THE DECEPTIVE WORDS

OF PARMENIDES' "DOXA"

By

Alexander P. D. Mourelatos

It has long been noticed that the two parts of Parmenides' poem are connected both in contrast and by similarity. The contrast is clear: In the first part a monism, a tenseless a-historical account, a conception resulting from a radical *krisis* between "to be" and "not to be"; in the second part a dualism, a cosmogony, a doctrine of *krasis*, "mixture." But the similarities are also clear: The language of explanation and proof is heard in both parts; *Anakē*, "Constraint," has a role in both parts; there is a *krisis*, "decision, separation," in the "Doxa" as well; and there is enough resemblance between each of the two contraries and the *eon*, "what-is," to warrant the view that Parmenides' contraries anticipate the elements of the later Pre-Socratics; the language associated with Light and its cognate forms appears to show a certain affinity for *eon* or *alētheia*. The studies by Reinhardt,[1] Schwabl,[2] Deichgräber,[3] and more recently Mansfeld,[4] give a rich and cumulative record of these points of similarity and contrast. Following their lead, Guthrie has rightly emphasized the importance of this double connec-

----

[1] Karl Reinhardt, *Parminedes und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* (Bonn, 1916; repr. Frankfurt a. M., 1959) ch. 1.

[2] Hans Schwabl, "Sein und Doxa bei Parmenides," *Wiener Studien*, 70 (1957), 278-89; repr. w. revisions in Hans-Georg Gadamer, ed., *Um die Begriffswelt der Vorsokratiker*, Wege der Forschung, 9 (Darmstadt, 1968), pp. 391-422.

[3] Karl Deichgräber, *Parmenides' Auffahrt zur Göttin des Rechts: Untersuchungen zum Prooimion seines Lehrgedichts*, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz: Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Jahrgang 1958, No. II (Wiesbaden, 1959), 629-724.

[4] Jaap Mansfeld, *Die Offenbarung des Parmenides und die menschliche Welt* (Assen, 1964), ch. 3.

tion for an interpretation of "Doxa."[5] To this fund of observations on the double relationship between the two parts I can make only minor additions. My aim in this study will be to show that two related concepts, drawn from the field of literary criticism, can serve to intpret faithfully both the facts of contrast and the facts of similarity. It will then appear that what is reflected in scholarly literature as controversy is actually a tension built into the argument and language of "Doxa," and that this tension is intrinsic to the philosphical message of this part of Parmenides' poem.

I have in mind the twin concepts of ambiguity and irony. It is actually surprising, considering that the goddess is impersonating a spokesman for mortal *Doxai,* "opinions," and warns that her words are "deceptive," that these important analytical tools of the literary critic have been neglected in discussions of the second part of the poem.[6] Under "ambiguity" we should be prepared to allow any of the several types distingushed by modern literary critics,[7] although, as one would expect, only a smaller number

---

[5] W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. II : *The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 71, 73. Cf. W. J. Verdenius, "Der Logosbegriff bei Heraklit und Parmenides, II," *Phronesis*, 12 (1967), 99-117. Leonardo Tarán, on the other hand, makes very little of this. He finds in the "Doxa no more than a development of the consequences of "the minimal mistake of positing two things as real": See *Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays* (Princeton, 1965), p. 231, cf. pp. 225-30.

[6] I note, however, that Charles H. Kahn has remarked: "The ambiguity of Parmenides' style is intentional" (*Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosomlogy* [New York, 1960], p. 227).

[7] See William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 3d ed. (New York, 1955), pp. v-vi; also William Bedell Stanford,

can be illustrated in the rhetorical and poetic effects of the "Doxa." I will not pause over questions of classification here; the type will become clear in the analysis of individual passages. For "irony," consider Fowler's definition:

> Irony is a form of utterance that postulates a double audience, consisting of one party that hearing shall hear and shall not understand, and another party that, when more is meant than meets the ear, is aware both of that more and of the outsiders' incomprehension.[8]

The terms of this definition fit closely the situation in the "Doxa," where the goddess is speaking in the language appropriate to the audience of uncomprehending mortals (cf. B6.4 "mortals, who know nothing"), while addressing herself to the privileged Kouros, who has already heard the *elenchos*, "challenge," of B6-7 and the deductions of B8, and must, accordingly, be regarded as "a man who knows" (B1.3).[9] The ambiguity (cf. B6.5 "two-headed") which is the crucial fault in human *doxai* becomes transformed into dramatic irony on the lips of the goddess. But to forestall any doubts as to the propriety of these conceptual tools in a study of Parmenides, let me first cite a case in point.

Undoubtedly the most successful line of poetry in Parmenides, and possibly, to quote Jean Beaufret, "one of the most beautiful lines of poetry in the Greek language" [10] is the description of the moon in B14:

νυκτιφαὲς περὶ γαῖαν ἀλώμενον ἀλλότριον φῶς,

Ambiguity in Greek Literature: Studies in Theory and Practice (Oxford, 1939), chs. 3, 4, and pp. 91-96.

[8] H. W. Fowler, *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, 2d ed. rv. E. Gowers (Oxford, 1965), s.v. "irony."

[9] Cf. Kahn, *Anaximander*, p. 227.

[10] *Le Poéme de Parménide* (Paris, 1955), p. 8.

> Shining in the night, wandering round about the
> earth, a foreign light.

The line involves a number of subtleties, both semantic
and acoustic, but the ambiguity of the final phrase is of
primary interest. Parmenides wants to tell us that there is
some kind of unreality, inauthenticity, or falehood about
the mood. He prepares us by characterizing the moon by
an adjective that combines the predicates of darkness and
light. This mild oxymoron is then reinforced by words
and sound-contrasts that underline the involvement of the
moon in relationships of contrariety. The strongest con-
trast is between the two nouns of each half: γαῖαν, "earth,"
against φῶς, "light." [11] And, of course, the word ἀλώμενον,
"wandering," is a signal of falsehood all by itself if one
remembers the full connotation of "wandering" for Par-
menides. But the final expression of this equivocal status
of the moon is by an equivocal phrase. The combination
ἀλλότριον φῶς, "a light not one's own," is instantly recog-
nizable as an imitation of the Homeric formula ἀλλότριος
φώς, "an alien man, a stranger" (φῶς, "light," and φώς,
"man," are two entirely different words, with no etymo-
logical connection). By this extremely improbable pun
Parmenides manages to say simultaneously: (a) "the moon
is a light which is not its own"; (b) "the Face-in-the-moon
(cf. B10.4 *kyklōpos*, "round-eyed" or "round-faced" but
also Cyclops, the mythological monster[12]) is a wandering

---

[11] But note also: the immobility of γαῖαν against the va-
grancy in ἀλώμενον, "wandering"; the "down" of γαῖαν
against the connotation of "above" in φῶς and in περί, "all
over"; the hard consonants *kt*, *p*, *g*, of the first half, against
the soft *l*, *m*, *n*, *tr*, together with no less than five soothing
o's (three of them long) in the second half; the pitch of the
two graves in the first half against the pitch of the acutes
in the second.

[12] Cf. Plutarch *Moralia* 944b "the so-called face [of the

stranger; (c) "the Face-in-the-Moon is not himself."

As poetry the line is both delightful and haunting;[13] as a device for stating the astronomical thesis, "the moon shines by reflection," it is surely a tour de force. At any rate, the line illustrates an effective use of ambiguity, precisely in the sense that has interested modern literary critics.

The Goddess and Her Double Audience

Let me now turn to the question of the structure of ambiguity and irony in the text of Parmenides' "Doxa." The *elenchos*, "the challenge," that the goddess issued to mortal men in B6 and B7 is that they do not realize that their positive terms could be shown to make reference to unqualified negation. Her argument in B8 was designed to reveal this discrepancy between surface grammar and depth grammar.[14] This confrontation between intention and performance continues to some extent in the "Doxa," where many of the key terms appear to have been chosen so as to afford maximum contrast with "Truth." But, more typically, we find the reverse effect—not unmasking, but concealment. Everything is dessed up with a positive veneer, and this is what comes through to us as a similarity between the two parts. As long as we think of this as the goddess' own work, it is irony in the sense of dissemblance. But, of course, it is also the mortals who are speaking through her, and this reveals the tension and conflict

---

moon] . . . has a grim and horrible aspect" (tr. Harold Cherniss; see his note *c*, ad loc., in the Loeb edition).

[13] A freer but poetically more sensitive translation will bring out something of the quality of the Greek: "Astray over earth, bright in darkness, its light also a wandering foreigner" (I am indebted for this tranlation to George Oppen.

[14] See *The Route,* p. 92 and chs. 4-5.

in their collective mind. For they cannot help feeling the presence of the *eon*, "what-is": as a goal, as an intention, as an implicit commitment.[15] Yet the terms they use are ambiguous in every case. If pressed they turn back on themselves (cf. B6.9 *palintropos*): the *krisis*, "separation," turns out to be a *krasis*, "mixture, confusion," the *kosmos* a disorder—and so on.

Let me begin with an analysis of the warning statement at the transition from "Truth" to "Doxa":

> . . . listening to the deceptive (*apatēlon*) *kosmos* (order, form) of my words. (B8.52)

"Doxa resembles "Truth," hence the deceptiveness. This is undoubtedly true, and the goddess indirectly repeats the warning in the closing line of B8:

> so that no mortal opinion may outstrip you (= may outwit you). (B8.61)

But the phrase "deceptive *kosmos*" may imply more than deceptive versimilitude. The very combination of words conceals the tension of contrary ideas: To speak *kata kosmon* is to speak "truly, properly, and with due sense of relevance." Implicit in this tension between *kosmos*, "order," and *apatē*, "deception," is the warning, not merely that *doxai* are deceptive but further that the *arrangement* or the context in which the goddess' words appear may assign to them multiple or conflicting meanings.

Here we should remind ourselves of Hesiod's *etymoisin homoia*, "truth-resembling words" (*Th.* 27). The dissemblance may or may not involve equivocation in that context; but elsewhere Hesiod shows that the concept of equivocation is not beyond his ken:

> *Νείκεά τε Ψεύδεά τε Λόγους τ' Ἀμφιλλογίας τε,*

---

[15] Ibid., ch. 7.

Quarrels, and Lies, and Tales, and Double Talk. (*Th.* 229)[16]

Could it not be that the "deception," in the second part of Parmenides' poem is a case of *amphilogia*, "double-talk"?

Amphilogy as understood by Hesiod in this passage (or as practice by Odysseus at the expense of Polyphemus, the Cyclops, in the "Noman"/"no man" episode of Odyssey IX) is deliberate and malicious. The mortals of Parmenides' poem practice amphilogy without knowing it, without malice, and at their own expense. And so when the goddess (who has seen through the amphilogy) becomes their spkesman, the impersonation takes on a dimension of irony. We can be sure that she will take every opportunity to play up the amphilogy in her advocacy of mortal *doxai*. She will, of course, stop short of explaining the amphilogy or correcting it because she has already done this in the deductions of B8. Again, insofar as we think of this as a stance by the goddess herself, it is irony in the classical sense of make-believe and sarcasm. But if we think of her words as something that mortals actually say, or might say, or subscribe to, this takes on the dimension of dramatic or Sophoclean irony. The author (Parmenides or the

---

[16] For the text see M.L. West, *Hesiod:* Theogony*: Edited with Prolegomena and Commentary* (Oxford, 1966), ad loc. The sense "double-talk" is guaranteed by the decrescendo effect: Ἀμφιλλογίαι must be less drastic a form of hostility than Lies and Tales, which in turn are less drastic than an open Quarrel. The whole sequence is "Battles, and Clashes, and Murders, and Manslaughter, and Quarrels, and Lies, and Tales, and Double-Talk" (*Th.* 228-29). Cf. Stanford, *Ambiguity*, p. 116; and Clémence Ramnoux, *La Nuit et les enfants de la Nuit dans la tradition grecque* (Paris, 1959), pp. 72, 137, 171. Most translators give "Disputes" for Ἀμφιλλογίαι, which destroys the decrescendo and is simply redundant after Νεῖκος.

goddess) puts in the mouth of his heroes (mortals) words that have a sense contrary to, or quite other than, the sense intended or understood by the heroes themselves. And, to use the word "irony" in a third (more vague or colloquial) sense, here is the irony of the situation: Mortals practice amphilogy innocently, and thereby fall into error; the goddess practices amphilogy with full knowledge, and thereby reveals the truth.

Let me now resume using, instead of "amphilogy," the more familiar terms "equivocation" and "ambiguity." There is ambiguity in the goddess' general statement at the conclusion of B8:

> This whole *eoikōs diakosmos* I declare to you. (8.60)

The noun *diakosmos* can be understood as "arrangement," "framework," "world-order." But there is also a suggestion of an activity in the word—not an established *kosmos* but a *diakosmos*, an "order*ing*," a processs in time, a cosmogony.[17] Moreover, there is a suggestion of thoroughness in the arrangement.[18] But this comes with a special nuance. In Homer the verb *diakosmeō* mean primarily "to divide and marshal, muster, array."[19] The reference is usually to a battle formation. Early parallels for the noun *diakosmos* are few, and some are questionable. But in the solid parallel of Thucydides IV.93 the word means "battle-formation." To appreciate fully the effect in Parmenides' use of this word we should remind ourselves of the connotation of

---

[17] Cr. Jula Kerschensteiner, *Kosmos: quellenkritische Untersuchungen zu den Vorsokratikern* (Munich, 1962), p. 122.

[18] Cf. Hans Diller, "Der vorphilosophische Gebrauch von ΚΟΣΜΟΣ und ΚΟΣΜΕΙΝ," *Festschrift Bruno Snell* (Munich, 1956), pp. 51-52.

[19] Cf. LSJ and R. J. Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (London, 1924; repr. Norman, Oklahoma, 1963), s.v.; also Diller, ibid.

Parmenides' terms for contraries: *ta antia* (B8.55, 59) and *ta enantia* (cf. B12.5). Both *antios* and *enantios* are properly and primarily Homeric expressions for "one's opposite in battle." The terms preserve a hostile sense (confrontation, interception, an encounter between opposed or contrary-minded parties)[20] even outside contexts of war. Quite apart from the use of these words, the idea that the cosmic contraries are opposed in battle is familiar enough outside Parmenides,[21] but can also be illustrated from B18, which speaks of a "battle" between contrary "powers" and with "dire" consequences.[22] We can now see that Parmenides' *diakosmos* works in several ways: It makes us think of the marshaling of all contraries under Light and Night respectively;[23] it invites us to think of an impending battle; and since the marshaling is in two, and of *antia*, there is a suggestion that the battle will be between these two formations. In short, by the choice of *diakosmos* the meaning of "order" in *-kosmos* is inverted into "segregation, division, cleavage, conflict." The *kosmos* of mortals is actually a battlefield.

A play of negative against positive meanings is also to be found in the participle *eoikōs*. Editors have debated whether the translation should be "fitting, appropriate, probable," or "seeming, apparent." Obviously both senses are present.[24] To the uninitiated mortals it means the first;

---

[20] See Cunliffe, s.vv. Cf. Kahn, *Anaximander*, p. 130.

[21] Cf. Kahn, *Anaximander*, p. 109, 130 ff., 162 ff.; G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge, 1966), pp. 16 ff., 99.

[22] B18.4-6 *virtutes pugnent/ . . . dirae/ . . . vexabunt.*

[23] *Not* "the 'arrangement' or 'disposition' of all things, *according to the combination* of the two primary forms" (Kahn, *Anaximander*, p. 227, my italics).

[24] Cf. Guthrie, vol. 2, pp. 50 f. He translates "likely-seeming."

to the goddess and the Kouros, the second. The same can be said for the concluding *kata doxan*, "according to what was deemed acceptable" (B19.1). Mortals would take this as equivalent of *dokimōs*, "acceptably";[25] but "the man who knows" realizes that the reference is to "opinions in which there is no true fidelity" (B1.30).

The Record of Contrasts

Before we can properly document the use of ambiguity in the actual details of the "Doxa," we must have in front of us a record of the verbal and conceptual contrasts, between the two parts, for passages in which ambiguity does *not* play a significant role. The words and phrases from the "Doxa" which appear in the table below seem to have been chosen by Parmenides precisely because they bring to mind, without any equivocation, corresponding denials in "Truth."

Table (1) Verbal and Conceptual Contrasts Between "Doxa" and "Truth"

(i)

8.54 μοράς, "perceptible forms."	1.29 ἀληθείης . . . ἦτορ, "the temper of truth."

(ii)

8.54 δύο, "two"; cf. 18.5 *nec faciant unam*, "and they do not make a unity," 18.6 *gemino*, "through a double."	8.5 f. ὁμοῦ πᾶν / ἕν, "altogether one," 8.22 οὐδὲ διαιρετόν, "nor divisible," 8.25 ξυνεχές, "cohesive."

---

[25] Cf. B1.31-32 "how it would be right for things deemed acceptable (δοκοῦντα) to be acceptably (δοκίμως εἶναι)." On this see *The Route*, ch. 8.

(iii)

8.54 μορφὰς . . . δύο (cf. the adjective δίμορφς, "of double form", in later Greek); cf. 18.2 *diverso ex sanguine*, "out of different blood."

8.4 μουνογενές, "of a single kind," 8.22 ὁμοῖον, "alike."

(iv)

8.55, 59 τἀντία, "the contraries," 9.4 ἴσων ἀμφοτέρων, "both equal," 9.2 κατὰ σφετέρας, "in accordance with their respective . . .," 12.5 τό τ' ἐναντίον αὖτις, "and again the opposite"; cf. 14 ἀλλότριον, "not one's own."

8.29 ταὐτόν τ' ἐν ταὐτῷ . . . καθ' ἑαυτό, "and the same and in the same . . . by it-self," 8.34 ταὐτόν, "and the same"; cf. 8.13 f. οὐδέ ποτ' ἐκ μή ἐόντος . . . γίγνεσθαί τι παρ' αὐτό, "nor that something should come to be from what-is-not alongside it."

(v)

8.56, 58 τῇ μὲν . . . ἀτὰρ κἀκεῖνο "here, on the one hand, . . . and again that other one," 9.2 ἐπὶ τοῖσί τε καὶ τοῖς, "on these and those," 12.1 στεινότεραι, "narrower in width (scil. bands)," 17 δεξιτεροῖσιν μὲν . . . λαιοῖσι δέ, "on the right . . . but on the left."

8.23 οὐδὲ . . . τῇ, "nor here," 8.45 οὔτε τῇ ἢ τῇ, "nor here or there," 8.48 denial of τῇ . . . τῇ δ', "here . . . but there."

(vi)

8.57 μεγ' ἐλαφρόν, "greatly nimble."

8.23-4 οὐδέ τι . . . μᾶλλον . . . οὐδέ τι Χειρότερον,"nor is it somewhat more nor somewhat less."

(vii)

9.1 πάντα φάος καὶ νὺξ ὀνόμασται, "all things have been called Light and Night," 9.2 τὰ κατὰ σφετέρας δυνάμεις ἐπὶ τοῖσί τε καὶ τοῖς [ὀνόμασται], "things in accordance with their respective powers have been spoken with reference to these and those," 19.3 τοῖς δ' ὄνομ' ἄνθρωποι κατέθεντ' ἐπίσημον ἑκάστῳ, "to these things men have laid down a name as an attached sign to each."

8.38 τῷ πάντ' ὀνόμασται, "with respect to *it* have all things been spoken";[26] cf. 8.35 ἐν ᾧ πεφατισ μένον ἐστίν . . . τὸ νοεῖν, "on which (scil. the what-is) thinking de-pends having been declared."[27]

---

[26] For the reading ὀνόμασται at B8.38, also translation, and interpretation of the line in its context, see ibid., pp. 180-85.

[27] Ibid., pp. 170-72.

(viii)
9.2 δυνάμεις, "powers," 11.3 μένος, "force, vigor"; cf. 18.2, 4 *virtus, -tes,* "power(s)"; cf. 19.2 τραφέντα, "having matured."

8.4 τέλειον, 8.32 οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον, 8.42 τετελεσμένον, "complete, actualized, perfect"; cf. 8.33 οὐκ ἐπιδευές, "in no need."

(ix)
10.3 ὁππόθεν ἐξεγένοντο, "wherefrom they were born"; cf. 12.4 τόκου, "of birth," 18.1 *germina,* "seeds,"18.6 *nascentem,* 18.6 *semine,* "through seed."

8.6-7 τίνα γὰρ γένναν; . . . / . . . πόθεν . . .; "what birth? from where?"

(x)
10.1-3 εἴση . . . ἔργ᾽ ἀΐδηλα, "you shall know devastating works," 10.4 ἔργα . . . πεύση περίφοιτα, "you shall learn wandering works."

1.28-9 πυθέσθαι / ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος ἀτρεμὲς ἦτορ, "to learn the unwavering temper of persuasive / compliant truth."

(xi)
10.4 περίφοιτα, "wandering," 10.6 ἄγουσα, "driving," 12.5 πέμπουσα . . . μιγῆν, "dispatching to be mixed," 14 ἀλώμενον, "wandering," 16.1 πολυπλάγκτων, "much-strayed."

1.29 and 8.4 ἀτρεμές, "unwavering," 8.26 ἀκίνητον, "immobile," 8.29 κεῖται, "lies," 8.30 ἔμπεδον αὖθι μένει, "remains there firm," 8.41 denial of τόπον ἀλλάσσειν, "exchanging place"; cf. 7 and 8 attack of πλάνη, "wandering," of mortals.

(xii)
10.6 ἔνθεν ἔφυ, "wherefrom it came to be (grew)," 19.1 ἔφυ τάδε, "these came to be (arose)."

8.10 denial of ἀρξάμενον φῦν, "to come to be (grow) having started."

(xiii)
11.1-4 πῶς . . . ἠδ᾽ ἄστρων θερμὸν μένος ὡρμήθησαν / γίγνεσθαι, "how . . . and the hot (also 'hot-headed') vigor of the stars were impelled to be born."

8.9-10 τί . . . μιν χρέος ὦρσεν / . . . φῦν; "what requirement might impel it to be born?" cf. 8.12 οὐδὲ . . . ἐφήσει, "nor will incite," 8.14 denial of ἀνῆκε, "would encorage."

(xiv)
12.1-3 αἱ γὰρ . . . / αἱ δ᾽ ἐπὶ ταῖς . . . μετὰ δὲ . . . / ἐν δὲ μέσῳ τούτων . . . , "the ones . . . and those next to them . . . and through them . . . and in the middle . . . ."

8.44-5 μέσσοθεν ἰσσπαλὲς πάντη . . . οὔτε τι μεῖζον / οὔτε τι βαιότερον, "from the middle equally extended every way . . . neither bigger nor smaller"; cf. 8.47-9 and 8.23-4.

13

(xv)
12.3-4 δαίμων . . . / . . . μίξιος ἄρχει, "the goddess rules over mixing"; cf. 16.1 κρᾶσις, "blend, constitution," 18.1 *miscent*, "they mix," 18.4 *permixto*, "in the mixed."

8.16 κέκριται . . . ὥσπερ ἀνάγκη, "and it has been decided, as is the constraint"; cf. 8.15 κρίσις, "decision, disjunction," 7.5 κρῖναι, "decide, discern for yourself."

(xvi)
13 μητίσατο, "she devised" (scil. the goddess), 18.2-3 *informans . . . virtus / . . . bene condita corpora fingit*, "the shaping power moulds well-formed bodies," 18.4-5 *virtutes . . . faciant*, "the powers make"; cf. 8.39, 8.53 κατέθεντο, "they laid down (scil. the mortals)," 8.55 ἐκρίναντο, "they segregated," ἔθεντο, "the posited (scil. the mortals)."

8.15, 31 ἔχει, "she holds (scil. Justice, Constraint)," 8.31 ἐέργει, "bars, impedes (scil. the bond)," 8.37 Μοῖρ᾽ ἐπέδησεν, "Fate shackled."

(xvii)
13 πρώτιστον, "first of all," 16.1 ἑκάστοτ᾽, "at each moment," 18.1 *cum*, "when," 19.1-2 ἔφυ . . . καί νυν ἔασι / καὶ μετέπειτ᾽ ἀπὸ τοῦδε τελευτήσουσι τραφέντα, "came to be and now are and later than now will come to an end having matured."

8.9-10 τί . . . ὕστερον ἢ πρόσθεν, "why later rather than sooner?" 8.5 οὐδέ ποτ᾽ ἦν οὐδ᾽ ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἐστιν, "nor *was* it ever, nor *will* it be for it *is* now," 8.20 εἰ γὰρ ἔγεντ᾽, οὐκ ἔστ(ι) οὐδ᾽ εἴ ποτε μέλλει ἔσεσθαι, for if it *got* to be it *is* not—nor if it intends to be in the future."

Here is a parallel list of the ideas which are paired in opposition:
  (i) perceptible appearance vs. inner being
  (ii) duality vs. unity
  (iii) heterogeneity vs. homogeneity
  (iv) otherness vs. sameness
  (v) axial differentiation vs. axial invariance
  (vi) gradation and intensiveness vs. neutrality
  (vii) putative naming vs. implicit or actual naming
  (viii)potency vs. actuality
  (ix) engendering vs. nonengendering
  (x) activity, process vs. state

(xi) mobility vs. immobility
(xii) growth vs. no growth
(xiii) susceptibility vs. impassivity
(xiv) radial differentiation vs. radial invariance
(xv) mixing vs. sharp disjunction
(xvi) efficiency vs. containment and maintenance
(xvii) temporal differentiation vs. timelessness

Most of these are self-explanatory when read in their context in the poem. But some of the contrasts have received little or no attention from recent critics. It would be wrong for us to miss the contrast in rows (viii) and (xiii). We are more accustomed to associate the oppositions of potentiality versus actuality, or susceptibility versus impassivity with Aristotle. Yet Parmenides must have anticipated something of this, as we may gather from the variety of dynamic expressions which appear even in the few preserved fragments of "Doxa," in contrast to the emphasis on the character of *eon* as "fully realized (*τέλειον* [or *-εστόν, -ῆεν?*] and *τετελεσμένον*) in "Truth." [28] Rows (x) and (xvi) exemplify a related contrast. In the "Doxa" we learn of *erga*, "works, deeds," whereas in "Truth" we learned of a permanent state or condition. Correspondingly, the divine agency in "Doxa" plays an activist, creative, demiurgic role, whereas Justice and her congeners in "Truth" are pictured as girding, bracing, holding, and retaining the *eon*. This causality of containment is intended to be understood as internal to *eon*.[29] But the causality of "Doxa" is that of an external agent. Again, it would seem, what

---

[28] Cf. Friedrich Solmsen, *Aristotle's System of the Physical World: A Comparison with His Predecessors*, Cornell Studies in Classical Philology, 33 (Ithaca, 1960), pp. 17-18, 277 and n. 9, 343 and n. 26; Deichgräber, p. 690; Kahn, *Anaximander*, p. 159.

[29] See *The Route*, ch. 6.

we have here prefigures the Aristotelian contrast between an efficient and a formal-final cause.[30] I suspect there is also some significance in (xiv), the contrast between the cosmic sphere of "Doxa" and the *sphaira* or "ball" with which the *eon* is compared in "Truth."[31] In the first part of the poem the *sphaira* functions as a symbol of the perfection, self-congruence, or actuality of *eon*. In the "Doxa," the cosmic sphere becomes the opposite: an encompassing framework for differentiation; a model of duality and mixing at a cosmic scale; and a field for the interaction between the contraries.

The Oxymora

Contrast as understood in the preceding section presupposes a sharp disjunction, and a denial of one of the disjuncts. At the other end from sharp disjunction we find cases in which contradictory elements are allowed to appear in a single word or phrase because one or both of the components has a saving ambiguity which can yield a positive construction of the whole unit. These are the cases in which ambiguity has broken out to the surface and is felt as an incipient paradox. We saw two relatively mild cases of this: *nyktiphaes*, "shining in the darkness"; and "the deceptive *kosmos* of words." Two more instances deserve special comment.

Beginning with the third edition (1912), the *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* have included this one-word fragment (B15a):

Parmenides in his work of poetry called the earth *hydatorizon*, "rooted in water."

The sentence is a scholion in one of the MSS of St. Basil's *Homilies on the Hexameron*. It would be gratuitous to spec-

---

[30] Cf. Mansfeld, p. 164 and n. 3.
[31] Cf. Deichgräber, pp. 691 f.

ulate as to how this conception relates to the cosmology of the "Doxa." But the adjective itself (attested nowhere else in the Greek corpus), taken as a semantic unit, is revealing: "Water-rooted" is a term coined in a mood of sarcasm. The popular idea that the earth had roots was meant to emphasize the rigid stability of the earth, called by Hesiod "the ever-sure foundation of all" (*Th.* 117).[32] As is well known, an alternative conception, articulated in early cosmologies, was that of the earth as floating on water.[33] It is plausible to assume that the use of the expression "rooted in water" by Parmenides involved a combined reference to these two conceptions, and that it was intended as an ironical comment on both. The adjective is a fit description for something like floating seaweed. It reminds us that to be rooted in water is to have lost one's roots. As Anaximander appears to have realized, the model of aquatic support leads to an infinite regress. So the image of floating seaweed points to rootlessness not in the trivial mechanical sense, but in a metaphysical sense which "the man who knows" will instantly recognize. But the adjective also works in the converse sense: it suggests that the idea of rooting *per se* will not explain support, that it too will lead to an infinite regress (cf. B8.7 "having grown from what?" 8.10 "to grow having started from nothing"). So to explain the stability of the earth by saying that it is "rooted" is as good as to say that it is "rooted in water." Either way, the adjective is an oxymoron. Mortals will see in it no more than an innocent, if somewhat unusual, expression of a mechanical model of support which they favor and understand. But to

---

[32] Cf. *Th.* 812 ἀστεμφής, ῥίζησι διηνεκέεσσιν ἀρηρώς, "immovable, growing out of unending roots." The conception of the "roots of the earth and sea" (728) as growing out of the Underworld is also intended to convey the sense of stability. Cf. also Xenophanes A47 and B28.

[33] See KR, pp. 87-93.

the goddess and to the Kouros the term works as a signal of the incoherence of mortal opinions.

The strange word *aïdēla* of B10.3 seems to involve a similar effect. The full context reads:

> the *aïdēla* works of the effulgent sun's pure torch [or, less probably, "of the sun's pure, effulgent torch"]. (B10.2-3)

The adjective *aïdēlos* can have the active sense "rendering unseen," even "destructive," or the passive sense "invisible, mysterious."[34] The Italian scholar Guazzoni Foà has made the suggestion that the word as used by Parmenides is "polysemous," involving a play both of the active sense against the passive, and of an ἀ-privative against an ἀ-intensive.[35] She explains the effect as follows: "That which is strongly luminous renders other things invisible (because it blinds), and because of its great splendor its own works cannot be seen."[36] This is an attractive interpretation, and it can be made stronger with two modifications: we need not exclude (as Guazzoni Foà does) the sense "destructive"; and we must determine the motivation for this play of multiple meanings.

The sun, especially the sun of southern Italy, can very well be a destructive force. It can scorch the land, and

---

[34] See *The Route*, pp. 237-39.

[35] Virginia Guazzoni Foà, "Per l'interpretazione di Ἀίδηλος nel Fr. 10 de Parminde," *Giornale di metafisica*, 19 (1964), 558-69, 562.

[36] Ibid., p. 559. Cf. Guido Calogero, *Studi sull' eleatismo* (Rome, 1932), p. 52 n. 2: "if ἀίδηος really means 'that which renders invisible' the allusion here could not be to anything other than the works of the sun insofar as it renders the other stars invisible with its appearance." (Calogero's book now also in German transl., *Studien über den Eleatismus* [Darmstadt, 1970].)

burn the skin, and give unstroke. (The Phaethon story is a familiar archetype of the destructive power of the sun.[37]) So Parmenides' use of *aïdēlos* is indeed polyemous, and conveys at once the distinct senses of "so fiery as to be destructive," "so brilliant as to eclipse other stars," and "so bright as to be impossible to behold."

The rationale for the use of this multiply suggestive term can now be appreciated. In a nonphilosophical context the whole phrase, "You shall learn the *aïdēla* works of the sun's torch," would have passed simply as an appropriately evocative statement of the idea, "you shall learn the mysterious works of the Sun's holy light." It is, of course, this sense which saves B10.2-3 from being a mere contradiction. But in the context of the "Doxa" the tension between "the pure torch of the effulgent sun" and "*aïdēla* works" is not relieved. Mortals are welcome to take this as a poetically charged and pious statement. But the Kouros perceives the message in the incipient contradiction. The sun which the words "effulgent torch" describe as *megalodēlos* or *aridēlos*, "greatly evident, conspicuous," is also *aïdēlos*, "too bright to behold" and "too bright to allow anything else to be seen." Moreover, the light, which is "pure" and "gentle" is also so ominously powerful as to be a dazzling, scorching, flagrant peril. It is not just the incipient contradiction which points to the unreality of "the effulgent torch of the sun"; the very idea that the sun can be "*too* bright to . . . " or "*too* powerful not to . . . " reminds us of the contrast with the real, which admits of no "more or less," no grades or degrees. Unlike the sun, and unlike the antithetically ranged "powers" of "Doxa," the real cannot be assigned to a field or continuum of intensive qualification.

---

[37] Cf. Archilochus 73 (Diehl) "I hope the sun sears them (*καταυανέει*) piercing in its blaze (*ὀξύς ἐλλάμπων*)"; also Empedocles B40 "sharp-shooting sun" (*ἤλιος ὀξυβελής*).

If this analysis is correct, then we have correspondence between the descriptions of the moon and the sun: The one "shines by night, with a light not its own"; the other outshines all stars by day, and is too bright to be seen directly (we can only look at reflections of its light).

The earth, the sun, and the moon are all given paradoxical descriptions—and *paradox* is what we should expect from the world of "Doxa." This use of paradox or of the oxymoron for a philosophic statement is better known from the fragments of Heraclitus. But it belongs with equal propriety to the second part of Parmenides' poem. The doctrine of the coincidence of opposites, celebrated by Heraclitus as an extraordinary insight achieved by the man of reason, is rejected by Parmenides much more decisively than it could have been by the adversaries Heraclitus had envisaged—the "many" whom he scorned. Parmenides claims he can show that the mortals' own view is unstable, and can easily lapse into Heracliteanism.[38] And so through the goddess he makes the mortals speak the very language which they find absurd and mystifying when it comes from Heraclitus.[39]

Ambiguity in the Contraries

────────────

[38] Cf. Harold F. Cherniss, "The Characteristics and Effects of Presocratic Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12 (1951), repr. in the Bobbs-Merrill Reprint Series (PHIL-52), p. 337: "Heraclitus had made explicit what was implicit in all the theories of a changing world . . . Parmenides saw this, that the opinions of all men were unconscious and unsystematic Heracliteanism."

[39] I note three more instances of experessions with the force of an oxymoron: 10.4 ἔργα . . . περίφοιτα, "wandering works" (ἔργα has the connotation of accomplishment, which is negated by περίφοιτα); B8.57 μεγ᾽ ἐλαφρόν, "greatly slight"; B10.6 ἄγουσ᾽ ἐπέδησεν, "driving she shackled."

Unequivocal contrast and incipient contradiction or paradox are the two extremes in the tension between truth and mortal opinions in the second part of the poem. Most of the passages fall in between. They exploit concealed or deceptive ambiguity. This can be shown both for the attributes of the two cosmic contraries and for the governing principles and basic concepts of the "Doxa" as a whole. With regard to the contraries, the clearest and most direct way to present the data is again in the form of a table.

In the first column of Table (2), on pp. 22-24, I have collected the passages of "Doxa" that present the two contraries and their respective attributes. The order from (i) to (iv) under each of the A (Light) and B (Night) sections aims to capture the correspondence between descriptions of the two contraries. In the second column I collect from the first part of the poem (including the proem) passages which refer to the *eon* or to something closely associated with the *eon*. These are aligned with passages of the first column to which they show verbal affinity. Viewed in this alignment, they present cases of parallelism which would encourage us to think that one or both of the contraries in "Doxa" is modeled on the *eon* of "Truth." In the third column I collect passages from the first part which tend to suggest that the contrary described on the corresponding line in the first column has the status of "what-is-not." The third column contains, accordingly: (a) explicit or implicit references to "what-is-not," or to something closely associated with it; (b) references to the *eon* which sharply contrast with the description in the corresponding line of the first column. Generally speaking, the passages in the second column support a "good sense," i.e. association with the *eon*, and the passages in the third column a "bad sense," i.e. association with what-is-not, for the contraries respectively.

Table (2) Ambiguity in the Attributes of the Contraries

A. Light

	Positive Associations	Negative Associations
(i) 8.56 φλογὸς . . . πῦρ, "the blaze of fire," 9.1 φάος, 9.3 φάεος, cf. 10.2-3 καθαρᾶς εὐαγέος ἠελίοιο / λαμπάδος, "of the pure torch of the effulgent sun."	1.10 the journey of the Heliades and the Kouros εἰς φάος, "toward the light"; cf. 8.48 ἄσυλον, "inviolate."	8.21 γένεσις . . . ἀπέσβεσται καὶ . . ὄλεθρος, "coming to be . . . has been quenched . . . and perishing" (coming-to-be and perishing are ablaze), 8.41 διά τε χρόα φανὸν ἀμείβειν, "exchanging bright surface."
(ii)		
a. 8.56 αἰθέριον: "heavenly" (contrary of ἐμβριθές).	a. 1.13 the journey to αἰθέριαι, "heavenly," gates.	
b. "bright-making" (contrary of ἀδαῆ).		
(iii) 8.57 ἤπιον ὄν:		
a. "a mild, well-disposed, gentle being" (contrary of ἐμβριθές).	a. 8.29 ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος, "of persuasive / compliant truth," ἐόν (passim).	
b. "a well-speaking, sagacious being" (contrary would be νήπιον, but is actually ἀδαῆ).	b. Cf. 1.15 μαλακοῖσι λόγοισιν / πεῖσαν, "through soft words they persuaded."	

(iv)
a. 8.57 ἐλαφρόν: "slight."

b. "nimble." Cf. 12.2 φλογὸς ἴεται αἶσα, "flame is discharged"; also 11.1-4, esp. θερμὸν μένος, "hot vigor," and ὁρμήθησαν, "were impelled."

c. "easy to bear."

a. 8.26 μεγάλων ἐν πείρασι δεσμῶν, "in the confines of mighty (huge) fetters."

b. immobility of ἐόν, attack on wandering of mortals (passim).

c. 8.30-1 κρατερὴ γὰρ Ἀνάγκη / πείρατος ἐν δεσμοῖσιν ἔχει, τό μιν ἀμφὶς ἐέργει, "for mighty Constraint holds it in the fetters of a bond which bars it all around."

1.9 the Heliades leave behind them the "house of Night."

B. Night

(i) 8.59 νύκτα, "night."

(ii) 8.59 ἐμβριθές:
a. "heavy, ponderous, down-pressing" (contrary of αἰθέριον, as well as ἐλαφρόν).

b. "grievous, ill-disposed" (contrary of ἤπιον.

a. 8.29 κεῖται, "it lies"; cf. 8.30 ἔμπεδον αὖθι μένει, "remains there firm."

b. Cf. passage in A(iv)c, third column above.

23

a. 2.6 παναπευθέ(α) . . . ἀταρπόν, "a path of no tidings," 2.7–8 οὔτε . . . γνοίης . . . οὔτε φράσαις, "you could not know it, nor could you point to it," 8.17 ἀνόητον ἀνώνυμον, "unknown and nameless" (all with reference to μὴ ἐόν).

b. 6.4 εἰδότες οὐδέν, "knowing nothing," 6.5 ff. ἀμηχανίη, "helplessness," etc. (all said of mortals).

a. 8.24 πᾶν ἔμπλεον . . . ἐόντος, 8.25 ξυνεχές, "cohesive."

b. 8.31 ἀμφὶς ἐέργει, "bars it all around," and generally the language of a tight bond around ἐόν.

c. Cf. passage in B(iii)b, third column above.

(iii) 8.59 ἀδαῆ:

a. "obscure" (contrary of αἰθέριον); cf. 9.3 ἀφάντου "obfuscating, invisible."

b. "ignorant" (contrary of ἤπιον, cf. νήπιος, "silly").⁴⁰

(iv) 8.59 πυκινόν:

a. "thick, dense, of close texture."

b. "tight, well-fenced."

c. "shrewd, wise."

24

⁴⁰ Cf. Mansfeld, p. 133 and n. 5; Mario Untersteiner, *Parmenide: Testimonianze e frammenti: Introduzione, traduzione e commento* (Florence, 1958), p. clxxiv n. 27. The latter accepts the opposition ἤπιος-[νήπιος] but translates ἤπιος as "utile."

What is immediately striking about Table (2) is that Parmenides balances the descriptions that point up the positive aspects of Light with descriptions that do the same for Night. In fact, even though a priori the positive associations of Light are undeniable,[41] in the actual text of Parmenides' poem they are rather indirect, for they presuppose a parallelism between the language of light and revelation in the proem and the language of the *eon*. The positive associations of Night (grave, firm, full, tight), on the other hand, can be traced directly to the description of *eon* in B8. Notice also that it would be one-sided to stress the affinity of Light as illumination with the *eon*.[42] Parmenides' Light is also "fire," "color-play" (cf. B8.41), the bearer of "vigor" and "impulse" (cf. B11.3), and something which "bursts forth" (B12.1)—all of which are marks of unreality.

The table presents, further, the multiple meanings of the attributes of Light and Night. As we know from usage, the terms $αἰθέριον$ (*A* [ii], first column) and $ἤπιον$ (*A* [iii], first column), assigned by Parmenides to Light, each admit of two distinct meanings, *a* and *b*, either of which could be relevant in the context of "Doxa." Similarly admissible are the three meanings, *a*, *b*, and *c*, of the attribute $ἐλαφρόν$ (*A* [iv], first column). Correspondingly for Night, usage suggests two relevant meanings, *a* and *b*, for the attribute $ἐμβριθές$ (*B* [ii], left column), two, *a* and *b*, for $ἀδαές$ ($ἀδαῆ$, *B* [iii], left column), and three, *a*, *b*, and *c*, for $πυκινόν$ (*B* [iv], left column). Because of this multiplicity of meanings, the correspondence between the attributes is not one-to-one, and this results in multiple relations of contrariety. Thus $αἰθέριον$ in the sense of "heavenly" is opposed to $ἐμβριθές$, "down-pressing," but in the sense

---

[41] Se Lloyd, *Polarity*, pp. 42, 48, 80.
[42] Guthrie commits this error (vol. 2, pp. 55-57). But Mansfield is more cautions: see esp. p. 139.

"bright-making" to ἀδαές or ἄφαντον, "obscure." Allowing for some additional (but quite natural) differentiations of nuance or connotation (for example, drawing out the implicit meaning, "subtle, of thin texture" in αἰθέριον), the multiple relations of contrariety suggested by Parmenides' table of opposites are presented schematically in Table 2A, below p. 331.
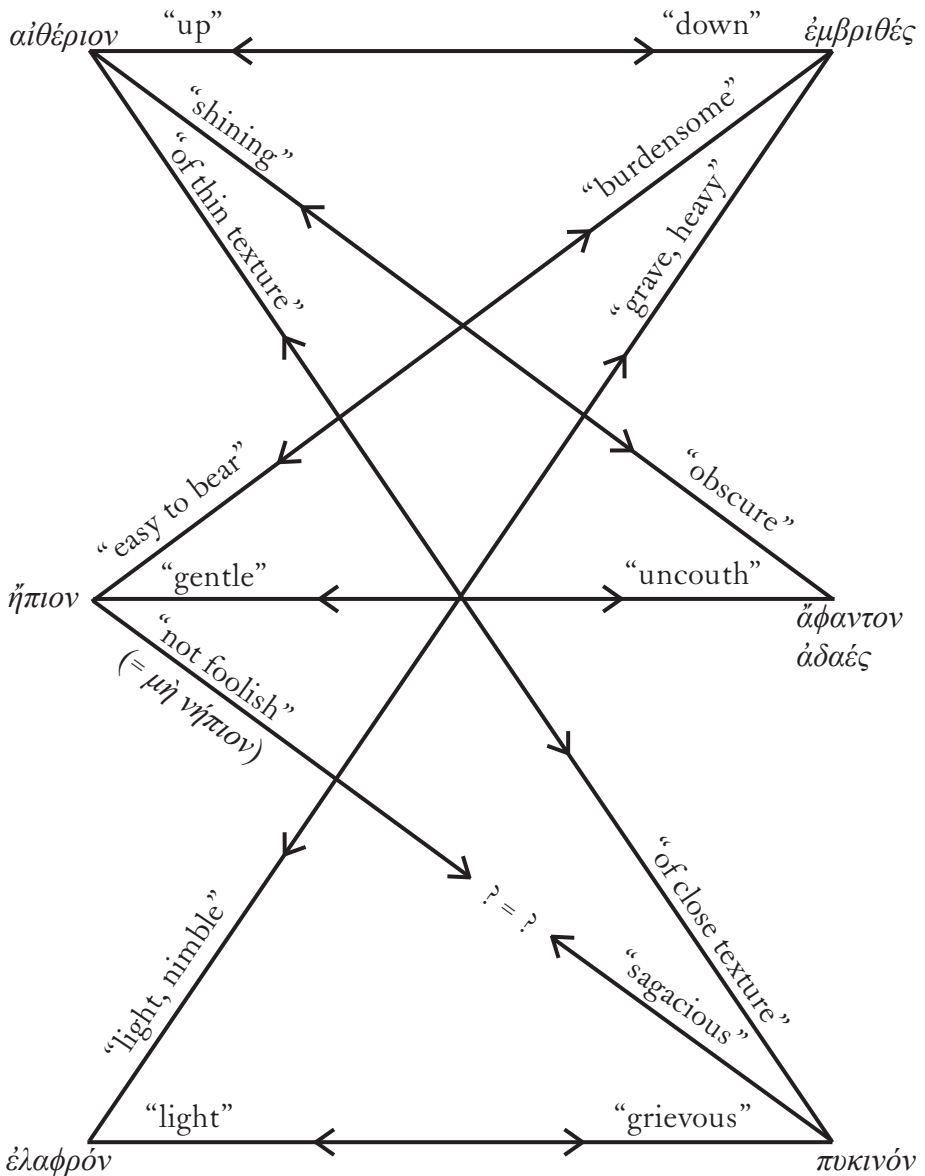
Horizontal lines represent primary, slanted lines secondary contrariety. Note that if there were a clear semantic contrariety between ἐλαφρόν and ἀδαές-ἄφαντον the scheme would be perfectly one-three for each of the opposites. Because of these multiple relationships, represented by the crisscrossings, the Parmenidean table of contraries is felt as essentially a dualism of two *morphai*, "forms." And because of this essential dualism, positive or negative associations, or equivocity, in the case of one of the attributes is transferred to its other two cognates. The result is that the whole of each side is felt as equivocally characterized as both positive (modeled on the *eon*) and negative (modeled on a denial of the *eon*). Symptomatic of the ambivalence which affects either side is the fact that ἤπιον and πυκινόν appear on opposite sides, whereas both seem to have positive associations (see *A* [iii] and *B* [iv] in Table [2], above, and note the equality sign interrupting the slanted line between the two terms in Table [2A]).

Ambivalence, affecting some of the pairs, is not uncommon in schemes of contrariety.[43] Parmenides, however, is not merely reproducing a feature of traditional or current schemes for the sake of verisimilitude. He is reproducing *the* feature which prompted him to ask for a decisive distinction between "is" and "is not." The character of mortals as *dikranoi*, "two-headed," is projected in the ambivalence that pervades their own table of cosmic opposites.

---

[43] See Lloyd, pp. 46, 62.

Table (2a) One-Many Contrariety of the Attributes of Light and Night

αἰθέριον "up" ⟷ "down" ἐμβριθές

"shining"
"of thin texture"

"burdensome"
"grave, heavy"

"easy to bear"

"obscure"

ἤπιον "gentle" ⟷ "uncouth" ἄφαντον
ἀδαές

"not foolish"
(= μὴ νήπιον)

"light, nimble"

? = ?

"of close texture"
"sagacious"

ἐλαφρόν "light" ⟷ "grievous" πυκινόν

I now turn to examine the ambiguity in statements which involve the basic concepts or governing principles of the "Doxa." These are the passages which are usually recorded as cases of similarity between the "Doxa" as a whole and "Truth." It is always, of course, a case of deceptive similarity, a similarity-with-a-difference. Bɪᴏ (which also features the oxymoron with *aïdēla*) shows this well and can be conveniently studied as a unit.

> And you shall learn the nature (*physin*) of the shining sky, and all the signs (*sēmata*) in the sky; and the works (*erga*), too dazzling to behold (*aïdēla*), of the effulgent sun's pure torch, and wherefrom they arose (*exegenonto*); and the rambling works of roundfaced [*also* Cyclops] moon you shall learn, and her nature; and you shall come to know theheaven that holds things all around, wherefrom it arose (*ephy*), and how driving Constraint harnessed it to hold the bounds (or "bands," *peirata*) of the stars.

The fragment as a whole has the tone of the programmatic statements at the end of the proem. We get no fewer than three announcements of an explanation, "you shall learn" (Bɪᴏ.1, 10.4, 10.5). As noted first by Heinimann,[44] the passage involves a series of four pairs in parallel coordination:

A	B
1. the *physis* of the sky.	the signs in the sky.
2. wherefrom they arose.	the works of the sun's torch.
3. the *physis* of the moon.	the works of the moon.
4. wherefrom it arose (*ephy*).	how driving Constraint

---

[44] Felix Heinimann, *Nomos und Physis: Herkunft und Bedeutung einer Antithese im griechischen Denken des 5. Jahrhunderts* (Basel, 1945, repr. 1965), pp. 90 f.

harnessed him to hold the
bounds of the stars.

The patterning is indeed elaborate;[45] but I am concerned
here only with the modulation of the term *physis*. On the
left we have *physis* understood dynamically as growth; on
the right ongoing processes or activities (*erga* or *sēmata*, the
latter here, clearly, "portents, omens, signals for action").
Yet the three "you shall learn" also activate the sense of "na-
ture" or "essence" in the three *phy-* words of column A,[46]
and so in the column as a whole. The ambiguity is intrinsic
to the passage,[47] and deliberate. "You shall learn the *physis*
and the *works* of . . . " recalls the announcement of the ar-
gument of "Truth" in the proem: "you shall learn *alētheia*
and its *ētor*, its temper" (cf. B1.29). But to the goddess and

───────────

[45] The φύσις of 1A and ἔφυ of 4A must represent the same
concept, and this must also be true of φύσις in 3A and
ἐξεγένοντο in 2A, both of which are paired with ἔργα in B:
cf. Heinimann, pp. 90 f. On the other side, 4B clearly refers
to works being performed by the sky. For σήματα in 1B, see
The Route, p. 25 n. 40, and note that "signs in the sky" and
"bands of stars" (cf. Aëtius in DK A37, and Tarán, pp. 240
ff.) are two alternative descriptions with the same reference.
So in addition to being "portentous works" the signs in the
sky are "wheeling works." Heinimann notes (pp. 90 f.) that
the structure of the fragment is AB-BA-BA-AB, and notes
an alteration of the form a-b-a-b (noun and verb expres-
sions) under A against a pattern β-α-α-β (with ἔργα as the
two α's) under B.
[46] Heinimann goes too far in saying that φύσις does *not* mean
"Wesen" or "Natur" here (p. 91 n. 2). On the other hand, it
is equally wrong to give one of these translations alone (so
Tarán, p. 165; Guthrie, vol. 2, p. 60). In this case, as in oth-
ers, the disagreement among scholars highlights and under-
scores an ambiguity that is built into the text.
[47] Cf. Mansfeld, p. 189.

to the Kouros the two announcements are worlds apart: as far apart as timeless reality and temporal process. In effect, Parmenides is telling us that mortals turn the legitimate quest for *alētheia* into a misguided adventure after "origins" and "works."[48]

There is a similar effect in the phrase "how driving Constraint harnessed him." Naturally, this sounds like an echo of the statements involving Constraint and her congeners in "Truth." But note this difference: The Constraint of "Truth" was an agent of containment and maintenance; the phrase ἄγουσ' ἐπέδησεν 'Ανάγκη, "driving Constraint harnessed," makes one think of a very different figure—an 'Ανάγκη who drives her victims from yokes or collars around their necks.[49]

Ambiguity in the Basic Concepts of "Doxa"

B10 is a good case in point of similarity-with-a-difference between "Truth" and "Doxa." But, once again, the most direct way of presenting all the evidence is in the form of a table. Table (3) gives on the left all the passages that show verbal resemblance (inviting a favorable interpretation) with passages from "Truth," which appear on the right.' The key word, the one that marks the radical difference, may appear either on the left or on the right or in both columns.

In row (i) we find that the mortals practice a κρίσις, "separation," and a placing χωρίς, "apart." But unlike the radical κρίσις between "is" and "is not" of "Truth," which is a

----

[48] The φύσις of B16.1 is embedded in a similar context of ambiguity: see the discussion of B16, below.

[49] See the discussion of the phrase ἄγειν ἀνάγκη in Heinz Schreckenberg, *Ananke: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Wortgebrauchs*, Zetemata, 36 (Munich, 1964), ch. 1, and note the pictorial illustrations in the appendix of his book.

Table (3) Similarities-with-a-Difference
Between "Doxa" and "Truth"

(i)

8.55 ἐκρίναντο δέμας, "they distinguished with respect to body"; 8.56 ἔθεντο / χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, "they posited apart of one another"; cf. 12.1 πυρος ἀκρήτοιο, "of unmixed fire."

See above, Table (1), right column, (xv).

(ii)

8.55 f. σήματ' ἔθεντο, "they posited signs,"19.3 κατέθεντ' ἐπίσημον, "they laid down as an attached sign"; cf. 9.1 τὰ τ' ἐν αἰθέρι . . . σήματα, "the signs in the aether."

8.2 ταύτη δ' ἐπὶ σήματ' ἔασι, "and on it (scil. the route) there are signs."

(iii)

8.57 f. ἑωυτῷ πάντοσε τωὐτόν / τῷ δ' ἑτέρῳ μὴ τωὐτόν, "in every way the same with itself but not the same with the other," 8.58 κατ' αὐτό, "in itself."

See above, Table (1), right column, (iv); cf. 8.36 f. οὐδὲν . . . ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ ἐόντος, "nothing else except what-is."

(iv)

8.60 διάκοσμον ἐοικότα, "a seeming dispositon" (see above, pp. 317 f.), 19.1 κατὰ δόξαν, "in accordance with what was deeped cceptable."

1.32 δοκίμως, "acceptably."[50]

(v)

9.3 πᾶν πλέον ἐστὶν ὁμοῦ, "all is full together," 11.1 πλῆνται, "are filled"; cf. 16.4 τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἐστὶ νόημα, "for thought is the full."

8.4 οὖλον, "whole," 8.5 f. ὁμοῦ πᾶν / ἕν, "all of it together one," 8.6 συνεχές, "cohesive," 8.24 πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεόν ἐστιν ἐόντος, "and all of it is full of what-is"; cf. comparison with a sphere, and 8.25 ἐὸν γὰρ ἐόντι πελάζει, "what-is consorts with what-is."

---

[50]   See *The Route*, ch. 8, esp. 197-205.

(vi)

9.4 ἴσων ἀμφοτέρων ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρῳ μέτα μηδέν, "both equal, since to neither does Nothing have a share.

8.22 πᾶν ἐστιν ὁμοῖον, "all of it is equal alike," 8.46 f. οὔτε γὰρ οὐκ ἐόν ἐσόν, τό κεν παύοι μιν ἱκνεῖσθαι / εἰς ὁμόν, "for there neither is what-is-not, which might prevent it from reaching the same [i.e. sameness]."

(vii)

10.1 ff. εἴη . . . πεύσῃ . . . εἰδήσεις . . . ὥς, "you shall learn how," 11.1 πῶς, "how," 19.1 οὕτω, "in this manner."

1.28 πυθέσθαι, "to learn," 8.31 μαθήσεαι . . . ὥς, "you shall learn how," 2.3 ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὥς, "that / how it is and that / how"; cf. 2.5, 8.2, 8.9.

(viii)

10.1 ff. φύσιν . . . ἔργα, "the nature and works."

(See above, p. 29-30).

(ix)

10.7 πείρατ᾽ ἄστρων, "the bands of the stars"; cf. implication of spherical universe in 10, 11, 12, and especially 11.2 f. ὄλυμπος ἔσχατος, "the outermost heaven."

8.26 ἐν πείρασι δεσμῶν, "in the bounds of fetters," 8.31 πείρατος, "of a bond," 8.42 πεῖρας πύματον, "an outermost boundary"; cf. comparison with a sphere.

(x)

12.3 δαίμων ἤ πάντα κυβερνᾷ, "a goddess piloting all things," 12.4 πάντῃ . . . ἄρχει, "she rules in every way."

Cf. the δαίμων and the Heliades as guides in the proem.

(xi)

12.4 στυγεροῖο τόκου, "of hateful, abominable birth.

8.21 τύς γένεσις μὲν ἀπέσβεσται, "and so birth has been quenched.

(xii)

12.4 μίξιος ἄρχει πέμπουσ᾽ ἄρσενι θῆλυ μιγῆν τό τ᾽ ἐναντίον αὖτις, "she rules over mixing, dispatching the female to have intercourse with the male, and contrariwise."

8.25 ἐὸν γὰρ ἐόντι πελάζει, "for what-is consorts with what-is"; cf. 1.1 f. ὅσον τ᾽ ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἱκάνοι / πέμπον, "conveyed me as far as heart might reach."

(xiii)

12.2 μετὰ δὲ . . . ἵεται αἶσα, "and through them a due portion is discharged";[51] cf. 18.3 *temperiem servans*, "maintaining proper proportion of mixture."

Cf. the character of what-is maintained by Dike-Themis-Moira, and 8.48 ἄσυλον, "inviolate."

(xiv)

13 Ἔρωτα, "Love"; cf. the goddess of intercourse in 12.

2.4 Πειθοῦς κέλευθος, "the route of Persuasion."

(xv)

16.2-4 τὸ γὰρ αὐτό / ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώποισιν / καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἐστὶ νόημα. "For it is the same that the nature of the limbs apprehends among men, both all and each. For thought is the full."

Cf. 3, 4, 8.34 ff. (see below, pp. 39 ff.)

(xvi)

19.1 καί νυν ἔασι, "and now are," 19.2 τελευτήσουσι, "will come to an end."

8.5 νῦν ἔστιν, "it is now," 8.32 οὐκ ἀτελεύτητον, "not incomplete."

logical κρίσις, what we get here is a physical separation: not λόγῳ, "through reason," but δέμας, "with respect to body." Indeed, as we learn in Β12 (cf. [x]-[xiii] in the table), the physical separation is perfect only at the outer limits of the universe. In (iii) we see that the κρίσις of "Doxa" is not between exhaustive or contradictory alternatives, but between contraries. The correct formula for reality is "in every way the same with itself and *not the same with anything else*." In Greek the italicized clause would be μηδενὶ δὲ ἄλλῳ τωὑτόν. Instead, we get the weaker τῷ δ᾽ ἑτέρῳ μὴ τωὑτόν, "not the same *with the other*." The distinction is between *coordinate* entities, as we can see immediately from the pronouns which appear on the left in (i), (iii), and (vi). But the distinction between what-is and what-is-not

---

[51]   See Tarán, p. 237.

is between entity and nonentity—a distinction *toto caelo*.[52]

The word σήματα, "signs" (see row [ii]), was used in "Truth" with reference to pointers to the bounds (*peirata*) of reality. In "Doxa" it is used with reference to the various manifestations of the dualism. But whereas in the first case the σήματα are pictured as lying "along the route" to the *eon*, so that our activity is limited to taking note of them, in "Doxa" the σήματα have been "posited," and "laid down," and superadded.

Especially interesting is the play with the idea of "fullness" as shown in (v). In "Truth" fullness appears as a corollary of the wholeness, simplicity, and indivisibility of what-is. The filling action is pictured as directed from the center out, as an overflow which has to be contained by "bounds." But in "Doxa" things get full in the manner in which one fills a container: from the outside. The fullness is induced by the action of the mixing goddess, as we see in row (xii). The same concept is thus given opposite interpretations in the two parts of the poem. In the first it functions as an expression of simplicity and unity; in the second as an expression of duality and confusion. This motif of fullness is developed further in B16. But this important fragment deserves, as I indicate in (xv), separate comment.

We already saw how Parmenides exploits the ambiguity of the term φύσις in B10. In (vii) I show the parallel ambiguity in the adverbs of manner. In "Truth" they are embedded in the context of the quest for reality; they serve to introduce the timeless "how" of the what-is.[53] This quest is still being felt in "Doxa," but it has been reduced to something more common and homely: the "how" expresses an historical or cosmogonical curiosity.

---

[52] For a fine discussion of this contrast, see Mansfeld, pp. 131 ff.; cf. *The Route*, ch. 3. Cf. also Lloyd. p. 23 and n. 1.
[53] See *The Route* , pp. 49-51, 70-73.

The proofs of B8 culminate in the comparison of what-is with a "well-rounded ball."[54] As we see in (ix), the comparison becomes reified in the "Doxa." The world is literally a gigantic physical sphere, or a nesting of rings: The "outermost boundary" has now become the shining "outermost heaven"; the "bands" or "bounds," which expressed the perfection or actuality of what-is, have now been projected as physical "bands" (the rings or wheels of the stars).

Fundamental to the doctrine of "Truth" is the idea of the quest (*dizēsis*), which brings with it the vocabulary of journey and guidance.[55] This quest is a relationship between two different orders or levels: mind and reality. In the passages to which (x) and (xii) refer we find again a "goddess" who "pilots" and "dispatches" (the same words are used which appeared in the first part). But her role is now mundane: She is no longer the mediator between the real and man, but a force that induces the wordly contraries to come together in mixture or intercourse. Moreover, whereas the real is "as far as heart might reach," the charges of the goddess in "Doxa" are pictured as reluctant partners. Since they are contraries, they would naturally tend to be apart, and the idea is reinforced by the phrase, "of abominable birth."

As shown in (xi), the adjective στυγερός, "abominable," carries double meaning. At the public and ordinary level it is understood immediately as a reference to the pains of childbirth, the unhappy consequence of a union of contraries.[56] But the goddess and the Kouros are aware of this

----

[54] Ibid., pp. 123-30.

[55] Ibid., ch. 2.

[56] Other associations may also be involved: childbirth was considered ritually impure (Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*, tr. W. B. Hillis [London, 1925], p. 295 and n. IX, 72); Hermann

as a reference to the flagrant impropriety of birth, which has to be "quenched."[57]Moreover, the pairing of "hateful birth" with *μίξις*, "intercourse," works like an oxymoron. "Intercourse" is something *philon*, "lovable," or *philotēs*, "love," itself. That the goddess of mixture should preside over "abominable birth and intercourse" is a signal (like nyktiphaes, "shining in the night," B14) of the unreality of the whole process. Heraclitus would have declared openly, "pleasure is pain." But Parmenides' "mortals" express this more timidly, through a noncommittal "and," which allows the paradox to remain below the surface.

Indeed, the goddess of mixture is herself a projection of mortal indecisions. Mortals make a physical *κρίσις*, but the things they distinguish are not complete, self-contained entities. So they soon find themselves reversing the original decision by postulating a certain goddess as agent of mixing. B12 gives a physical model of this reversal. The outermost rings are pure fire; then come rings of night with just a "due portion" of fire showing through; but

---

Frankel finds in the adjective the expression of a negative attitude toward heterosexual love (*Dichtung und Philosophie des friihen Griechentums*, 2d ed. [Munich, 1962], p. 414 n. 32). But with the word being *στυγερός* (rather than something with the force of "unholy" or "impure") a more likely association is with the motif of hatred between generations, as we know it from Hesiod's *Theogony* (138, 155; cf. Paul Seligman, *The "Apeiron" of Anaximander: A Study in the Origin and Function of' Metaphysical Ideas* [London, 1962], pp. 103 f.).

[57] But some editors would (once again) expunge the ambiguity by emending the text to read *σμυγεροῖο* (Theodor Bergk, *Kleine philologische Schriften*, ed. R. Peppmiiller, 2 vols. (Halle, 1884-86), vol. 2, p. 82) or by simply giving the translation "painful" of *στυγερός* without the benefit of emendation (so Untersteiner, p. 161; Taran, p. 166).

in the middle there is general (πάντῃ) mixture, under the goddess' prodding. Translated into logical terms: Mortals made a κρίσις, "separation," but not of contradictories, rather a half-hearted one of contraries, which lapses into Heracliteanism.

Also fundamental to the doctrine of "Truth" are the ideas of Justice and πίστις.[58] The real is *eupeithēs:* "faithful" and "compliant."[59] It is ἶσον, "equal," insofar as it is ὁμοῖον, "alike," or self-contained, self-congruent, and self-consistent. If one were to speak of the real as "just," the appropriate definition of this term would have to be obtained from Plato or from a rationalist—it fulfills its own appointed role. If we now look at the context in which these words appear, (vi) and (xiii), we find that the radical sameness of the *eon* has been translated into a democratic doctrine of *isonomia*, "equality in apportionment," in the "Doxa":[60] The contraries are described as "both equal"; fire is given a "due portion" in the mixed rings of the stars; and the Latin fragment (B18) mentions a *temperies* which is to be observed.

We should recall here that Peitho is also a person-

––––––––––

[58] See *The Route*, chs. 6, 7.

[59] Ibid., pp. 154-58.

[60] Gregory Vlastos has suggested that the justice of Parmenides' "Truth" is grounded in equality, understood as distributive *ἰσονομία*; but differing from the equality of the two forms in "Doxa" in that it obtains internally among parts in the single whole of reality: see "Equality and Justice in Early Greek Cosmologies," *CP*, 42 (1947), pp. 162 ff. (the article is reprinted in Furley and Allen, I, pp. 42-55). But as the word "parts" betrays, "equality" Hill too weak for Parmenides' "Truth." The sameness (ὁμοῖον, ἶσον) of which Parmenides speaks in "Truth" is reflexive rather than distributive (οἷ . . . ἶσον); it is nothing short of identity, unity, total integration.

ification of Aphrodite. In (xiv) I have recorded a responsion which I find between the radical concept of Peitho in "Truth"[61] and the merely physical conception of Love or Eros in "Doxa." Indeed, it is interesting to note that the different aspects or faces of divine agency which appear in "Truth" have their secular counterpart in "Doxa." To the guiding *daimōn* (B1.3) corresponds a goddess who "dispatches" and "pilots" (B12); to Justice and Fate one who assigns "due portions" (B12.2); to Constraint a "driving Constraint" (B10.6); to Persuasion a goddess of Love, and Eros himself (B12, B13).

Finally, in the passages of row (xvi) we can see how two of the most important concepts in the proofs of BS become trivialized in the "Doxa." The phrase "it now is" appears in BS.5 in a context which assigns it unmistakably the sense of tenseless reality; in B19.1 it expresses the historical present tense. Correspondingly, whereas the $τελ$-words of BS convey the sense of actuality and perfection, the verb $τελευτήσοσι$ in B19.2 has the more prosaic significance of "they will die."

It should be remembered that in all these cases the ambiguity achieves a number of effects. First, it shows us concretely that mortals are aware (if only subconsciously) of their commitment to reality. Second, the ambiguous character of the language shows why they are misled into thinking that they have reached truth. Third, it shows mortals as being indecisive, "two-headed," and ambivalent; they go only part of the way to reality, and then turn back. Finally, it serves as irony on the part of the goddess and Parmenides, at the expense of mortal *doxai*.

B16: "Wandering" and "Fullness"

Perhaps the most effective use of ambiguity is in B16. It is now generally agreed that the correct text is:

---

[61] See *The Route*, pp. 146-63.

ὡς γὰρ ἑκάστοτ᾿ ἔχει κρᾶσις μελέων πολυπλάγκτων,
τὼς νόος ἀνθρώποισι παρέστηκεν· τὸ γὰρ αὐτό
ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις ἀνθρώποισιν
καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί· τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἐστὶ νόημα.[62]

The simplest and most convincing syntactical construction of these lines is the one given by Tarán.[63] He translates:

For as at any time the mixture of the much wandering body is, so does mind come to men. For the same thing is that the nature of the body thinks in each and all men; for the full is thought.[64]

With most interpreters, Tarán reads the fragment as a physiological theory of thought:

In each and all men, what the constitution of the body thinks is the same, for the full is thought. The body, of the individual and of humanity as a whole, thinks the same, i.e. *to pleon*. That is, whenever a given ratio of Light and Night is present in the body the same thought would result, since thought is the result of the whole mixture. Consequently, thought would be automatically determined by whatever is present in the body at any given moment.[65]

The poets had spoken of the mind of men as determined by what Zeus sends from day to day, and Parmenides gave a

---

[62] So Tarán, pp. 168-70. Mansfeld keeps the accusative *κρᾶσιν* of the MSS. He then has to postulate *νόος* or "the goddess" (he favors the latter) as subject of *ἔχει* (pp. 175-85). With either subject *ἔχει* must carry an unusual sense. Tarán's solution is clearly preferable.

[63] Cf. pp. 168-70, and 253-58.

[64] Ibid., p. 169.

[65] Ibid., p. 258.

naturalistic version of this commonplace within the framework of "Doxa."

This is correct so far as it goes; but the Greek words have a background of associations which Tarán's analysis leaves unexplored. To begin with, the ambiguity of *τὸ πλέον* should not be ignored. There has been considerable discussion as to whether the relevant sense is "the more" or "the full." But the idea of "the full," at least if we should follow Tarán in connecting the latter with "ratio," cannot be isolated from that of "*the more* relatively to *the less*,"[66] and so a choice between these two senses is not to be pressed in the present case. It is likely that the doctrine "thought is *to pleon*" derives whatever plausibility it had for Parmenides' audience not so much from philosophical theorizing, but from familiar linguistic usage. In English we say "I would rather . . . " (etymologically, "I would sooner," cf. French *plutôt*). The corresponding Greek idiom uses *pleon*, "more," and can serve to express an opinion or belief as well as a preference: *πλέον ἔφερέ οἱ γνώμη*, "he inclined rather to the belief."[67] The view that the actual or final thought or preference is the one which "prevails" or "dominates" is built into the semantics of Greek, as well as in that of other Indo-European languages, and Parmenides is exploiting the familiarity of this view in saying "thought is *to pleon*." As I will show shortly, some important associations of *pleon* = "the full," established in linguistic usage, are also involved. But in the context of B16 these point away from the commonplace toward a specifically Parmenidean doctrine. First let me focus on some of the other words in the fragment.

---

[66] Tarán recognizes that his interpretation "does not nullify Theophrastus' statement that thought would be different if what prevails is the hot (Fire or Light) or the cold (Night)" (p. 258).

[67] Hdt. 8.100; cf. LSJ, s.v. *πλείων*, *πλέον*, II.2.

The adjective *polyplanktos*, "much tossed about" or "much led astray," suggests immediately that there is more than physiological psychology to the fragment. The word makes us think of the *plaktos noos*, "distracted mind" (B6.6), of mortals,[68] and it activates the motif of the Journey that is so distinctly dominant in the first part of the poem. The effect is strengthened by the use of the word *melea*, "limbs," for the human frame (cf. "body" in the translation above). The combination "limbs much led astray"[69] has the emotive force of "weary limbs of a luckless traveler."[70] Note further that the phrase *noos parestēken*, "mind comes," is actually an instance of the idiom

---

[68] Cf. Gregory Vlastos, "Parmenenides' Theory of Knowledge," *TAPA*, 77 (1946), 69; Hermann Frankel, *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens* 2d ed. (Munich, 1960), pp. 175 and 176 n. 3; Heribert Boeder, *Grund und Gegenwart als Frageziel der frühgriechischen Philosophie* (The Hague, 1962), pp. 128 ff.; also Reinhardt, p. 77 (above, pp. 306-07).

[69] It should be noted that *μελέων πολυπλάγκτων* taken by itself admits of another translation as well, viz. "of the wretched (miserable, luckless) wanderers." In Homer the adjective *μέλεος* means "vain, useless, idle, empty" (see Cunliffe, s.v.). But after Homer it appears with reference to men in the sense given above, especially in tragedy: See LSJ, s.v., and cf. *μελεοπαθής, μελεόπονος* and *μελεόφρων*. The word *κρᾶσις* in line 1 makes this translation of *μελέων* unlikely. But the homonymous form might have been felt as a distant echo, and this may account for Parmenides' choice of *μέλεα* for "limbs, body" instead of the more common *γυῖα*.

[70] Recall that Odysseus is *πολύπλαγκτος* (*Od*. 17.511), that he is introduced in the opening lines of the Odyssey as *ὃς μάλα πολλά / πλάγχθη*, and that *πολύτλας* is one of his epithets.

paristasthai, "to come into one's head, to occur to one."[71] The idiom views thought as a completely passive process,[72] something which happens or occurs. This is the converse of Parmenides' own conception of thought as a "quest," a directed search. Note finally that the syntax of the first tw lines is that of the Homeric simile: "even as (*hōs*) . . . even so (*tōs*) . . . ." To notice this is to realize that the fragment does more than posit a causal dependence of the state of mind on the state of the body. It likens the occurrence of thought among men to the varying state (*krasis hekastote*) of "limbs much tossed about." Once again we hear that human thought is a *planē*, "wandering." But now we are also told that it is a *krasis*, a "confusion" or a "muddle," which amplifies the charges of "two-headed" and "hordes of no discernment" (B6).

What I have discussed so far are negative aspects of B16: They belong with the record of contrasts between "Truth" and the "Doxa." But the remarkable fact is that in the second and third sentences of the fragment there are also positive aspects. If the second sentence had been preserved in isolation, we would feel justified to place it in the context of "Truth." Tarán's translation is very revealing in this connection: "For the same *thing* is that the nature of the body thinks in each and all men."[73] If we hear of a certain "same thing" that is the object of thought of "the individual and of humanity as a whole,"[74] can we resist the implication that this "same thing" is *to eon*? Of course, Parmenides did not say "same thing," but simply "same," and the correct paraphrase of the direct meaning is "same

---

[71] Cf. LSJ, s.v. παρίστημι, B, IV.
[72] Cf. Vlastos, "Parrnenides' Theory," p. 69: "This extraordinary notion of the corpse-like passivity of sense perception. . . ."
[73] Page 169 (italics mine).
[74] Tarán, p. 258.

state" or "same condition." Sill, there remains an uncanny similarity both in wording and in syntax between B16 and such lines as B3, B4, and B8.34 ff.

Indeed a number of scholars have stressed this affinity of B16 with statements concerning the relation of mind to reality, or with passages involving the idea of "fullness" in the first part of the poem.[75] But one can easily go too far in this direction. The similarities can seduce us into treating the epistemology and metaphysics of "Doxa" as the next best thing to the epistemology and metaphysics of "Truth"—against Parmenides' express warning to the contrary.[76] These similarities have even nurtured the unorthodox thesis that B16 actually belongs to the first part.[77] At the other extreme, one may ignore these verbal echoes as only accidental, and then proceed to a physio-psycholog-

---

[75] Cf. Fränkel, *Wege*, pp. 177 ff.; Deichgräber, p. 699; Untersteiner, pp. cxcix-ccx; Jean Bollack, "Sur deux Fragments de Parménide (4 et 16)," *Revue des études grecques*, 70 (1957), 66-71; J. H. M. M. Loenen, *Parmenides, Melissus, Gorgias: A Reinterpretation of Eleatic Philosophy* (Assen, 1959), pp. 50-60; Jackson P. Hershbell, "Parmenides' Way of Truth and B16," *Apeiron*, 4 (1970), no. 2, pp.1-23.

[76] This is true, in varying degrees, of the interpretations by all of the authors mentioned in the preceding note. Bollack's account (which draws specifically on the similarity between B4 and B16) goes furthest in reconciling "Doxa" with "Truth." He finds that τὸ πλέον in B16-4 refers to the "plénitude de ce qui est" (p. 69) and comments: "les hommes, dans l' univers de leurs propre opinions . . . peuvent faire l'expérience d'un être qui unit pensée et choses, qui est τὸ ἐόν et qui est τὸ πλέον, et devenir sensibles au reflet de l'Être" (pp. 70 f.). Also: "la pensée, à défaut de contempler la perfection de l'Être, peut saisir l'unité de ce qui est" (p. 71).

[77] Cf. Loenen, pp. 58-60; Hershbell, pp. 9-16.

ical interpretation of B16 without further comment.[78] But this would be to deny verbal features which are in no way esoteric, and which have repeatedly drawn the attention of modern readers.

In yet one more case, we find that what is reflected in modern scholarship as a controversy in interpretation is actually an ambiguity intrinsic to the text. B16 does three things: Openly and directly it gives a physiology of thought; indirectly it censures human thought as "wandering" and "confusion"; but it also gives subtle reminders of the proper relationship between mind and reality. What we hear is that the *physis* of the bodily frame for each and all men *phroneei* that very same thing, the what-is. This radical reorientation of the sentence as a whole is matched by a shift in the meaning of the two words I have left untranslated. The noun *physis* now assumes the meaning of "inner essence, inner reality." And the verb *phroneei* recovers its proper and global sense of "to mind," which combines intellect, volition, and affect. Deep inside, each and all men think and desire (cf. B2.2 "quest") the same thing.

But the most interesting shift appears in the final line, with *pleon*. As indicated in Table (3), row (v) (above, p. 335), the idea of fullness plays contrasting roles in the two parts of the poem. So when the goddess tells us "thought is the full" we think first of the full as a *krasis*, a mixture externally induced. Yet the language (see again Table [3]) rings with a radically different suggestion: "thought is the whole (cf. οὖλον), the all-together-one (cf. ὁμοῦ πᾶν ἕν), the cohesive (cf. συνεχές), the fullness of what-is (cf. ἔμπλεον ἐόντος), the consorting of what-is with what-is (cf. B8.25). Parmenides is, in effect, telling us that "thought is fulfillment." This idiom is no less natural in Greek than it

[78] So Mansfeld, pp. 185-94; Tarán, pp. 253-63; Guthrie, vol. 2, pp. 67-70.

is in English. The verb *pleroō*, "fill full of," can be used with reference to the realization of what *thymos*, "spirit," wants;[79] it can also be used with reference to paying back a debt.[80] The adjective *plērēs* can also be used with reference to psychological fulfillment,[81] and it is well known that Plato (and others) projected this linguistic usage into a quasi-physiological theory.[82] The sense of "fulfillment, accomplishment" is well established for the verbs *ekplēroo*[83] and *ekpimplēmi*,[84] both of which mean literally "to fill up." Many of the contexts which are served by the *tel-* (accomplishment) words could also be served by one of the words with the root *plē-*,[85] Conversely, one of the familiar ways of expressing nonaccomplishment or nonrealization in Greek is through adjectives such as *chaunos*, "empty, gaping,"[86] or *kenos*, "empty, void."[87] These uses of *chaunos* and *kenos* are especially interesting because they figure in the vocabulary of pessimistic anthropology of the sixth- and fifth-century lyric poets. However, all of the uses to which I have referred are recorded for the fifth century or earlier, and we may assume that they were familiar to Parmenides. Given this pattern of linguistic usage, *pleon* comes to be very close conceptually to *tetelesmenon*, "accomplished,

---

[79] Cf. LSJ, s.v., I.2.

[80] Ibid., s.v.,, III.5.

[81] Ibid., s.v., I.3.

[82] Cf. *Gorg*. 493a ff., Rep. 585a ff.; cf. also Empedocles A95. The theory of *Phil*. 31b ff. and *Tim*. 64a ff. is more sophisticated.

[83] Cf. LSJ, s.v., I.4.

[84] Ibid., s.v., II and III.

[85] One may thus speak of the fulfillment (πλη-) or of the accomplishment (τελ-) of any of the following: μοῖρα, θυμός, a dream, the length of a year, a curse, sacred rites.

[86] Cf. LSJ, s.vv., II and I.2, respectively.

[87] Cf. Hershbell, p. 13.

perfect" (B8.42, cf. 8.4, 8.32). The phrase *τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἐστὶ νόημα* can also be understood as *τὸ τετελεσμένον ἐστὶ νόημα*, "thought is that which is realized."

Let me review this analysis of B16 as a whole by presenting in sequence translations which capture the different aspects of the fragment. First the direct statement:

> For such as is the state of mixture at each moment of the much-wandering limbs, even such thoughts occur to men. For it is the same [condition] that the nature of the limbs apprehends among men, both all and each. For thought is "the full" [and "the more" and "the rather"].

Next the mocking statement of human thought as "wandering" and "confusion":

> For such as is the confoundment [or "the muddlement, mix-up, befuddlement"] at each moment of limbs much tossed about and led astray, even such thoughts come into the heads of men. For it is the same [confused complex] that the constitution of the limbs apprehends among men, both all and each. For thought is what preponderates [in the mixture].

And now the last two sentences with their radically different suggestion:

> For it is the same [thing, viz. "the what-is"] that the inner essence of the human frame apprehends, both for all mankind and in each man. For thought is what is fulfilled.

I am not saying, of course, that Parmenides intended that we should read the passage three times, each time attending to a different pattern of associations. Nor that he intended that we should choose among these three possibilities, or that he wanted to leave us puzzled. The correct and openly intended meaning is the one given in the first

translation. But he chose his language deftly, so as to create something like counterpoint: a dominant theme, a second theme similar to the first but with a different tonality, and a third theme which is the reversal of the other two.

"Doxa" as a Study in Deception

I am prepared to allow that not all of the cases of contrast, similarity, play, ambiguity, and irony explored in this study have an equal claim to being intentional. A good many may well be accidents. But, as it has often been argued, the notion of "accident" in literature is openended (as in ordinary life: a slip of the tongue is an accident, and yet it isn't). Certainly Parmenides did not consciously and programmatically design even a majority of the subtleties for which I have given evidence. He simply put himself in the frame of mind of a "deceptive ordering of words." Translated into mental directives this would be: (a) Speak in the manner which is directly intelligible to ordinary mortals. (b) Speak in a way that indicates the felt attractiveness of what-is. (c) Also choose words that point toward what-is-not. (d) Choose words that have a familiar-but-incoherent and an unfamiliar-but-illuminating meaning. (e) Choose words that are equivocal even at the ordinary level. (f) Speak as an ironist, so as to give the lie to the mortals' own beliefs. Something like this set of directives could have served as a controlling influence over his choice of vocabulary.

The primary contribution of the analysis in this chapter is, of course, to the old question of the relation between "Truth" and "Doxa." Why did Parmenides bother, after the proofs of BS, to append an exposition of "mortal opinions" that was actually longer than the first part? He did it as a case-study in self-deception, indecisiveness, and confusion. This does not contradict the usual reading of the "Doxa" as dialectical—in the sense of refutation. But it adds some depth to this view, and it accounts better for

the detail and length of the exposition. Moreover, it tries to do justice to the many similarities between the two parts, but without mitigating the contrast between the "temper of *eupeithēs* truth" and "mortal opinions in which there is no true fidelity (*pistis*)."

There are three further implications. The first concerns Parmenides' status as a poet. He certainly did not compose the kind of poetry that the Romantics would have appreciated. Yet there is a rhetorical cleverness in his use of language. He can exploit pairings and contrasts, etymologies, associations, verbal conceits, and puns with at least as much relish, and often with as much success, as Heraclitus. Both men combine a philosopher's interest in literal, original, and paradigmatic meaning, with something of the poet's sensitivity to the psychological suggestiveness and acoustic associations of words. But whereas Heraclitus packs his observations into charged and luminous apothegms, Parmenides uses his keen sense for language to trace out implications at length, to project alternative and related models of his concepts, to establish multiple and systematic connections, and to detect and exploit ambiguity for the purpose of argument and refutation.

The second implication is of greater significance philosophically, for it concerns what might be called the "speculative" or "heuristic" use of ambiguity. As I have argued in this study, it is not enough to say that the "Doxa" is in a double relationship of contrast and similarity to "Truth"; we must also notice that the very words used in the table of contraries, or in expounding the basic assumptions and governing processes of "Doxa," carry double meaning. In short, there are multiple relations of *homonymy* between the two parts of the poem. What comes after the goddess' warning is a case-study in the deception which mortals unwittingly practice on themselves. And so, those who observe the warning and "pay heed" will get from the second part of the poem a semantic commentary

on "Truth." Cast in the form of an epilogue to the poem as a whole, this commentary would read somewhat as follows:

We must make a *krisis*, a "decision," "separation," and "judgment"—but not in the sense in which mortals do so (BS.55-56). The what-is is "unborn and unperishing"—but it is so in a radical sense of "nongenerable" and "nonperishable," not in any sense which might imply its being in time. The what-is is "whole" and "full"—but not in the sense of a physical *krasis* or *mixis*, "mixture" (B9.3, B12, B16). It is "immobile"—but not in the sense of ponderous earth. It is *tetelesmenon*, "realized, accomplished, perfect"—but not in the sense of "coming to an end" (cf. B19.2 *teleutēsousi*]. It is "well-rounded"—but without implying a distinction between "outermost," "in-between," and "center" (B12.1-3). It is held by "bands" (*peirata*)—but not in the sense in which physical things or the sky are so held (cf. B10.5-7, B12, A37). It is within the "bounds" of Justice—but not for the purpose of preserving equality with its rivals (cf. B9-4). It submits to Constraint—but one that is internal, not a "driving Constraint" (B10.6). It submits to Persuasion—but not in the sense of Aphrodite or Eros, who bring opposites together (B12-4, B13, B18). Indeed, there is a "quest" for it—but not in the sense in which one of two opposites is impelled to join its counterpart, rather in the sense of a commitment, a relationship of *pistis*, trust and good faith, between our mind and reality.

Of course, Parmenides did not have this semantic vocabulary. His solution was to write a didactic poem in two parts. In the second part words occur in their familiar, ordinary meaning; but paradox and oxymoron are felt as incipient, and references to what-is-not are disguised all too thinly. In the first part there is logical consistency and rigor; but the words assume an unfamiliar and figurative sense.

The third implication is an historical corollary to

the second. It assigns to Parmenides a role in the development of the concept of "systematic ambiguity," or "systematic equivocity." The suggestion will appear surprising at first blush, since the one author for whom this concept becomes central, Aristotle, repeatedly censures Parmenides for having failed to appreciate that "being is spoken of in many senses."[88] What Aristotle means, of course, is that there are no modes of reality or categorial distinctions within the domain of Parrnenidcs' what-is. This is perfectly sound as an interpretation, so far as it goes. But note that Aristotle's criticism does not exclude equivocity of a different genre: one which is correctly understood not as *pros hen* homonymy, or "focal meaning,"[89] but as equivocity between different *levels* of knowledge. Homonymy is not only the Greek term for equivocation; it is also one of the words which express the relationship between particulars and Forms, images and originals, in Plato's metaphysics.[90] The sense in which a particular is *F* and the sense in which a Form is *F* are not the same. If we overlook this, we are caught in the paradoxes of the *Parmenides*. It is precisely because this implies transcendence or *chōrismos* that Aristotle was anxious to supplant the Platonic concept of *levels* of meaning with one of *focal organization*.

We seem to have an early model of this Platonic conception in the dialogic practice of Socrates, or (to speak in terms of the actual literary evidence), in the structure of the early, aporetic dialogues of Plato. Fallacy and equivo-

---

[88] Cf. *Phys*. I.185b20-30, *Metaph*. XIV. 1089a1-15.

[89] Cf. *Metaph*, IV. 1003a33 ff.; W. D. Ross, *Aristotle's* Metaphysics, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1953), vol. 1, p. 256; G. E. L. Owen, "Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle," in *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-Fourth Century*, ed. I. Düring and G. E. L. Owen (Goteborg, 1960), pp. 163-90.

[90] Cf. *Phaedo* 78e, *Parm*. 133d3, *Soph*, 234b, *Tim*. 52a.

cation in the context of these dialogues often point to an unstated but positive thesis. The disappointing conclusion at the end may even be identical verbally with a popular or traditional view criticized at the start. But the discerning listener or reader will notice that key terms have received (contextually) a fresh interpretation in the course of the argument, and that the lame conclusion may now serve as the homonymous vehicle of an important insight.[91]

It would now seem that this dialogic practice of Socrates was not the only source for Plato's conception of homonymous and graded levels of understanding. The goddess of Parmenides' poem was also one who had spoken as an ironist.

---

[91] See Rosamond Kent Sprague, *Plato's Use of Fallacy: A Study of the* Euthydemus and *Some Other Dialogues* (London, 1962), pp. 80-87 and passim.