

comes from Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades I*, and can be found on p. 117 of L. G. Westerink's 1954 edition of the text. References to two major papyrus collections use the standard abbreviations "P.Herc." and "P.Oxy."⁵

Unless otherwise indicated, translations are by Richard D. McKirahan. In the few places where I have modified his translations, "tmpc" appears in the source identification line; where I have translated the entire passage, "tpc" appears. All of the translations in Chapter 9 (Anaxagoras) are mine.

Notes on the texts are scattered throughout this collection. Notes from the translator (McKirahan) are marked as such; all other notes are mine.

Finally, in the translations of quoted passages from ancient authors, I use a system of brackets:

- (. . .) Parenthetical comment in the ancient text
- < . . . > Supplements to the text (either proposed by scholars, or added by the translator for the sake of clarity)
- [. . .] Alternative possible translations, explanatory remarks, or context for the quoted passage

2. THE MILESIANS

Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes were all from the city of Miletus in Ionia (now the western coast of Turkey) and make up what is referred to as the Milesian "school" of philosophy. Tradition reports that Thales was the teacher of Anaximander, who in turn taught Anaximenes. Aristotle begins his account of the history of philosophy as the search for causes and principles (in Metaphysics I) with these three.

2.1. Thales

Thales appears on lists of the seven sages of Greece, a traditional catalog of wise men. The chronicler Apollodorus suggests that he was born around 625 BCE. We should accept this date only with caution, as Apollodorus usually calculated birthdates by assuming that a man was forty years old at the time of his "acme," or greatest achievement. Thus, Apollodorus arrives at the date by assuming that Thales indeed predicted an eclipse in 585 BCE, and was forty at

5. P.Herc. is the Herculaneum Papyri, followed by the classification number of the papyrus. (More information can be found at <http://163.1.169.40/cgi-bin/library?site=localhost&a=p&p=about&c=PHerc&ct+0&1=en&w=utf-8>.) P.Oxy. is the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, followed by the classification number of the papyrus. (More information can be found at <http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/>.)

the time. Plato and Aristotle tell stories about Thales that show that even in ancient times philosophers had a mixed reputation for practicality.

1. (11A9) They say that once when Thales was gazing upwards while doing astronomy, he fell into a well, and that a witty and charming Thracian serving-girl made fun of him for being eager to know the things in the heavens but failing to notice what was just behind him and right by his feet. (Plato, *Theaetetus* 174a)
2. (11A10) The story goes that when they were reproaching him for his poverty, supposing that philosophy is useless, he learned from his astronomy that the olive crop would be large. Then, while it was still winter, he obtained a little money and made deposits on all the olive presses both in Miletus and in Chios, and since no one bid against him, he rented them cheaply. When the time came, suddenly many requested the presses all at once, and he rented them out on whatever terms he wished, and so he made a great deal of money. In this way he proved that philosophers can easily be wealthy if they wish, but this is not what they are interested in. (Aristotle, *Politics* 1.11 1259a9–18)

Thales reportedly studied astronomy (there is evidence for his interest in eclipses, whether or not he had anything to say about the eclipse of 585 BCE), geometry (he was said to have introduced the subject into Greece from Egypt), and engineering (Herodotus reports that he changed the course of the Halys river in order to aid the Lydian army). In his account of the cosmos, Thales reportedly said that the basic stuff was water: This could mean that everything comes from water as the originating source, or that everything really is water in one form or another. Aristotle, the source of the reports, seems unsure about which of these propositions Thales adopted. This shows that even by Aristotle's time, Thales was probably not known by any direct written evidence but only indirectly. According to the tradition that Aristotle follows, Thales also said that the earth rests or floats on water. Aristotle also reports that Thales thought that soul produces motion and that a magnetic lodestone has soul because it causes iron to move.

3. Thales said that the sun suffers eclipse when the moon comes to be in front of it, the day in which the moon produces the eclipse being marked by its concealment. (*P.Oxy.* 53.3710, col. 2, 37–40; not in DK)
4. Causes are spoken of in four ways, of which . . . one is matter. . . . Let us take as associates in our task our predecessors who considered the things that are and philosophized about the truth, for it is clear that they too speak of certain principles and causes, and so it will be useful to our present inquiry to survey them: either we will find some other

kind of cause or we will be more confident about the ones now being discussed. (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.3 983a26–b6; not in DK)

5. (11A12) Of those who first pursued philosophy, the majority believed that the only principles of all things are principles in the form of matter. For that of which all existing things are composed and that from which they originally come to be and that into which they finally perish—the substance persisting but changing in its attributes—this they state is the element and principle of the things that are. . . . For there must be one or more natures from which the rest come to be, while it is preserved. However, they do not all agree about how many or what kinds of such principles there are, but Thales, the founder of this kind of philosophy, stated it to be water. (This is why he declared that the earth rests on water.) He may have gotten this idea from seeing that the nourishment of all things is moist, and that even the hot itself comes to be from this and lives on this (the principle of all things is that from which they come to be)—getting this idea from this consideration and also because the seeds of all things have a moist nature; and water is the principle of the nature of moist things.
(Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.3 983b6–27)
6. (11A14) Some say [the earth] rests on water. This is the oldest account that we have inherited, and they say that Thales of Miletus said this. It rests because it floats like wood or some other such thing (for nothing is by nature such as to rest on air, but on water). He says this just as though the same argument did not apply to the water supporting the earth as to the earth itself!
(Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 2.13 294a28–34; tpc)
7. (11A22) Some say the soul is mixed in with the whole universe, and perhaps this is why Thales supposed that all things are full of gods.
(Aristotle, *On the Soul* 1.5 411a7–8; tpc)
8. (11A22) From what is related about him, it seems that Thales too held that the soul is something productive of motion, if indeed he said that the lodestone has soul, because it moves iron.
(Aristotle, *On the Soul* 1.2 405a19–21; tpc)

2.2. Anaximander

Diogenes Laertius says that Anaximander was sixty-four years old in 547/6BCE, and this dating agrees with the ancient reports that say that Anaximander was a pupil or follower of Thales. He was said to have been the first person to construct a map of the world, to have set up a gnomon at

Sparta, and to have predicted an earthquake. Anaximander makes the originating stuff of the cosmos something indefinite or boundless (apeiron in Greek; later the word can also mean “infinite”). This indefinite stuff is moving, directive of other things, and eternal; thus it qualifies as divine. The apeiron gives rise to something productive of hot and cold, but Anaximander does not say what this “something productive of hot and cold” is. The hot takes the form of fire, the origin of the sun and the other heavenly bodies; while the cold is a dark mist that can be transformed into air and earth. Both air and earth are originally moist, but become drier because of the fire. In the first changes from the originating apeiron, Anaximander postulates substantial opposites (the hot, the cold) that act on one another and that are in turn the generating stuffs for the sensible world. The reciprocal action of the opposites is the subject of B1, the only direct quotation we have from Anaximander (and the extent of the quotation is disputed by scholars). Here he stresses that changes in the world are not capricious, but are ordered; with the mention of justice and retribution he affirms that there are lawlike forces guaranteeing the orderly processes of change between opposites. Anaximander also had theories about the natures of the heavenly bodies and why the earth remains fixed where it is. He made claims about meteorological phenomena, and about the origins of living things, including human beings.

9. (12A9 + 12B1) Of those who declared that the *arkhē*⁶ is one, moving and *apeiron*, Anaximander . . . said that the *apeiron* was the *arkhē* and element of things that are, and he was the first to introduce this name for the *arkhē* [that is, he was the first to call the *arkhē* *apeiron*]. (In addition he said that motion is eternal, in which it occurs that the heavens come to be.) He says that the *arkhē* is neither water nor any of the other things called elements, but some other nature which is *apeiron*, out of which come to be all the heavens and the worlds in them. The things that are perish into the things from which they come to be, according to necessity, for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice in accordance with the ordering of time, as he says in rather poetical language.

(Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 24.13–21)

10. (12A11) He says that the *arkhē* is neither water nor any of the other things called elements, but some nature which is *apeiron*, out of which come to be all the heavens and the worlds in them. This is eternal and ageless and surrounds all the worlds. . . . In addition he said that motion is eternal, in which it occurs that the heavens come to be.

(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 1.6.1–2)

6. The word *arkhē* is left untranslated here. It means “originating point” or “first principle.”

11. (12A15) This [the infinite, *apeiron*] does not have an *arkhē*, but this seems to be the *arkhē* of the rest, and to contain all things and steer all things, as all declare who do not fashion other causes aside from the infinite [the *apeiron*] . . . and this is the divine. For it is deathless and indestructible, as Anaximander and most of the natural philosophers say.
(Aristotle, *Physics* 3.4 203b10–15)

12. (12A10) He declares that what arose from the eternal and is productive of [or, “capable of giving birth to”] hot and cold was separated off at the coming to be of this *kosmos*, and a kind of sphere of flame from this grew around the dark mist about the earth like bark about a tree. When it was broken off and enclosed in certain circles, the sun, moon, and stars came to be.
(Pseudo-Plutarch, *Miscellanies* 2)

13. (12A21) Anaximander says that the sun is equal to the earth, and the circle where it has its vent and on which it is carried is twenty-seven times <the size> of the earth.
(Aëtius 2.21.1)

14. (12A18) Anaximander says that the stars are borne by the circles and spheres on which each one is mounted.
(Aëtius 2.16.5)

15. (12A11) The earth is aloft and is not supported by anything. It stays at rest because its distance from all things is equal. The earth’s shape is curved, round, like a stone column. We walk on one of the surfaces and the other one is set opposite. The stars come to be as a circle of fire separated off from the fire in the *kosmos* and enclosed by dark mist. There are vents, certain tube-like passages at which the stars appear. For this reason, eclipses occur when the vents are blocked. The moon appears sometimes waxing, sometimes waning as the passages are blocked or opened. The circle of the sun is twenty-seven times <that of the earth and> that of the moon <eighteen times>, and the sun is highest, and the circles of the fixed stars are lowest. Winds occur when the finest vapors of dark mist are separated off and collect together and then are set in motion. Rain results from the vapor arising from the earth under the influence of the sun. Lightning occurs whenever wind escapes and splits the clouds apart.
(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 1.6.3–7)

16. (12A23) Anaximander says that these [thunder, lightning, thunderbolts, waterspouts, and hurricanes] all result from wind. For whenever it [wind] is enclosed in a thick cloud and forcibly escapes because it is so fine and light, then the bursting [of the cloud] creates the noise and the splitting creates the flash against the blackness of the cloud.
(Aëtius 3.3.1)

17. (12A26) Some, like Anaximander . . . declare that the earth stays at rest because of equality. For it is no more fitting for what is situated at the center and is equally far from the extremes to move up rather than down or sideways. And it is impossible for it to move in opposite directions at the same time. Therefore, it stays at rest of necessity.
(Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 2.13 295b11–16)
18. (12A30) Anaximander says that the first animals were produced in moisture, enclosed in thorny barks. When their age advanced they came out onto the drier part, their bark broke off, and they lived a different mode of life for a short time.
(Aëtius 5.19.4)
19. (12A10) He also declares that in the beginning humans were born from animals of a different kind, since other animals quickly manage on their own, and humans alone require lengthy nursing. For this reason they would not have survived if they had been like this at the beginning.
(Pseudo-Plutarch, *Opinions* 2)
20. (12A30) Anaximander . . . believed that there arose from heated water and earth either fish or animals very like fish. In these, humans grew and were kept inside as embryos up to puberty. Then finally they burst, and men and women came forth already able to nourish themselves.
(Censorinus, *On the Day of Birth* 4.7)

2.3. Anaximenes

Ancient sources say that Anaximenes was a younger associate or pupil of Anaximander. Like Anaximander he agrees with Thales that there is a single originative stuff, but he disagrees with both Thales and Anaximander about what it is. He calls this basic stuff aēr (usually translated “air,” although aēr is more like a dense mist than what we think of as air, which is ideally transparent). Aēr is indefinite enough to give rise to the other things in the cosmos, but it is not as vague as Anaximander’s apeiron (or indefinite). Anaximander seems to have left it unclear just what it is that comes from the apeiron and then produces the hot and the cold, and Anaximenes could well have argued that the apeiron was simply too indefinite to do the cosmic job Anaximander intended for it. In a major step away from Thales and Anaximander, Anaximenes explicitly includes condensation and rarefaction as the processes that transform aēr and the other stuffs of the cosmos. Like the other Presocratics, Anaximenes gave explanations of all sorts of meteorological and other natural phenomena.

21. (13A5) Anaximenes . . . like Anaximander, declares that the underlying nature is one and unlimited [*apeiron*] but not indeterminate, as Anaximander held, but definite, saying that it is air. It differs in rarity

and density according to the substances <it becomes>. Becoming finer, it comes to be fire; being condensed, it comes to be wind, then cloud; and when still further condensed, it becomes water, then earth, then stones, and the rest come to be from these. He too makes motion eternal and says that change also comes to be through it.

(Theophrastus, quoted by Simplicius,
Commentary on Aristotle's Physics 24.26–25.1)

22. (13B2) Just as our soul, being air, holds us together and controls us, so do breath and air surround the whole *kosmos*.

(Pseudo-Plutarch, *Opinions* 876AB)

23. (13A10) Anaximenes determined that air is a god and that it comes to be and is without measure, infinite, and always in motion.

(Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 1.10.26)

24. (13A7) Anaximenes . . . declared that the principle is unlimited [*apeiron*] air, from which come to be things that are coming to be, things that have come to be, and things that will be, and gods and divine things. The rest come to be out of the products of this. The form of air is the following: when it is most even, it is invisible, but it is revealed by the cold and the hot and the wet, and by its motion. It is always moving, for all the things that undergo change would not change if it were not moving. For when it becomes condensed or finer, it appears different. For when it is dissolved into a finer condition it becomes fire, and on the other hand air being condensed becomes winds. Cloud comes from air through felting,⁷ and water comes to be when this happens to a greater degree. When condensed still more it becomes earth, and when it reaches the absolutely densest stage it becomes stones.

(Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 1.7.1–3)

25. (13B1) Or as Anaximenes of old believed, let us leave neither the cold nor the hot in the category of substance, but <hold them to be> common attributes of matter, which come as the results of its changes. For he declares that the contracted state of matter and the condensed state is cold, whereas what is fine and “loose” (calling it this way with this very word) is hot. As a result he claimed that it is not said unreasonably that a person releases both hot and cold from his mouth. For the breath becomes cold when compressed and condensed by the lips, and when the mouth is relaxed, the escaping breath becomes warm because of rareness.

(Plutarch, *The Principle of Cold* 7 947F)

7. Translator's note: “Felting” is the production of nonwoven fabric by the application of heat, moisture, and pressure, as felt is produced from wool. The term here is extended to describe any other process in which the product is denser than and so has different properties from the ingredients.

26. (13A6) When the air was being felted the earth was the first thing to come into being, and it is very flat. This is why it rides upon the air, as is reasonable. (Pseudo-Plutarch, *Miscellanies* 3)
27. (13A20) Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, and Democritus say that its flatness is the cause of its staying at rest. For it does not cut the air below but covers it like a lid, as bodies with flatness apparently do; they are difficult for winds to move because of their resistance. They say that the earth does this same thing with respect to the air beneath because of its flatness. And the air, lacking sufficient room to move aside, stays at rest in a mass because of the air beneath. (Aristotle, *On the Heavens* 2.13 294b13–20)
28. (13A7) Likewise the sun and moon and all the other heavenly bodies, which are fiery, ride upon the air on account of their flatness. The stars came into being from the earth because moisture rises up out of it. When the moisture becomes fine, fire comes to be and the stars are formed of fire rising aloft. There are also earthen bodies in the region of the stars carried around together with them. He says that the stars do not move under the earth as others have supposed, but around it, as a felt cap turns around our head. The sun is hidden not because it is under the earth but because it is covered by the higher parts of the earth and on account of the greater distance it comes to be from us. Because of their distance the stars do not give heat. (Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 1.7.4-6)
29. (13A17) Anaximenes stated that clouds occur when the air is further thickened. When it is condensed still more, rain is squeezed out. Hail occurs when the falling water freezes, and snow when some wind is caught up in the moisture. (Aëtius 3.4.1)
30. (13A21) Anaximenes declares that when the earth is being drenched and dried out it bursts, and earthquakes result from these hills breaking off and collapsing. This is why earthquakes occur in droughts and also in heavy rains. For in the droughts, as was said, the earth is broken while being dried out, and when it becomes excessively wet from the waters, it falls apart. (Aristotle, *Meteorology* 2.7 365b6–12)

112. (B14) Nightwalkers, Magi, Bacchoi, Lenai, and the initiated. [These people Heraclitus threatens with what happens after death. . . .] For the secret rites practiced among humans are celebrated in an unholy manner. (Clement, *Protreptic* 22)
113. (B92) The Sibyl with raving mouth uttering mirthless [and unadorned and unperfumed phrases, reaches a thousand years in her voice on account of the god]. (Plutarch, *On the Oracles at Delphi* 397A)

6. PARMENIDES OF ELEA

The most reliable reports on the life of Parmenides of Elea (an Italian town today called Velia near what is now Naples) imply that he was born around 515 BCE. Diogenes Laertius says that he was a pupil of Xenophanes, "but did not follow him" (i.e., he did not adopt Xenophanes' views). Diogenes Laertius also says that Parmenides was, at some time in his life associated with the Pythagoreans. There is no way of knowing whether or not these reports are true, but it seems clear that Parmenides is concerned with answering questions about knowledge that are generated by Xenophanes' views. (It is less clear that, as sometimes claimed, Xenophanes' account of his greatest god [see Chapter 4 fragment 13] influenced Parmenides' account of what-is.) It would not be surprising that Parmenides should know about Pythagoreanism, as Elea is in the southern part of Italy, which was home to the Pythagorean movement.

Like Xenophanes, Parmenides wrote in verse: His poem is in Homeric hexameters, and there are many Homeric images, especially from the Odyssey. In the poem Parmenides presents a young man (kouros, in Greek), who is taken in a chariot to meet a goddess. He is told by her that he will learn "all things"; moreover, while the goddess says that what the kouros is told is true, she stresses that he himself must test and assess the arguments she gives. Parmenides is one of the most important and most controversial figures among the early Greek thinkers, and there is much disagreement among scholars about the details of his views. The poem begins with a long introduction (The Proem, B1); this is followed by a section traditionally called Truth (B2–B8.50). This is followed by the so-called Doxa section ("beliefs" or "opinions")—a cosmology that, the goddess warns, is in some way deceptive. In Truth, Parmenides argues that genuine thought and knowledge can only be about what genuinely is (what-is), for what-is-not is literally unsayable and unthinkable. Parmenides warns against what he calls the "beliefs of mortals," based entirely on sense-experience; in these, the goddess says, "there is no true trust." Rather, one must judge by understanding (the capacity to reason) what follows from the basic claim that what-is must be, and what-is-not cannot be. The poem proceeds (in the crucial fragment B8) to explore the features of

genuine being: What-is must be whole, complete, unchanging, and one. It can neither come to be nor pass away, nor undergo any qualitative change. Only what is in this way can be grasped by thought and genuinely known.

Given these arguments, the accounts of the way things are given by Parmenides' predecessors cannot be acceptable. The earlier views required fundamental changes in their theoretically basic entities, or relied on the reality of opposites and their unity; Parmenides argues that all these presuppose the reality of what-is-not, and so cannot succeed. For modern scholars, one particularly intriguing aspect of Parmenides' thought is that, having apparently rejected the world of sensory experience as unreal, the goddess then goes on, in the Doxa, to give a cosmological account of her own. Is this meant to be a parody of other views? Is it the best that can be said for the world that appears to human senses? Is it a lesson for the hearer, to test whether any cosmology could ever be acceptable on Parmenidean grounds? There is little agreement among Parmenides' readers on this. While Parmenides clearly shares with Xenophanes and Heraclitus interests in metaphysical and epistemological questions, Parmenides is the first to see the importance of metatheoretical questions about philosophical theories themselves, and to provide comprehensive arguments for his claims. These arguments are powerful, and Parmenides' views about knowledge, being, and change were a serious theoretical challenge, not only to later Presocratic thinkers, but also to Plato and Aristotle.

1. (28B1) The mares which carry me as far as my spirit ever
aspired
were escorting me, when they brought me and proceeded
along the renowned route
of the goddess, which brings a knowing mortal to all cities
one by one.
On this route I was being brought, on it wise mares were
bringing me,
straining the chariot, and maidens were guiding the way. 5
The axle in the center of the wheel was shrilling forth the
bright sound of a musical pipe,
ablaze, for it was being driven forward by two rounded
wheels at either end, as the daughters of the Sun
were hastening to escort <me> after leaving the house of
Night
for the light, having pushed back the veils from their heads
with their hands. 10
There are the gates of the roads of Night and Day,
and a lintel and a stone threshold contain them.
High in the sky they are filled by huge doors
of which avenging Justice holds the keys that fit them.

The maidens beguiled her with soft words 15
 and skillfully persuaded her to push back the bar for them
 quickly from the gates. They made
 a gaping gap of the doors when they opened them,
 swinging in turn in their sockets the bronze posts
 fastened with bolts and rivets. There, straight through them
 then, 20
 the maidens held the chariot and horses on the broad road.
 And the goddess received me kindly, took my
 right hand in hers, and addressed me with these words:
 Young man, accompanied by immortal charioteers,
 who reach my house by the horses which bring you, 25
 welcome—since it was not an evil destiny that sent you
 forth to travel
 this route (for indeed it is far from the beaten path of
 humans),
 but Right and Justice. It is right that you learn all things—
 both the unshaken heart of well-persuasive Truth
 and the beliefs of mortals, in which there is no true trust. 30
 But nevertheless you will learn these too—how it were
 right that the things that seem
 be reliably, being indeed, the whole of things.
 (lines 1–30: Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians*
 7.111–14; lines 28–32: Simplicius, *Commentary on*
Aristotle's On the Heavens, 557.25–558.2; tmpc)

2. (B2) But come now, I will tell you—and you, when you
 have heard the story, bring it safely away—
 which are the only routes of inquiry that are for thinking:
 the one, that is and that it is not possible for it not to be,
 is the path of Persuasion (for it attends upon Truth),
 the other, that it is not and that it is right that it not be, 5
 this indeed I declare to you to be a path entirely unable to
 be investigated:
 For neither can you know what is not (for it is not to be
 accomplished)
 nor can you declare it.
 (Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* 1.345.18; lines 3–8:
 Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 116.28; tmpc)

3. (B3) . . . for the same thing is for thinking and for being.²⁵
 (Clement, *Miscellanies* 6.23; Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.1.8)

25. Translator's note: Alternative translations: "for the same thing both can be thought of and can be"; "for thinking and being are the same."

4. (B4) But gaze upon things which although absent are
securely present to the mind.
For you will not cut off what-is from clinging to what-is,
neither being scattered everywhere in every way in order
nor being brought together. (Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.15)

5. (B5) . . . For me, it is indifferent
from where I am to begin: for that is where I will arrive
back again.
(Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* 1.708)

6. (B6) It is right both to say and to think that it is what-is: for
it can be,
but nothing is not: these things I bid you to ponder.
For I < ²⁶ > you from this first route of inquiry,
and then from that, on which mortals, knowing nothing,
wander, two-headed: for helplessness in their
breasts steers their wandering mind. They are borne along
deaf and blind alike, dazed, hordes without judgment
for whom to be and not to be are thought to be the same
and not the same, and the path of all is backward-turning.
(Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*
86.27–28; 117.4–13; tmpc) 5

7. (B7) For in no way may this prevail, that things that are not
are;
but you, hold your thought back from this route of inquiry
and do not let habit, rich in experience, compel you along
this route
to direct an aimless eye and an echoing ear
and tongue, but judge by reasoning (*logos*) the much-
contested
examination spoken by me. 5
(lines 1–2: Plato, *Sophist* 242a; lines 2–6: Sextus Empiricus,
Against the Mathematicians 7.114; tmpc)

8. (B8) . . . Just one story of a route
is still left: that it is. On this [route] there are signs
very many, that what-is is ungenerated and imperishable,

26. There is a lacuna (gap) in all the manuscripts at this point. Diels supplied *eirgō*, so the line would be translated "I hold you back." (This would imply that there are three routes.) Two recent suggestions from scholars supply forms of the verb *archein*, "to begin," so the goddess says either "I begin for you," or "You will begin." (This implies two routes.)

a whole of a single kind, unshaken, and complete.
 Nor was it ever, nor will it be, since it is now, all together 5
 one, holding together: For what birth will you seek out for it?
 How and from what did it grow? From what-is-not I will allow
 you neither to say nor to think: For it is not to be said or
 thought
 that it is not. What need would have roused it,
 later or earlier, having begun from nothing, to grow? 10
 In this way it is right either fully to be or not.
 Nor will the force of true conviction ever permit anything to
 come to be
 beside it from what-is-not. For this reason neither coming to
 be
 nor perishing did Justice allow, loosening her shackles,
 but she [Justice] holds it fast. And the decision about these 15
 things is in this:
 is or is not; and it has been decided, as is necessary,
 to leave the one [route] unthought of and unnamed (for it is
 not a true
 route), so that the other [route] is and is genuine.
 But how can what-is be hereafter? How can it come to be?
 For if it came to be, it is not, not even if it is sometime going to 20
 be.
 Thus coming-to-be has been extinguished and perishing
 cannot be investigated.
 Nor is it divisible, since it is all alike,
 and not at all more in any way, which would keep it from
 holding together,
 or at all less, but it is all full of what-is.
 Therefore it is all holding together; for what-is draws near to 25
 what-is.
 But unchanging in the limits of great bonds
 it is without starting or ceasing, since coming-to-be and
 perishing
 have wandered very far away; and true trust drove them away.
 Remaining the same and in the same and by itself it lies
 and so remains there fixed; for mighty Necessity 30
 holds it in bonds of a limit which holds it in on all sides.
 For this reason it is right for what-is to be not incomplete;
 for it is not lacking; otherwise, what-is would be in want of
 everything.
 What is for thinking is the same as that on account of which
 there is thought.

For not without what-is, on which it depends, having been
solemnly pronounced, 35
will you find thinking; for nothing else either is or will be
except what-is, since precisely this is what Fate shackled
to be whole and changeless. Therefore it has been named all
things
that mortals, persuaded that they are true, have posited
both to come to be and to perish, to be and not, 40
and to change place and alter bright color.
But since the limit is ultimate, it [namely, what-is] is complete
from all directions like the bulk of a ball well-rounded from all
sides
equally matched in every way from the middle; for it is right
for it to be not in any way greater or lesser than in another. 45
For neither is there what-is-not—which would stop it from
reaching
the same—nor is there any way in which what-is would be
more than what-is in one way
and in another way less, since it is all inviolable;
for equal to itself from all directions, it meets uniformly with
its limits.
At this point, I end for you my reliable account and thought 50
about truth. From here on, learn mortal opinions,
listening to the deceitful order of my words.
For they established two forms to name in their judgments,²⁷
of which it is not right to name one—in this they have gone
astray—
and they distinguished things opposite in body, and
established signs 55
apart from one another—for one, the aetherial fire of flame,
mild, very light, the same as itself in every direction,
but not the same as the other; but that other one, in itself
is opposite—dark night, a dense and heavy body.
I declare to you all the ordering as it appears, 60
so that no mortal judgment may ever overtake you.

(Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 145.1–146.25
[lines 1–52]; 39.1–9 [lines 50–61]; tmpc)

9. (B9) But since all things have been named light and night
and the things which accord with their powers have been
assigned to these things and those,

27. Translator's note: Other manuscripts give a different form of the word rendered "judgment" that requires another translation: "established judgments" (i.e., decided).

all is full of light and obscure night together,
 of both equally, since neither has any share of nothing.
 (Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 180.9–12)

10. (B10) You shall know the nature of the Aithēr and all the
 signs in the Aithēr
 and the destructive deeds of the shining sun's pure
 torch and whence they came to be,
 and you shall learn the wandering deeds of the round-faced
 moon
 and its nature, and you shall know also the surrounding
 heaven,
 from what it grew and how Necessity led and shackled it
 to hold the limits of the stars.

5

(Clement, *Miscellanies* 5.14; 138.1)

11. (B11) . . . how earth and sun and moon
 and the Aithēr that is common to all and the Milky Way
 and
 furthest Olympus and the hot force of the stars surged forth
 to come to be.

(Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Heavens*
 559.22–25)

12. (B12) For the narrower <wreaths> were filled with unmixed
 fire,
 the ones next to them with night, but a due amount of fire
 is inserted among it,
 and in the middle of these is the goddess who governs all
 things.
 For she rules over hateful birth and union of all things,
 sending the female to unite with male and in opposite fashion,
 male to female.

5

(Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*
 39.14–16 [lines 1–3], 31.13–17 [lines 2–6])

13. (B13) First of all gods she contrived Love.
 (Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 39.18)

14. (B14) Night-shining foreign light wandering around earth.
 (Plutarch, *Against Colotes* 1116A)

15. (B15) Always looking toward the rays of the sun.
 (Plutarch, *On the Face in the Moon* 929A)

16. (B16) As on each occasion there is a mixture of the much-wandering limbs,
so is mind present to humans; for the same thing
is what the nature of the limbs thinks in men,
both in all and in each; for the more is thought.
(Theophrastus, *On the Senses* 3; tpc)
17. (B17) [That the male is conceived in the right part of the uterus has been said by others of the ancients. For Parmenides says:]
<The goddess brought> boys <into being> on the right
<side of the uterus>, girls on the left.
(Galen, *Commentary on Book VI of Hippocrates' Epidemics* II 46)
18. (B18) As soon as woman and man mingle the seeds of love
<that come from> their veins, a formative power fashions
well-constructed bodies
from their two differing bloods, if it maintains a balance.
For if when the seed is mingled the powers clash
and do not create a single <power> in the body resulting
from the mixture,
with double seed they will dreadfully disturb the nascent
sex <of the child>.
(Caelius Aurelianus, *On Chronic Diseases* VI.9)
19. (B19) In this way, according to opinion (*doxa*), these things
have grown and now are
and afterwards after growing up will come to an end.
And upon them humans have established a name to mark
each one.
(Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle's On the Heavens* 558.9–11)

7. ZENO OF ELEA

Almost everything we think we know about the life of Zeno of Elea comes from Plato's dialogue Parmenides. According to Plato, Zeno was about twenty-five years younger than Parmenides and was reported to have been his lover as well as his philosophical associate. If Plato's claims are accepted, Zeno was born around 490 BCE, and he and Parmenides visited Athens in about 450 when Socrates was a young man. (It is quite unlikely that the conversation Plato reports took place, but the chronological information from Plato may be based

8. EMPEDOCLES OF ACRAGAS

Born in Acragas, in Sicily, around 492 BCE, Empedocles belongs to the generation of Presocratics who come after Parmenides. He is known to have visited the southern Italian mainland, and while his work shows his familiarity with Parmenides, there are also signs of the influence of Pythagoreanism, the other great southern Italian philosophical movement. At home in Acragas, he seems to have been an active politician, supporting democracy against oligarchy, even though his own aristocratic family connections might have made that support unexpected. Empedocles was a philosopher, a medical man, and a truly flamboyant figure. According to ancient reports, he dressed ostentatiously (there are stories of rich purple robes, a golden diadem, and bronze sandals), he claimed remarkable powers for himself, and in fragment B112 (no. 1 below) he says of himself, "I go about among you, an immortal god, no longer mortal, / honored among all, as it seems, / wreathed with headbands and blooming garlands." There are many stories of his fantastic activities: reportedly a woman with no pulse who had stopped breathing was kept alive by him for a month; he diverted two streams in the city of Selinus (on the south coast of Sicily) in order to rid the city of a plague (and was said to have been honored as a god as a result). Empedocles was exiled from his home and was said to have died in the Peloponnese, although, given his character, it is not surprising that more exciting tales were told about his death. Diogenes Laertius reports that Empedocles, desiring to demonstrate that he was indeed a god, leapt into the crater of Mount Aetna.

*Although these stories suggest a flashy and eccentric figure, we should not lose sight of the fact that Empedocles constructed a serious and complicated theory of the cosmos and the place of human beings in it. Like Parmenides, he wrote in verse; his subjects included both natural philosophy (physics and the development of the cosmos) and inquiry into how human beings ought to live (ethical and religious topics). For a long time scholars debated how, if at all, these two main areas of interest were related. New study, and the discovery of some new texts, now show without a doubt that Empedocles regarded these questions as connected, and that the material from the two was thoroughly integrated. There remains the question of how many different works Empedocles composed; traditionally there have been thought to be at least two separate poems, usually called *Physics* and *Purifications*. Although we now know that the physical and purificatory material were not viewed by Empedocles as entirely distinct, the question of how many poems Empedocles wrote remains open.*

Empedocles claimed that the numerous basic realities of the cosmos are entities with the features of basic reality for which Parmenides had argued. Although these basic entities are eternally real and unchanging in their natures, their mixture and separation cause the world of the senses.

Empedocles says that there are six such basic things in the cosmos, each a genuine being in the Parmenidean sense: the roots (as Empedocles refers to them) Earth, Water, Air, and Fire (later called “elements” by Aristotle), and two forces, Love and Strife. The roots are mixed and separated (by Love and Strife) to produce the world that we sense and are a part of; this mixture and separation take the place of coming-to-be and passing-away, since the ingredients remain all through the changes. In selections 87 (B96) and 88 (B98) Empedocles provides “recipes” for such phenomenal things as bone and blood. At the same time, under the waxing and waning of the comparative strengths of the forces of Love and Strife the cosmos undergoes cycles from complete mixture of the roots to their complete separation: how many cycles there are, and the events within those cycles are subjects of controversy among commentators. Within the cycles, living things come to be and pass away; Empedocles’ system includes daimones (singular, daimōn) which are divinities of some sort. These daimones undergo many lives, apparently because of some transgression. Although they, like the gods, are called “long-lived” by Empedocles, they are not immortal, for they, like the roots of which they are made, are all absorbed into the complete mixture of the roots at the height of Love’s power. Only the roots and Love and Strife are genuinely immortal, subject neither to coming-to-be or passing-away. The destiny of the daimones is connected with the sorts of lives they lead, and it is in the nature, behavior, and fates of the daimones that Empedocles’ natural and religious views come together.

Note on the text and the order of the fragments: In the 1990s scholars discovered that previously unexamined papyrus fragments contained some seventy-four lines of poetry (in varying states of completeness). Because the papyrus contained previously known lines as well as new, previously unknown material, the editors were able to identify the author as Empedocles. The Strasbourg Papyrus (so named because it has been in the collections of the Strasbourg library since the early part of the twentieth century), reconstructed and translated, provided important new material for Empedocles studies, and that material is included here. The ordering of the fragments of Empedocles is controversial; scholars have strong views and serious disagreements about the proper order. Here, the order is that of the translator, Richard McKirahan.³⁰

1. (31B112) Friends who dwell in the great city on the yellow
Acragas
on the heights of the citadel, you whose care is good deeds,
respectful havens for strangers, untouched by evil,

30. There are a few exceptions and omissions in the texts given here. For a discussion of McKirahan’s ordering principles, see his *Philosophy Before Socrates*, 2nd edition, p. 230 n. 1.