Σωτίων, ἀνδρὶ πένητι μέν, καλῷ δὲ καὶ ἀγαθῷ. ᾧ καὶ μᾶλλον ἠκολούθησε καὶ ἀποθανόντος ἡρῷον ἱδρύσατο γένους τε ὑπάρχων λαμπροῦ καὶ πλούτου, καὶ ὑπ' Ἀμεινίου, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὑπὸ Ξενοφάνους εἰς ἡσυχίαν προετράπη . . .(23) . . .λέγεται δὲ καὶ νόμους θεῖναι τοῖς πολίταις, ὥς φησι Σπεύσιππος ἐν τῷ Περὶ φιλοσόφων.[1]

340 Strabo 6, p. 252 Cas. (DK28A12) . . .Ἐλέαν . . ., ἐξ ἧς Παρμενίδης καὶ Ζήνων ἐγένοντο ἄνδρες Πυθαγόρειοι. δοκεῖ δέ μοι καὶ δι' ἐκείνους καὶ ἔτι πρότερον εὐνομηθῆναι.

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339 *Parmenides of Elea, son of Pyres, was a pupil of Xenophanes (and he, according to Theophrastus in his* Epitome, *of Anaximander). But though a pupil of Xenophanes, he did not follow him. He associated also, as Sotion recorded, with the Pythagorean Ameinias, son of Diochaitas, a poor but noble man, whom he preferred to follow. When Ameinias died Parmenides, who came of a distinguished family and was rich, built a shrine to him. It was by Ameinias rather than Xenophanes that he was converted to the contemplative life. . . .He is said also to have legislated for the citizens of Elea, as Speusippus records in his work* On the philosophers.

340 *. . .Elea . . ., whence Parmenides and Zeno came, both Pythagoreans. I believe that through their agency the city was well governed, as it had also been even earlier.*

[1] Cf. **341** Plutarch *adv. Colot.* 32, 1126A Παρμενίδης δὲ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ πατρίδα διεκόσμησε νόμοις ἀρίστοις, ὥστε τὰς ἀρχὰς καθ' ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτὸν ἐξορκοῦν τοὺς πολίτας ἐμμενεῖν τοῖς Παρμενίδου νόμοις.

These two passages, though both from late authors, preserve two traditions which are likely enough, on other grounds, to be true. That Parmenides should have taken an active part in the politics of his city is in no way surprising: several of the Presocratic philosophers did. And that he should originally have been a Pythagorean is not only not unlikely in itself, Elea being no great distance from Croton and Metapontium, but is borne out by internal evidence in his poem (see especially p. 277). Again, the statement in **339** that it was not Xenophanes but the otherwise unknown Pythagorean Ameinias who 'converted' Parmenides to the philosophic life is not the sort of thing to be invented. Aristotle himself, possibly misled by a remark of Plato's in the *Sophist* (242C–D, cf. **166**) which is not to be taken seriously, says of Parmenides that 'he is supposed to have been a pupil of Xenophanes' (*Met.* A5, 986b22, DK28A6); and Sotion, whom Diogenes is quoting in **339**, must have had some good reason—possibly the existence of the shrine erected by Parmenides in memory of Ameinias—for rejecting Aristotle's guidance and substituting for Xenophanes so obscure a figure. When it is remembered, finally, that these traditions are probably derived from such earlier authorities as the fourth-century historian Timaeus, there seems to be no good ground for rejecting the scanty evidence we possess about the life of Parmenides.

THE NATURE OF PARMENIDES' POEM

Parmenides wrote exclusively in hexameter verse—in which he was followed by Empedocles. With the exception of the allegory of the proem (and perhaps also certain passages in the 'Way of Seeming', in which divine figures were introduced), his subject-matter is of the most prosaic order. His diction, moreover, besides being far from poetical, is often exceedingly obscure: the precise meaning of some of his sentences will probably never be unanimously agreed. Thanks to Simplicius, who, knowing that the original work was already in his day rare, transcribed large

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341 *Parmenides set his own state in order with such admirable laws that the government yearly swears its citizens to abide by the laws of Parmenides.*

sections of it into his commentaries on Aristotle, we possess, probably, a higher proportion of the writings of Parmenides than of any other Presocratic philosopher. After the allegorical introduction the poem is in two parts, the 'Way of Truth' and the 'Way of Seeming'. The former, of which Diels estimated that we possess about nine-tenths, presents an unprecedented exercise in logical deduction: starting from the premise ἔστι, 'it is',—in much the same way as Descartes started from the premise 'cogito'—Parmenides proceeds, by the sole use of reason unaided by the senses, to deduce all that can be known about Being, and he ends by denying any truthful validity to the senses or any reality to what they appear to perceive. Then in the 'Way of Seeming', unexpectedly reinstating the world of appearances that he has so vehemently demolished, he appends what seems, from the relatively scanty fragments that survive, to have been a cosmogony of the traditional type. The relation between the two parts of the poem is by no means obvious and has, as we shall see, been very variously interpreted; but fortunately it is the 'Way of Truth', of which so large a proportion survives, that made Parmenides the most influential of all the Presocratics, while the 'Way of Seeming', whatever the motive that prompted Parmenides to write it, seems to have exercised comparatively little influence upon his successors (but see p. 283).

THE PROEM

342 Fr. 1, Sextus *adv. math.* VII, 111 and Simplicius *de caelo* 557, 25

ἵπποι ταί με φέρουσιν ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἱκάνοι
πέμπον, ἐπεί μ' ἐς ὁδὸν βῆσαν πολύφημον ἄγουσαι
δαίμονος, ἣ κατὰ πάντ' ἄστη[1] φέρει εἰδότα φῶτα·
τῇ φερόμην· τῇ γάρ με πολύφραστοι φέρον ἵπποι
ἅρμα τιταίνουσαι, κοῦραι δ' ὁδὸν ἡγεμόνευον.
ἄξων δ' ἐν χνοίῃσιν ἵει σύριγγος ἀυτὴν
αἰθόμενος (δοιοῖς γὰρ ἐπείγετο δινωτοῖσιν
κύκλοις ἀμφοτέρωθεν), ὅτε σπερχοίατο πέμπειν

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342 *The steeds that carry me took me as far as my heart could desire, when once they had brought me and set me on the renowned way of the goddess, who leads the man who knows through every town. On that way was I conveyed; for on it did the wise steeds convey me, drawing my chariot, and maidens led the way. And the axle blazing in the socket—for it was urged round by well-turned wheels at each end—was making the holes in the naves sing,*

Ἡλιάδες κοῦραι, προλιποῦσαι δώματα Νυκτός,
εἰς φάος, ὠσάμεναι κράτων ἄπο χερσὶ καλύπτρας.
ἔνθα πύλαι Νυκτός τε καὶ Ἤματός εἰσι κελεύθων,
καί σφας ὑπέρθυρον ἀμφὶς ἔχει καὶ λάινος οὐδός.
αὐταὶ δ' αἰθέριαι πλῆνται μεγάλοισι θυρέτροις·
τῶν δὲ Δίκη πολύποινος ἔχει κληῖδας ἀμοιβούς.
τὴν δὴ παρφάμεναι κοῦραι μαλακοῖσι λόγοισιν
πεῖσαν ἐπιφραδέως, ὥς σφιν βαλανωτὸν ὀχῆα
ἀπτερέως ὥσειε πυλέων ἄπο· ταὶ δὲ θυρέτρων
χάσμ' ἀχανὲς ποίησαν ἀναπτάμεναι πολυχάλκους
ἄξονας ἐν σύριγξιν ἀμοιβαδὸν εἰλίξασαι
γόμφοις καὶ περόνῃσιν ἀρηρότε· τῇ ῥα δι' αὐτέων
ἰθὺς ἔχον κοῦραι κατ' ἀμαξιτὸν ἅρμα καὶ ἵππους.
καί με θεὰ πρόφρων ὑπεδέξατο, χεῖρα δὲ χειρὶ
δεξιτερὴν ἕλεν, ὧδε δ' ἔπος φάτο καί με προσηύδα·
ὦ κοῦρ' ἀθανάτοισι συνάορος ἡνιόχοισιν,
ἵπποις ταί σε φέρουσιν ἱκάνων ἡμέτερον δῶ,
χαῖρ', ἐπεὶ οὔτι σε μοῖρα κακὴ προὔπεμπε νέεσθαι
τήνδ' ὁδόν (ἦ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου ἐστίν),
ἀλλὰ θέμις τε δίκη τε. χρεὼ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι
ἠμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμὲς ἦτορ
ἠδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής.
ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσεαι, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα
χρῆν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα.[2]

[1] πάντ' ἄστη Sextus N, πάντ' ἄτη L, πάντα τῇ E, ς. κατὰ πάντα τατὴ Barnett Wilamowitz (='stretched through all things') seems improbable, since τατός occurs elsewhere only once, in Aristotle's *Hist. An.* The reading

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while the daughters of the Sun, hasting to convey me into the light, threw back the veils 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 controls the double bolts. Her did the maidens entreat with gentle words and cunningly persuade to unfasten without demur the bolted bar from the gates. Then, when the doors were thrown back, they disclosed a wide opening, when their brazen posts fitted with rivets and nails swung in turn on their hinges. 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, o youth, that comest to my abode on the car that bears thee, tended by immortal charioteers. It is no ill chance, but right and justice, 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 well-rounded truth, as the opinions of mortals in which is no true belief at all. Yet none the less shalt thou learn these things also—how the things that seem, as they all pass through everything, must gain the semblance of being.' (After Burnet)

of N, by its suggestion that Parmenides was an itinerant philosopher, accords with the statement of Plato that Parmenides and Zeno visited Athens.

2 δοκίμως Simpl. mss., δοκιμῶσ' Diels, admitting an elision unknown in hexameters. But, coming so soon after δοκοῦντα, δοκίμως surely means 'seemingly', which resolves the difficulty. περῶντα Simpl. A; περ ὄντα DEF.

This proem is not only of the utmost interest as a whole but also contains a number of important points of detail. Parmenides is clearly describing his escape from error to enlightenment, and it is most likely that, as Diels suggested, the allegorical form is borrowed from oracle- and mystery-literature. 'It is clear', writes Bowra (*Problems in Greek Poetry* 47), 'that this Proem is intended to have the importance and seriousness of a religious revelation.' Not only the passage from darkness into light but many minor details throughout the poem suggest that Parmenides desired, particularly in the Proem, to arm himself in advance, by stressing the religious nature of his revelation, with an answer to his potential critics. Bowra is probably right in concluding that these potential critics were 'his fellow Pythagoreans'.

Two points of detail call for comment. It is to be noted, in the first place, that the goddess is made to address Parmenides (l. 24) as κοῦρε, 'youth', a word which provides us with our only clue as to the date of the poem's composition. If we take this to mean that Parmenides was, at the most, not much over thirty when he wrote his poem, that would fix its date somewhere between, say, 490 and 475 B.C.; and if this estimate is right, then we have an approximate *terminus ad quem*, not only for several of the Pythagorean views already described, against which we shall see that Parmenides especially aims many of his arguments, but also, possibly, for the publication of the fundamental doctrine of Heraclitus.

The other important point concerns the phrase (l. 29) Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος, 'well-rounded Truth'. Truth is described as well-rounded because, presumably, wherever you pick up the chain of Parmenides' reasoning, you can follow it round in a circle, passing through each of its links in turn, back to your starting-point. Parmenides himself says almost exactly that in fragment 5:

343 Fr. 5, Proclus *in Parm.* I. 708, 16 Cousin

. . . ξυνὸν δέ μοί ἐστιν
ὁππόθεν ἄρξωμαι· τόθι γὰρ πάλιν ἵξομαι αὖθις.

Every attribute of reality can be deduced from every other.

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343 *It is all one to me where I begin; for I shall come back there again in time.*

THE WAY OF TRUTH

(i) *The premise*

344 Fr. 2, Proclus *in Tim.* 1, 345, 18 Diehl

εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐγὼν ἐρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας,
αἵπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι·
ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι,
πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος (Ἀληθείῃ γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ),
ἡ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεών ἐστι μὴ εἶναι,
τὴν δή τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν·
οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἐόν (οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν)
οὔτε φράσαις. (Fr. 3) τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἔστιν τε καὶ εἶναι.

The goddess begins her instruction by defining 'the only two conceivable ways of enquiry', which are directly contrary one to the other: if you accept one premise, then logic compels you to reject the other. The choice in fact, as Parmenides later puts it in its briefest form (**347** l. 16), is simply this: ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν. Unfortunately even to translate these apparently simple words is liable to be misleading, because of the ambiguity, of which Parmenides himself was unconscious, between the predicative and the existential senses of the Greek word ἐστι.[1] The usual translation, 'It is or it is not', too easily gives rise to the question what 'it' is. So Burnet, for instance, at the beginning of his discussion of the Way of Truth (*EGP* 178), writes: '. . .it is not quite obvious at first sight what it is precisely that *is*. . . .There can be no real doubt that this is what we call body. . . .The assertion that *it is* amounts just to this, that the universe is a *plenum*.' Such a conclusion is at best premature. At this early stage in his poem Parmenides' premise ἔστι has no definite subject at all: if it is necessary to translate the sentence ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν, then perhaps the least misleading rendering is: 'Either a thing is or it is not.' Parmenides is attacking those who believe, as all men always had believed,

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344 *Come now, and I will tell thee—and do thou hearken and carry my word away—the only ways of enquiry that can be thought of* [literally, *that exist for thinking*, the old dative sense of the infinitive]*: the one way, that it* is *and cannot not-be, is the path of Persuasion, for it attends upon Truth; the other, that it* is-not *and needs must not-be, that I tell thee is a path altogether unthinkable. For thou couldst not know that which is-not (that is impossible) nor utter it; for the same thing can be thought as can be* [construction as above, literally *the same thing exists for thinking and for being*].

that it is possible to make a significant negative predication; but he is enabled to attack them only because of his own confusion between a negative predication and a negative existential judgement. The gist of this difficult and important fragment is therefore this: 'Either it is right only to think or say of a thing, "it is. . ." (i.e. "it is so-and-so, e.g. white"), or else it is right to think or say only "it is not. . ." (i.e. "it is not something else, e.g. black"). The latter is to be firmly rejected on the ground [a mistaken one, owing to the confusion between existential and predicative] that it is impossible to conceive of Not-Being, the non-existent. Any propositions about Not-Being are necessarily meaningless; the only significant thoughts or statements concern Being.'

[1] Owing to this undetected ambiguity it is often difficult to decide how the word ἐστι should be accented in Parmenides' poem. I have for the most part, but not always, followed DK; where I have diverged, see the parentheses in the translation.

A page or two after the sentences quoted in the last paragraph Burnet, in discussing the effects of Parmenides' 'thorough-going dialectic', adds (p. 180): 'Philosophy must now cease to be monistic or cease to be corporealist. It could not cease to be corporealist; for the incorporeal was still unknown.' This too seems an over-simplification. It is true that the incorporeal was still unknown; but it does not follow from that that Parmenides was wishing to describe 'body' or 'a *plenum*'. On the contrary, the chief difficulty about Parmenides is that, while the incorporeal was still unknown, and no vocabulary therefore existed to describe it, he was none the less, as were the Pythagoreans in the choice of their first principles, feeling his way towards it. We shall see (pp. 302 ff.) that Melissus carried the advance a stage further; but it seems probable, even in the case of Parmenides, that had he been asked whether his 'Being' was solid (or 'body') his answer would have been a hesitant negative.

(ii) *Two false premises*

345 Fr. 6, Simplicius *Phys.* 117, 4

χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι,
μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν· τά σ' ἐγὼ φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα.

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345 *That which can be spoken and thought needs must be* [construction as in **344**]*; for it is possible for it, but not for nothing, to be; that is what I bid thee ponder. This is*

πρώτης γάρ σ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ ταύτης διζήσιος ⟨εἴργω⟩,
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ τῆς, ἣν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν
πλάττονται, δίκρανοι· ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν
στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλακτὸν νόον· οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται
κωφοὶ ὁμῶς τυφλοί τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φῦλα,
οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταὐτὸν νενόμισται
κοὐ ταὐτόν, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπός ἐστι κέλευθος.

346 Fr. 7, Plato *Sophist* 237A and Sextus *adv. math.* VII, 114

οὐ γὰρ μήποτε τοῦτο δαμῇ εἶναι μὴ ἐόντα·
ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ διζήσιος εἶργε νόημα
μηδέ σ' ἔθος πολύπειρον ὁδὸν κατὰ τήνδε βιάσθω
νωμᾶν ἄσκοπον ὄμμα καὶ ἠχήεσσαν ἀκουὴν
καὶ γλῶσσαν, κρῖναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον
ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα.

Though Parmenides has, in **344**, suggested that there are only two 'conceivable ways of enquiry', either a thing is or it is not, it now appears from these two fragments (which seem to present a continuous passage) that in addition to the true premise there are actually two premises that must be rejected. One of these, of course, is that already defined in fr. 2, the premise οὐκ ἔστι, and described as παναπευθέα, 'altogether inconceivable'; misguided as men may be, no man could confine himself to negative judgements and negative statements only. But for all that, the goddess (in **345** l. 3) warns Parmenides against treading this path, because, as she goes on to suggest (in ll. 8–9), this utterly false way can be, and constantly is, so combined with the true way that a third way, a compromise between the other two, a thing both is and is not, comes into the picture. This third way is the way on which 'ignorant mortals wander two-faced'; and they are two-faced because, as Simplicius puts it (*Phys.* 117, 3; DK28B6), εἰς ταὐτὸ συνάγουσι τὰ ἀντικείμενα, 'they combine contraries'. It is in fact

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the first way of enquiry from which I hold thee back, and then from that way also on which mortals wander knowing nothing, two-headed; for helplessness guides the wandering thought in their breasts; they are carried along, deaf and blind at once, altogether dazed—hordes devoid of judgement, who are persuaded that to be and to be-not are the same, yet not the same, and for whom the path of all things is backward-turning.

346 *For never shall this be proved, that things that are not are; but do thou hold back thy thought from this way of enquiry, nor let custom, born of much experience, force thee to let wander along this road thy aimless eye, thy echoing ear or thy tongue; but do thou judge by reason the strife-encompassed proof that I have spoken.*

this very combination of contraries that is the basis of 'the opinions of mortals' (**342** l. 30 and **353** l. 51) which provide the content of the Way of Seeming; the premise upon which the whole Way of Seeming rests is just this compromise between the true way and the utterly false way, a thing both is and is not. It has often been suggested that the last clause of **345**, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπός ἐστι κέλευθος (translated 'of all things the path is backward-turning'), contains a special reference to the doctrines of Heraclitus; and so translated, it certainly is particularly appropriate to the Heraclitean belief that all things eventually change into their opposites (see pp. 195 f.).[1] But it is by no means the case that unless we see such a reference, then the last two lines of the fragment are meaningless. They need not necessarily mean anything more than that mortals as a whole (note ἄκριτα φῦλα, '*hordes* devoid of judgement') 'have made up their minds to believe that to be and not to be are the same and yet not the same' (i.e. they believe that that which *is* can change and become *not* what it was before. To be and not to be are the same in that they are both found in any event; and yet they are obviously opposites and are therefore, in a more exact sense, not the same), 'and they imagine that all things pass back and forth between being and not-being' (i.e. all things change from being so-and-so, e.g. hot, to not being so-and-so, and then change back again).

[1] A quite different interpretation of this last clause is attractive, taking πάντων as masculine and κέλευθος (as in **344** l. 4) as a 'way of thought', which is described as παλίντροπος because, having started out promisingly by saying ἔστι, these muddlers turn back on their tracks by adding οὐκ ἔστι. If this interpretation were adopted, the case for seeing here a reference to Heraclitus (which anyhow was largely based on the doubtful reading παλίντροπος for παλίντονος in **212**) would be further weakened.

(iii) *Deductions from the true premise:*

(*a*) *denial of time, the void, plurality*

The premise ἔστι is by now established as the only possibility: the only significant thought or statement is that a thing *is*. At this stage, therefore, Parmenides proceeds to consider precisely what must be the nature of the subject of the only true statement that can be made. From now onwards until the end of the Way of Truth he is concerned, in other words, to deduce all that can be deduced from his chosen premise about the properties of Being.

347 Fr. 8, Simplicius *Phys.* 145, 1 (continuing **346**)

μόνος δ' ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο
λείπεται ὡς ἔστιν· ταύτῃ δ' ἔπι σήματ' ἔασι
πολλὰ μάλ', ὡς ἀγένητον ἐὸν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἐστιν,
ἔστι γὰρ οὐλομελές τε καὶ ἀτρεμὲς ἠδ' ἀτέλεστον·
οὐδέ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πᾶν,
ἕν, συνεχές· τίνα γὰρ γένναν διζήσεαι αὐτοῦ;
πῇ πόθεν αὐξηθέν; οὐδ' ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος ἐάσσω
φάσθαι σ' οὐδὲ νοεῖν· οὐ γὰρ φατὸν οὐδὲ νοητὸν
ἔστιν ὅπως οὐκ ἔστι. τί δ' ἄν μιν καὶ χρέος ὦρσεν
ὕστερον ἢ πρόσθεν, τοῦ μηδενὸς ἀρξάμενον, φῦν;
οὕτως ἢ πάμπαν πελέναι χρεών ἐστιν ἢ οὐχί.
οὐδέ ποτ' ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος ἐφήσει πίστιος ἰσχὺς
γίγνεσθαί τι παρ' αὐτό· τοῦ εἵνεκεν οὔτε γενέσθαι
οὔτ' ὄλλυσθαι ἀνῆκε Δίκη χαλάσασα πέδῃσιν,
ἀλλ' ἔχει· ἡ δὲ κρίσις περὶ τούτων ἐν τῷδ' ἔστιν·
ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν· κέκριται δ' οὖν, ὥσπερ ἀνάγκη,
τὴν μὲν ἐᾶν ἀνόητον ἀνώνυμον (οὐ γὰρ ἀληθὴς
ἔστιν ὁδός), τὴν δ' ὥστε πέλειν καὶ ἐτήτυμον εἶναι.
πῶς δ' ἂν ἔπειτ' ἀπόλοιτο ἐόν; πῶς δ' ἄν κε γένοιτο;
εἰ γὰρ ἔγεντ', οὐκ ἔστ', οὐδ' εἴ ποτε μέλλει ἔσεσθαι.
τὼς γένεσις μὲν ἀπέσβεσται καὶ ἄπυστος ὄλεθρος.

This passage, though it presents a continuous argument and is impossible to subdivide, leads Parmenides none the less to more than one conclusion; and each of his affirmations involves a corresponding denial. The selected premise ἔστι, being the only

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347 *One way only is left to be spoken of, that it* is*; and on this way are full many signs that what* is *is uncreated and imperishable, for it is entire, immovable and without end. It* was *not in the past, nor* shall *it be, since it* is *now, all at once, one, continuous; for what creation wilt thou seek for it? how and whence did it grow? Nor shall I allow thee to say or to think, 'from that which is not'; for it is not to be said or thought that it is not. And what need would have driven it on to grow, starting from nothing, at a later time rather than an earlier? Thus it must either completely be or be not. Nor will the force of true belief allow that, beside what is, there could also arise anything from what is not; wherefore Justice looseth not her fetters to allow it to come into being or perish, but holdeth it fast; and the decision on these matters rests here: it* is *or it is not. But it has surely been decided, as it must be, to leave alone the one way as unthinkable and nameless (for it is no true way), and that the other is real and true. How could what* is *thereafter perish? and how could it come into being? For if it came into being, it is not, nor if it is going to be in the future. So coming into being is extinguished and perishing unimaginable.*

true premise, must, Parmenides first argues, be eternally true; there cannot ever have been a time in the past, nor will there ever be a time in the future, when the statement ἔστι is anything but true. It follows, therefore, that past and future are alike meaningless, the only time is a perpetual present time, and Being must of necessity be both uncreated and imperishable. Parmenides actually adds in the course of this argument that Being must also be both ἀτρεμές, 'immovable', and ἕν, συνεχές, 'one, continuous'; but unless each of these epithets is interpreted (not very plausibly, since συνεχές unquestionably refers to space, not time, in **348** l. 25) to mean only that Being exists unalterably in one continuous present, then he is here anticipating—for 'it is all one to him where he begins' (**343**)—conclusions which he does not establish until later in the present fragment.

The next step in the argument, which occupies ll. 6–11, is the demolition of the concept of the void. The cosmogony of the Pythagoreans had made great use of the void: the first unit, once generated, had proceeded forthwith to take in from the surrounding Unlimited, possibly time (which Parmenides has just demolished), and certainly the void (to which he now turns his attention); and the void had from the outset fulfilled its vitally important function of keeping units apart (see pp. 252 f.). It is tempting to suppose that Parmenides, whom there is reason to suspect of being a dissident Pythagorean (cf. p. 265), aims the three questions that these lines contain at the very cosmogony that he had come to reject. At all events the Pythagoreans' answer to the second of these questions (πῇ πόθεν αὐξηθέν;) could only be that their first unit had grown by 'inhaling' the void; and Parmenides' immediate demolition of that concept effectually destroys, therefore, the very basis of their cosmogony. Moreover, even granting that the first unit had indeed so developed, as the Pythagoreans maintained, into the universe as we know it, why should the process have ever begun at one moment rather than another? Being must either exist as a whole or not exist at all: that (as ll. 15–18 repeat) has already been established. Yet the Pythagoreans assert that more and more of Being is constantly coming into existence from the unreal void.

The last point established in this passage before Parmenides rounds it off with a summary is that contained in lines 12–13. Unfortunately this particular sentence is ambiguous. It could

perhaps mean simply that nothing can come from τὸ μὴ ὄν, 'that which does not exist', except Not-Being; but in view of the fact that it follows, in its context, immediately after nine lines that are concerned entirely with τὸ ὄν, 'Being' (in one of which, l. 6, τὸ ὄν is referred to as αὐτό), it seems preferable to follow Cornford (*Plato and Parmenides* 37) and translate: 'Nor will the force of belief suffer to arise out of what is not something over and above it (viz. what is).' In any case, as Cornford points out, this latter sense is unquestionably contained in another brief sentence further on in the same fragment (**352** ll. 36–7).

(b) Reality is indivisible

348 Fr. 8, l. 22, Simplicius *Phys.* 145, 23 (continuing **347**)

οὐδὲ διαιρετόν ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἐστιν ὁμοῖον·
οὐδέ τι τῇ μᾶλλον, τό κεν εἴργοι μιν συνέχεσθαι,
οὐδέ τι χειρότερον, πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεόν ἐστιν ἐόντος.
τῷ ξυνεχὲς πᾶν ἐστιν· ἐὸν γὰρ ἐόντι πελάζει.

With these four lines should be read also the following fragment, the place of which in the poem as a whole is not clear:

349 Fr. 4, Clement *Strom.* v, 15, 5

λεῦσσε δ' ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόῳ παρεόντα βεβαίως·
οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἐὸν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχεσθαι
οὔτε σκιδνάμενον πάντῃ πάντως κατὰ κόσμον
οὔτε συνιστάμενον.

In these two short passages Parmenides reinforces his earlier denial of the void by a fresh argument which appears to be aimed both at Anaximenes and at the Pythagoreans. Anaximenes by his doctrine of condensation and rarefaction (see pp. 145ff.), the Pythagoreans by their view of the void as χωρισμός τις τῶν ἐφεξῆς καὶ διόρισις, 'a kind of separation and definition of things in proximity' (see **315**), had both alike been guilty of assuming the existence of what is not. Being, Parmenides maintains against them, is both indivisible and homogeneous.

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348 *Nor is it divisible, since it is all alike; nor is there more here and less there, which would prevent it from cleaving together, but it is all full of what is. So it is all continuous; for what is clings close to what is.*

349 *Yet look at things which, though far off, are firmly present to thy mind; for thou shalt not cut off what is from clinging to what is, neither scattering itself everywhere in order nor crowding together.*

(*c*) *Reality is motionless, finite, like a sphere*

350 Fr. 8, l. 26, Simplicius *Phys.* 145, 27 (continuing **348**)

αὐτὰρ ἀκίνητον μεγάλων ἐν πείρασι δεσμῶν
ἔστιν ἄναρχον ἄπαυστον, ἐπεὶ γένεσις καὶ ὄλεθρος
τῆλε μάλ' ἐπλάχθησαν, ἀπῶσε δὲ πίστις ἀληθής.
ταὐτόν τ' ἐν ταὐτῷ τε μένον καθ' ἑαυτό τε κεῖται
χοὕτως ἔμπεδον αὖθι μένει· κρατερὴ γὰρ Ἀνάγκη
πείρατος ἐν δεσμοῖσιν ἔχει, τό μιν ἀμφὶς ἐέργει,
οὕνεκεν οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον τὸ ἐὸν θέμις εἶναι·
ἔστι γὰρ οὐκ ἐπιδευές· [μὴ] ἐὸν δ' ἂν παντὸς ἐδεῖτο.

351 Fr. 8, l. 42, Simplicius *Phys.* 146, 15 (after **352**)

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πεῖρας πύματον, τετελεσμένον ἐστὶ
πάντοθεν, εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλίγκιον ὄγκῳ,
μεσσόθεν ἰσοπαλὲς πάντῃ· τὸ γὰρ οὔτε τι μεῖζον
οὔτε τι βαιότερον πελέναι χρεόν ἐστι τῇ ἢ τῇ.
οὔτε γὰρ οὐκ ἐὸν ἔστι, τό κεν παύοι μιν ἱκνεῖσθαι
εἰς ὁμόν, οὔτ' ἐὸν ἔστιν ὅπως εἴη κεν ἐόντος
τῇ μᾶλλον τῇ δ' ἧσσον, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἐστιν ἄσυλον·
οἷ γὰρ πάντοθεν ἶσον, ὁμῶς ἐν πείρασι κύρει.

These two passages are actually separated by eight lines of summary, but by temporarily omitting those eight lines the argument is shown to be so continuous that they are best treated together. Parmenides is of course inevitably repetitive, because, as we saw (**343**), his arguments are so closely linked one with another that each attribute of Being can be deduced from any other. But even allowing for his habitual repetitiveness, we can

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350 *But, motionless within the limits of mighty bonds, it is without beginning or end, since coming into being and perishing have been driven far away, cast out by true belief. Abiding the same in the same place it rests by itself, and so abides firm where it is; for strong Necessity holds it firm within the bonds of the limit that keeps it back on every side, because it is not lawful that what is should be unlimited; for it is not in need—if it were, it would need all.*

351 *But since there is a furthest limit, it is bounded on every side, like the bulk of a well-rounded sphere, from the centre equally balanced in every direction; for it needs must not be somewhat more here or somewhat less there. For neither is there that which is not, which might stop it from meeting its like, nor can what is be more here and less there than what is, since it is all inviolate; for being equal to itself on every side, it rests uniformly within its limits.*

hardly fail to notice, in these sixteen lines, the recurrent emphasis placed on the conception of limit, πεῖρας. Now Limit, as one of the two fundamental Pythagorean principles, stood at the top of the left-hand column in the Table of Opposites (see **289**); and among the concepts listed in that column was one, namely unity, which Parmenides has already accepted as consistent with his premise. Moreover, there is another point in these two passages that Parmenides is evidently concerned to stress: Being—or the One—is ἀκίνητον, 'motionless', ἐν ταὐτῷ μένον, 'resting in the same place', ἔμπεδον, 'stable', and ἰσοπαλές, 'equally poised'. It is in fact, in Pythagorean terminology, ἠρεμοῦν, 'at rest', as opposed to κινούμενον, 'in motion'. It begins to look almost as if Parmenides, having been reared in the Pythagorean school, had come to feel that the fatal flaw in Pythagoreanism was its dualism. At all events he seems so far, while denying the existence of those two manifestations of the Unlimited, time and the void, to be applying to his Being those attributes from the left-hand column of the Table of Opposites that can be apprehended by the sole use of reason as opposed to the senses.

SUMMARY OF THE WAY OF TRUTH

352 Fr. 8, l. 34, Simplicius *Phys.* 146, 7 (continuing **350**)

ταὐτὸν δ' ἔστι νοεῖν τε καὶ οὕνεκεν ἔστι νόημα.
οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐν ᾧ πεφατισμένον ἐστίν,
εὑρήσεις τὸ νοεῖν· οὐδὲν γὰρ ⟨ἢ⟩ ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται
ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐπεὶ τό γε Μοῖρ' ἐπέδησεν
οὖλον ἀκίνητόν τ' ἔμεναι· τῷ πάντ' ὄνομ' ἔσται
ὅσσα βροτοὶ κατέθεντο πεποιθότες εἶναι ἀληθῆ,
γίγνεσθαί τε καὶ ὄλλυσθαι, εἶναί τε καὶ οὐχί,
καὶ τόπον ἀλλάσσειν διά τε χρόα φανὸν ἀμείβειν.

These eight lines, which belong properly between **350** and **351**, give a summary recapitulation of the main steps in the argument

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352 *What can be thought is only the thought that it is.* [The infinitive by itself seldom bears the sense of the infinitive with article—i.e. '*thinking*'; the construction must be the same as in **344** and **345**—that is: *the only thing that exists for thinking is the thought that it is.*] *For you will not find thought without what is, in relation to which it is uttered; for there is not, nor shall be, anything else besides what is, since Fate fettered it to be entire and immovable. Wherefore all these are mere names which mortals laid down believing them to be true—coming into being and perishing, being and not being* [i.e. both at once], *change of place and variation of bright colour.*

of the Way of Truth. Lines 34–6 repeat the conclusion reached at the end of **344**; lines 36–7 confirm lines 12–13 of fragment 8, **347**; lines 37–8 summarize very briefly the content of **350** and **351**; and lines 38–40 revert to lines 19–21 of this same fragment, **347**. It is only in the last clause, διά τε χρόα φανὸν ἀμείβειν, 'and change of bright colour', that we find a new point. Change of colour is presumably specified as being a type of change that does not involve change of place; both locomotion and qualitative change are 'mere names'.

TRANSITION TO WAY OF SEEMING

353 Simplicius *Phys.* 30, 14 μετελθὼν δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν νοητῶν ἐπὶ τὰ αἰσθητὰ ὁ Παρμενίδης, ἤτοι ἀπὸ ἀληθείας, ὡς αὐτός φησιν, ἐπὶ δόξαν, ἐν οἷς λέγει

(Fr. 8, l. 50) ἐν τῷ σοι παύω πιστὸν λόγον ἠδὲ νόημα
ἀμφὶς ἀληθείης· δόξας δ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε βροτείας
μάνθανε κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων,

τῶν γενητῶν ἀρχὰς καὶ αὐτὸς στοιχειώδεις μὲν τὴν πρώτην ἀντίθεσιν ἔθετο, ἣν φῶς καλεῖ καὶ σκότος ⟨ἢ⟩ πῦρ καὶ γῆν ἢ πυκνὸν καὶ ἀραιὸν ἢ ταὐτὸν καὶ ἕτερον, λέγων ἐφεξῆς τοῖς πρότερον παρακειμένοις ἔπεσιν

(Fr. 8, l. 53) μορφὰς γὰρ κατέθεντο δύο γνώμας ὀνομάζειν,
τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεών ἐστιν—ἐν ᾧ πεπλανημένοι εἰσίν—
τἀντία δ' ἐκρίναντο δέμας καὶ σήματ' ἔθεντο
χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, τῇ μὲν φλογὸς αἰθέριον πῦρ,
ἤπιον ὄν, μέγ' [ἀραιὸν] ἐλαφρόν, ἑωυτῷ πάντοσε τωὐτόν,
τῷ δ' ἑτέρῳ μὴ τωὐτόν· ἀτὰρ κἀκεῖνο κατ' αὐτὸ
τἀντία νύκτ' ἀδαῆ, πυκινὸν δέμας ἐμβριθές τε.[1]

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353 *Parmenides effects the transition from the objects of reason to the objects of sense, or, as he himself puts it, from truth to seeming, when he writes: 'Here I end my trustworthy discourse and thought concerning truth; henceforth learn the beliefs of mortal men, listening to the deceitful ordering of my words'; and he then himself makes the elemental principles of created things the primary opposition of light and darkness, as he calls them, or fire and earth, or dense and rare, or sameness and difference; for he says immediately after the lines quoted above: 'For they made up their minds to name two forms, of which they must not name one only—that is where they have gone astray—and distinguished them as opposite in appearance and assigned to them manifestations different one from the other—to one the aitherial flame of fire, gentle and very light, in every direction identical with itself, but not with the other; and that other too is in itself just the opposite, dark night, dense in appear-*

τόν σοι ἐγὼ διάκοσμον ἐοικότα πάντα φατίζω,
ὡς οὐ μή ποτέ τίς σε βροτῶν γνώμη παρελάσσῃ.

[1] This passage of Simplicius actually ends here, at l. 59, but elsewhere (*Phys.* 39, 8) he appends also the next two lines. [ἀραιὸν] secl. Diels.

Parmenides has now, in the Way of Truth, taught us all that reason, unaided by the senses, can deduce about Being. It is like a sphere, single, indivisible and homogeneous, timeless, changeless and, since motion is itself one form of change, motionless as well. It has in fact no perceptible qualities whatever. If Parmenides had taken the left-hand column of the Pythagorean Table of Opposites and selected from it those concepts which could be apprehended by reason alone, the result would be much what his One is; while to the right-hand column, the various manifestations of the Unlimited, he has denied any reality whatever. Such are the consequences of the exercise of reason. Now, however, in passing from the Way of Truth to the Way of Seeming, Parmenides passes, as Simplicius saw, ἀπὸ τῶν νοητῶν ἐπὶ τὰ αἰσθητά, 'from the objects of reason to the objects of sense'; and just as in the Way of Truth the objects of sense have been altogether excluded, so also, as we shall see, the Way of Seeming will exclude altogether the objects of reason. Since all objects of sense are, to Parmenides, 'mere names' without substantial existence, he is obviously compelled to base his survey of them upon the false assumptions which he himself declines to share with mortals; but at the same time his survey does not cover *all* those false assumptions. Besides allowing existence to non-existent phenomena, most men went so far as to confuse them with the objects of reason. Parmenides will not, even in what he knows and avows to be 'a deceitful ordering of words' (l. 52), follow them as far as that in their error.

The significance and purpose of the Way of Seeming has been very variously interpreted. Whereas Zeller for instance, following, as he thought, a suggestion by Theophrastus,[1] regarded it as a review of popular beliefs, Burnet (*EGP* 184–5) concluded that 'in the absence of evidence to the contrary' it should be regarded rather as 'a sketch of contemporary Pythagorean cosmology'. Against any such view there are several strong arguments. The

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ance and heavy. The whole ordering of these I tell thee as it seems likely, that so no thought of mortal men shall ever outstrip thee.'

Way of Seeming, contrary to Burnet's view, bears no discernible trace of the two fundamental Pythagorean doctrines—the opposition of Limit and Unlimited, and the equation, in whatever sense, of things with numbers; nor do the remarks of the ancient commentators indicate that there ever was any trace of these doctrines anywhere in the whole poem. It does, on the other hand, contain at least one doctrine, that of the στεφάναι in **358** and **359**, of which there is no trace in the Pythagorean cosmology, nor indeed anywhere else except possibly in Anaximander (see pp. 135 ff.). Finally, it is surely inconceivable that all the ancient commentators should have regarded the cosmology of the Way of Seeming, as they all, including Theophrastus, almost invariably did, as Parmenides' own invention, if it was in reality nothing but a summary of either popular beliefs or contemporary Pythagoreanism.

[1] **354** Theophrastus *Phys. Op.* fr. 6 *ap.* Alexandrum *Met.* 31, 12 (DK 28 A 7) ...κατὰ δόξαν δὲ τῶν πολλῶν εἰς τὸ γένεσιν ἀποδοῦναι τῶν φαινομένων δύο ποιῶν τὰς ἀρχάς.... Burnet also (*EGP* 182–4), to this extent following Zeller, used this passage to show that in the opinion of Theophrastus Parmenides meant to give the belief of 'the many'. It is, however, open to doubt whether Theophrastus here meant any more than that in the opinion of the many it is the *phenomenal* world that has to be explained. Cf. **355** Aristotle *Met.* A 5, 986 b 31 (DK 28 A 24) ...ἀναγκαζόμενος δ' ἀκολουθεῖν τοῖς φαινομένοις, καὶ τὸ ἓν μὲν κατὰ τὸν λόγον πλείω δὲ κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν ὑπολαμβάνων εἶναι, δύο τὰς αἰτίας καὶ δύο τὰς ἀρχὰς πάλιν τίθησι.... At all events this passage from Aristotle seems to show that he regarded the cosmology of the Way of Seeming as Parmenides' own; and that Theophrastus usually took the same view is evident from **357** below. The real value of these two passages is that they emphasize what was evidently the most important characteristic of the Way of Seeming: *two* constituents (and two only) are named, not one only. Parmenides' predecessors, other than the Pythagoreans and Alcmaeon, had run into difficulties by trying to generate the opposites out of one ἀρχή.

The foregoing interpretation of the Way of Truth will have suggested quite a different interpretation of the Way of Seeming. The essential difference between the objects of reason and the objects of sense is evidently, to Parmenides, just this: that whereas, in the case of the objects of reason, acceptance of one of a pair of

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354 ...*to give an account, in accordance with popular opinion, of the coming into being of sensible things, he makes the first principles two*....

355 ...*but being forced to comply with sensible things, and supposing the existence of that which is one in formula but more than one according to our sensations, he now posits two causes and two first principles*.... (After Ross)

contraries logically involves the rejection of the other, in the case of the objects of sense the acceptance of one involves the acceptance of the other as well. Light, for instance, can only be seen to exist in its contrast with darkness; a heavy body cannot be heavy unless there is a lighter body with which to compare it; and so with all sensible contraries.[1] The fundamental error of which men are guilty is that they have agreed to recognize the existence of these sensible opposites; and this is, of course, the error which Parmenides himself must knowingly perpetrate if he is to give an account of phenomena. Accordingly, even as he perpetrates it he declares it to be an error: 'that', he says (**353**, fr. 8 l. 54), 'is where they have gone astray'. But at least he will follow misguided mortals no further. If he is to introduce these sensible contraries he will not confuse them with intelligible; and so, instead of the primary pair of Pythagorean opposites, Limit and Unlimited (the former of which has been shown in the Way of Truth to be intelligible), he selects as his own primary pair one of their perceptible manifestations, φῶς and σκότος (or, as he himself calls it, νύξ), 'light' and 'darkness' (or 'night').

[1] This consideration seems sufficient to establish Simplicius' interpretation of the clause τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεών ἐστιν, 'two forms, of which it is not right to name one only (i.e. without the other)', as the most convincing. It is true that Cornford's translation, 'of which it is not right to name so much as one' (*Plato and Parmenides* 46), avoids the obvious difficulty of taking μίαν in the sense of ἑτέρην, and may therefore be right. But if we suppose Parmenides to mean that, whereas in the Way of Truth it is right to name one opposite and one only (the other being ἀνώνυμον, **347** l. 17), in the Way of Seeming you must not name one only without also naming the other, then we not only give the sentence an additional point, of which the structure of the whole poem seems to show that Parmenides himself was fully aware, but we also give to the crucial word μίαν the significance which its obvious contrast with δύο seems to suggest.

What Parmenides has in fact done, in passing from the Way of Truth to the Way of Seeming, is to take his own sphere of reality, the One, and fill it, quite illegitimately, with the sensible opposites of light and darkness; and once he has taken that forbidden step, then he can proceed, as had the Pythagoreans with Limit and Unlimited, to broaden the scope of each of these primary opposites by describing their various manifestations.[1] Light is rare, night dense, and so on. Once one pair of sensible opposites has been admitted, then there is no insuperable difficulty in giving an

explanation of phenomena; and if only because it avoids the confusion between reason and sense, Parmenides' own explanation, even though deliberately based on error, is at least such that 'no thought of mortal men shall ever outstrip him' (**353**, fr. 8 l. 61).

[1] Cf. Fr. 9, which according to Simplicius comes μετ' ὀλίγα (i.e. soon after Fr. 8): **356** Simplicius *Phys.* 180, 9

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

THE SENSIBLE OPPOSITES

357 Theophrastus *de sensu* 1 ff. (DK 28 A 46) περὶ δ' αἰσθήσεως αἱ μὲν πολλαὶ καὶ καθόλου δόξαι δύ' εἰσιν· οἱ μὲν γὰρ τῷ ὁμοίῳ ποιοῦσιν, οἱ δὲ τῷ ἐναντίῳ. Παρμενίδης μὲν καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς καὶ Πλάτων τῷ ὁμοίῳ, οἱ δὲ περὶ Ἀναξαγόραν καὶ Ἡράκλειτον τῷ ἐναντίῳ....(3) Παρμενίδης μὲν γὰρ ὅλως οὐδὲν ἀφώρικεν ἀλλὰ μόνον ὅτι δυοῖν ὄντοιν στοιχείοιν κατὰ τὸ ὑπερβάλλον ἐστὶν ἡ γνῶσις. ἐὰν γὰρ ὑπεραίρῃ τὸ θερμὸν ἢ τὸ ψυχρόν, ἄλλην γίνεσθαι τὴν διάνοιαν, βελτίω δὲ καὶ καθαρωτέραν τὴν διὰ τὸ θερμόν· οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ ταύτην δεῖσθαί τινος συμμετρίας·

(Fr. 16) ὡς γὰρ ἕκαστος (φησίν) ἔχει κρᾶσιν μελέων πολυπλάγκτων,
τὼς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παριστᾶται· τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ
ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώποισιν
καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί· τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἐστὶ νόημα.

τὸ γὰρ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ φρονεῖν ὡς ταὐτὸ λέγει· διὸ καὶ τὴν μνήμην καὶ τὴν λήθην ἀπὸ τούτων γίνεσθαι διὰ τῆς κράσεως· ἂν

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356 *And when all things have been named light and night, and things corresponding to their powers have been assigned to each, everything is full of light and of obscure night at once, both equal, since neither has any share of nothingness.*

357 *The majority of general views about sensation are two: some make it of like by like, others of opposite by opposite. Parmenides, Empedocles and Plato say it is of like by like, the followers of Anaxagoras and of Heraclitus of opposite by opposite....Parmenides gave no clear definition at all, but said only that there were two elements and that knowledge depends on the excess of one or the other. Thought varies according to whether the hot or the cold prevails, but that which is due to the hot is better and purer; not but what even that needs a certain balance; for, says he, 'According to the mixture that each man has in his wandering limbs, so thought is forthcoming to mankind; for that which thinks is the same thing, namely the substance of their limbs, in each and all men; for that of which there is more is thought'—for he regards perception and thought as the same. So too memory and forgetfulness arise from these causes, on account of the mixture; but he never*