

Articles

The Significance of **κατὰ πάντ' ἄ(ς)τη** in Parmenides Fr. 1.3

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Few of the problematic aspects of Parmenides' poem have proven more resistant to solution than the famous crux contained in the first sentence of his Fr. 1 (following our best MS, N= Laur. 85.19, of Sextus' *adversus Mathematicos* vii 111):

ἵπποι ταί με φέρουσιν, ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἰκάνοι,
πέμπον, ἐπεὶ μ' ἐς ὁδὸν βῆσαν πολύφημον ἄγουσαι
δαίμονος, ἢ κατὰ †πάντ' ἄτη† φέρει εἰδότα φῶτα·
τῇ φερόμην, τῇ γάρ με πολύφραστοι φέρον ἵπποι
ἄρμα τιταίνουσαι, κοῦραι δ' ὁδὸν ἡγεμόνευον.¹

While a credible translation must await discussion of a half dozen difficult phrases (ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἰκάνοι, ὁδὸν πολύφημον, εἰδότα φῶτα, πολύφραστοι ἵπποι, κοῦραι ἡγεμόνευον, as well as κατὰ...φέρει), the general sense of the sentence seems clear enough: Parmenides relates how horses (mares, judging from the feminine forms ταί, ἄγουσαι, and τιταίνουσαι), the ones that are now carrying him, were (at some earlier time) in the process of leading or escorting him when they brought and set him down on a roadway of a goddess that (the τῇ φερόμην in line 4 suggests that ἡ refers to the road rather than to the goddess) carries 'a knowing man' κατὰ πάντ' ἄτη—at which point the neuter accusative plural form πάντα ('all things') combines with the nominative singular of the feminine noun ἄτη ('distraction, blindness, heaven-sent folly') to render further translation impossible.² Two minor variants, πάντᾶτη (in L) and πάντα τῇ (in E₃ and others), are equally devoid of meaning.

For more than fifty years, from the publication in 1912 of the third edition of

¹ As printed in Diels and Kranz 1951, i 228, with two significant modifications: (1) in line 3, I retain the original πάντ' ἄτη of N and mark it within obeli (as will be explained shortly, in 3rd and subsequent editions DK printed πάντ' ἄστη); and (2) also in line 3, I retain the δαίμονος of Sextus' text rather than emending to δαίμονες (as proposed by Stein and Wilamowitz). DK's iota adscript has also been changed to iota subscript for the sake of consistency with passages quoted from other authors.

² H. Tarrant's heroic attempt to defend ἄτη notwithstanding. On his account, 'the knowing man' is led—astray—by the goddess Delusion/Deception, and the pathway alluded to in Fr. 1 corresponds with the way of *doxa* of Fr. 8. But there are some major discrepancies: one whose νόος was enmeshed in appearances could not possibly qualify by Parmenidean standards as 'a knowing man'. The notion of a 'goddess of appearances', moreover, is inherently implausible (it is Zeus himself, so *Od.* xviii 137 tells us, who brings each day to mortals). We have every reason, then, to continue to *contrast* knowledge with deception, rather than to attempt to unite them.

DK until 1968, it was widely supposed that N actually contained the phrase *κατὰ πάντ' ἄστη*—‘down to, along, on, or among all cities’, but A.H. Coxon disposed of that idea when he reported that DK’s ἄστη was actually a misreading of the MS, caused perhaps by a passing glance at the *αστοι* in the *πολύφραστοι* in the adjacent line. Coxon’s claim that N contained ἄτη and not ἄστη was subsequently corroborated by Tarán 1977; a photocopy of Laur. 85.19. f. 124v. clearly showing the ἄτη has since been published in Coxon’s 1986. Coxon 1968, 69 also commented that, ‘The more percipient critics have realized that ἄστη is difficult or impossible to defend, for it makes no good sense and is incompatible with 1.27, according to which the way is *ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου*.’ (Parmenides, in short, could not possibly have been alluding here to ‘a knowing man’ who, while he is being carried down to, or down along all cities, simultaneously travels ‘far from the beaten track of men’.)

The precedents identified for the phrase *κατὰ πάντ' ἄστη*, moreover, have been few in number, on occasion problematic in their own right, and generally quite distant from anything going on here in Parmenides’ Fr. 1. DK ii 228n cited: “*Ἥλιε Πῦρ διὰ πάντ' ἄστη νίσειαι*—‘Fire of the Sun go through all cities’ (Orpheus Fr. 47.3)³; *πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω*—‘He saw the cities and came to know the mind of many men’ (Homer, *Od.* i 3); *ἄστεα δ' ἀνθρώπων ἡγήσομαι*—‘I will lead (you) to cities of men’ (xv 82); *σμικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα ἄστεα ἀνθρώπων ἐπεξίων*—‘speaking of men’s cities great and small’ (Herodotus i 5); and *κατ' ἀνδρῶν κράατα βαίνει*—‘she walks on the heads of men’ (*Iliad* xix 93, for *κατά* in the sense of ‘on’ or ‘on top of’). To this list Heitsch added *Od.* xv 492; xvi 63-64; xix 170; and xxiii 267, each of which contains the phrase (spoken by Odysseus): *πολλὰ βροτῶν ἐπὶ ἄστεα*—‘to many cities of mortals’. The phrase *κατὰ πάντ' ἄστη*, then, cannot be found in any of the manuscripts, has yet to be shown to make good sense in this context, and is without a known parallel.

Nevertheless, I believe, and will proceed to argue, that a good case can be made for restoring ἄστη by emendation as the original text of Parmenides’ Fr. 1.3. The case will consist of showing how, when viewed in the larger context of early Greek poetry, *κατὰ πάντ' ἄστη* can be seen to possess an entirely natural meaning and, in concert with virtually every other feature in the opening lines of Fr. 1, contribute to a single, appropriate objective for the poem as a whole. The immediate question, then, is essentially a philological matter, but to answer it we must consider how Parmenides’ views, aims, and methods might have been shaped by the artistic and intellectual traditions of his time and place.

I. Some Recent Proposals

Having disposed of *κατὰ πάντ' ἄστη*, Coxon opted for more radical surgery by reviving Heyne’s emendation of ἄ(ν)τη(ν)—‘face to face’, ‘in front of’, or (more

³ Guthrie’s caution (1969, ii 7) that the Orphic text was too uncertain to be added to the evidence has been recently reinforced by H. Pelliccia.

controversially) ‘straight ahead’. By way of justification, Coxon cited *Il.* viii 399-400, where, so he claimed, ‘going ἄντην’ is set in contrast with ‘turning back’:

βάσκ' ἴθι, Ἰρι ταχεῖα, πάλιν τρέπε μηδ' ἕα ἄντην
ἔρχεσθ(αι)

Go, swift Iris, turn (them) back and do not allow (them) to go straight ahead...

As Coxon 1986, 9-10 noted, the surrounding passage had already provided Parmenides with more than one turn of phrase (τῆ ῥα δι' αὐτάων appears both at viii 396 and in Parmenides Fr. 1.20; and Homer's description of the gate through which Hera and Athena travel on their way to meet Zeus is echoed in the description Parmenides gives of the gate through which the youth passes on his way to the house of the goddess). Even more promisingly, a contrast between ‘going straight ahead’ and ‘turning back’ would be of unquestionable relevance to Parmenides' philosophy since the mortals he is about to pillory in his Fr. 7.4-9 are described as ‘knowing nothing...wandering...for whom the path of all things is backward turning (παλίντροπός ἐστι κέλευθος). Although not mentioned by Coxon, the idea of the ‘straight path of knowledge’ also appears in Fr. 1 when at line 21 the maidens are said to ἰθὺς ἔχον—‘keep straight’ the path of the chariot and mares along the broad way’ (cf. LSJ, s.v ἔχω, II8). The Coxon-Heyne conjecture of κατὰ πάντ' ἄ(ν)τη(ν) is, therefore, not without its charms.

But, as has been argued by Renehan 1992, 401, it is also almost certainly not correct:

It is true enough that the Liddell and Scott *Greek Lexicon* translates ἄντην in this passage of Homer by ‘straightforwards’, but they happen to be wrong. ἄντην, cognate with ἀντί, is an adverb that denotes ‘opposition’, ‘confrontation’; and in the Homeric passage in question the sense is ‘do not permit them to come to confront me’, as the words that follow make perfectly clear. There is no evidence that ἄντην ever means ‘straight onwards’ or ‘straightforwards’ and ἄντην must therefore be a false conjecture in Parmenides because it gives a wrong sense. Any notion of ‘confrontation’ or ‘opposition’ would be devoid of meaning here.

That Renehan is right about the meaning of ἄντην ἔρχεσθαι is evident from the full context of *Il.* viii 399-400:

βάσκ' ἴθι, Ἰρι ταχεῖα, πάλιν τρέπε μηδ' ἕα ἄντην
ἔρχεσθ'· οὐ γὰρ καλὰ συνοισόμεθα πτόλεμόνδε.

Go, swift Iris, turn (them) back but do not allow (them) ἄντην ἔρχεσθ(αι), for we will not fittingly join in combat.

The inappropriateness of combat among the immortals provides a very good reason for Iris ‘not to allow them to come face to face’ with Zeus, but no reason whatever for Iris not to allow the goddesses ‘to go straight ahead’.

Setting aside the Coxon-Heyne κατὰ πάντ' ἄ(ν)τη(ν), Renehan proposes that we return (or in the light of Coxon's discovery concerning N, emend) to κατὰ

πάντ' ἄ(σ)τη, in light of the many significant parallels between the journey of Odysseus and that of Parmenides' youth, who, if not returning home, has at least embarked on a νόστος or journey of literally epic proportions.⁴ Especially significant, Renehan claims, is *Od.* xv 82 (also cited in DK), in which appear not only ἄστεα, but also horses (ἵππους), the notion of guiding (ἡγήσομαι), as well as ἀπέμψει, a compound form of the verb πέμπω that appears in Parmenides' line 2. Furthermore:

Of all the great men of the heroic age Odysseus was the most famous for 'intellect' and none other undertook a more exciting, and mysterious, journey, encompassing the world of both the living and the dead. None other, in short, was a more appropriate symbol, for Parmenides, of the man who knows as he goes on his intellectual, and heroic journey. (Renehan 1992, 403)

In general, there is no reason to dispute the claim (now well established through the efforts of Deichgräber, Tarán, Havelock, Mourelatos, Coxon, Pfeiffer, Böhme, and others) that the Homeric epics, especially the *Odyssey*, furnish a great many valuable clues to the full meaning of the language and imagery in Parmenides' poem. But the links between 1.3 and *Od.* xv 82 are tenuous at best. The recipient of the send-off in book 15 was in fact not Odysseus, but Telemachus; and he was there addressed and escorted not by an immortal goddess, but by the eminently mortal Menelaus. It is not obvious, then, how an allusion to xv 67ff. could possibly have called to anyone's mind the travels of *Odysseus*. Parmenides' goddess, moreover, speaks of a single roadway that carries the knowing man over, down to, or among all cities; Odysseus, by contrast, was notoriously a 'wanderer along many ways' (cf. the archetypal characterization of him in the opening lines of the *Odyssey*: "Ἄνδρα...πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλά/ πλάγχθη...).

More importantly, the theories of knowledge and reality Parmenides is about to propose make it highly unlikely that the phrases εἰδότα φῶτα and κατὰ πάντα... were meant to call to mind Odysseus and his extraordinary journey.⁵ In Fr. 7, for example, Parmenides' goddess warns:

μηδέ σ' ἔθος πολύπειρον ὁδὸν κατὰ τήνδε βιάσθω,

⁴ Pelliccia 1988, 511 has argued that the repetition of the sequence τατη φερ in v. 3 and -τα τη φερ in vs. 3-4 rendered τατη wholly corrupt, and thereby undermined any attempt to plausibly reconstruct the original text. But, as Renehan 1992, 402 replies, 'while it is true that *any* letters may have originally stood in verse 3, it is also true that the closer in appearance the original letters were to the following sequence, the more likely they were to become corrupted by attraction to those following letters. In these circumstances an appeal to paleographical similarity is neither specious nor, indeed, conservative—if a word of similar appearance to the letters ατη, one which seems wholly appropriate in context, suggests itself. Such a word is ἄστη'.

⁵ I am assuming that many of the features in the poem foreshadow aspects of the account to follow. As Gallop 1984 puts it: 'The imagery of the chariot ride contains numerous pre-echoes of the goddess's instruction... The setting of [Parmenides'] revelation neatly encapsulates its content.' For an extended defense of this assumption, see Gallop 1984, and Leshner (forthcoming).

νωμῶν ἄσκοπον ὄμμα καὶ ἠχῆεσαν ἀκοὴν
καὶ γλῶσσαν, κρίναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον
ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα.

Nor let custom born of much experience force you to ply along
this road

An aimless eye and echoing ear

And tongue, but judge by discourse⁶ a much-contested testing⁷

Spoken by me.

The goddess calls on the youth to resist the pull of custom or ‘force of habit’ to think about ‘what is’ or ‘that which is’ (τὸ εἶν) in the terms made available to him through his language and sensory experience. Our sense of sight (eye) is ‘aimless’ (literally: ‘untargetted’) and our hearing (ear) and faculty of speech (the ‘tongue’ of mortals) are ‘echoing’ in so far as they lead us to believe that ‘what is’ admits of divisions and pluralities, comes into being and is destroyed, moves about, and develops over time. The alternative she proposes, judging the ἔλεγχος or ‘testing’ by means of λόγος calls for clear and rigorous reflection on the arguments she presents, not on extensive sensory experience. In short, the testimony of eye, ear, and tongue through which Odysseus came to know the cities and νόος of many is just the source of knowledge the goddess here directs the youth to ignore.

Furthermore, the much-wandering that is one of Odysseus’ defining attributes is associated in Parmenides’ poem not with truth and knowledge, but with error and ignorance (cf. ἦν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν/ πλάττονται, δίκρανοι—‘[the way] on which mortals, knowing nothing, wander, split-brained...’ Fr. 6.4-5). Few persons in fact could better symbolize the ‘backward turning’ path of mortals than the sailor who (at *Od.* x 45-55) approached the shoreline of his homeland only to be blown all the way back to his starting place on Aeolus’ island. And while the world Parmenides is prepared to countenance as real is forever locked into absolute immobility and changelessness by the bonds of logical necessity (cf. Fr. 8.26-28), the world in which Odysseus maneuvered his quicksilver intellect (cf. the defining epithets, πολύμητις, πολυμήχανος) had precisely the opposite properties:

its field of application is the world of movement, of multiplicity and of ambiguity. It bears on fluid situations which are constantly changing and which at every moment combine contrary features and forces that are opposed to each other... The many-colored, shimmering nature of *mētis* is a mark of its kinship with the divided, shifting world of multiplicity in the midst of which it operates. (Detienne and Vernant 1978, 20-21)

In each of these ways, the qualities of Odysseus’ intelligence as depicted in the stories of the *Odyssey* would be wholly out of character with the view of knowl-

⁶ Following the translation by Coxon 1986, 58.

⁷ Cf. Pindar, *Nemean* 8.20; Baccylides, Fr. 14; discussed in Leshner 1984, and Coxon 1986, 192.

edge Parmenides is about to champion.⁸ Considered in this light it would be hard to imagine a *less* appropriate model for Parmenides' 'knowing man' than the much-wandering, slip-sliding, experiential-learning Odysseus.

Thus neither the *κατὰ πάντ' ἄτη* of our best MS, nor the Heyne-Coxon proposal to emend to *κατὰ πάντ' ἄ(ν)τη(ν)*, nor Renehan's proposal to emend to *κατὰ πάντ' ἄ(σ)τη* on the basis of various Homeric parallels can be considered free of problems. And while many other emendations have been proposed over the years,⁹ none has yet gained wide acceptance.

So far in the present discussion two assumptions have been allowed to go unchallenged: (1) that 'the knowing man who is carried down to, or among all cities' must refer simply to Parmenides (or to the youth of the poem who is about to receive instruction from the goddess)¹⁰; and (2) that since Parmenides sought to incorporate elements of Homeric speech and imagery within in his poem, we should look to the Homeric epics for the key to solving our problem. But in his important 1930 study Hermann Fränkel suggested an alternative to assumption (2) that, if pursued further, might also lead us to question assumption (1) as well.

Fränkel held (erroneously, as I have just suggested) that *κατὰ πάντ' ἄστη* could be 'easily explained by the Homeric simile and passages such as ἴδεν ἄστεα' (1930, 37n). But he also drew attention to a number of striking similarities (first noted by August Böckh) between the imagery of the proem of Parmenides' Fr.1 (lines 1-2, 5, and 17) and that of Pindar's *Olympian* vi. There, in celebrating the victory of Hagêsias of Syracuse, Pindar made use of the complex simile of chariot, guiding animals, pathway, and gates in speaking of his own poetic performance:

ἜΩ Φίντις, ἀλλὰ ζευξον ἤδη μοι σθένος ἡμίονων,
ἔ τάχος. ὄφρα κελεύθῳ τ' ἐν καθαροῦ
βάσομεν ὄκχον, ἴκωμαί τε πρὸς ἀνδρῶν
καὶ γένος·

But Phintis yoke to me the strength of mules
With all good speed, so that in the clear pathway,
We may mount the chariot, and I may reach (the theme of

⁸ Parmenides' youth and Odysseus do, however, have in common the fact that both put various claims through a testing process in order to determine the truth (in Homer: *πειράω*; in Parmenides: the *ἐλεγχος*). But Odysseus was hardly unique in this respect (cf. book 7 when he is put to the test by the Phaeacian men, and his duel of wits with Penelope in book 23). In any case the characterization of 'the man who knows' as one who is 'carried over, down to, or among all cities' does not itself evoke the idea of a peirastic approach to knowledge.

⁹ *κατὰ πάντ' ἀσινῆ* (Meineke, Jaeger, Becker, Mondolfo, Gallop); *καὶ πάντ' αὐτῆ* (Hermann); *κατὰ πάντ' αὐτῆ* (Mullach, DK 1st edn.); *κατὰ πᾶν αὐτῆ* (Lowe); *κατὰ πᾶν πάντῃ* (Böckh); *κατὰ πάντ' αἰδῆ* (Fülleborn); *κατὰ πάντα σαφῆ* (Brandis); *κατὰ πάντα μάθη* (Stein); *κατὰ πᾶν ἀπάτης* (Bergk); *κατὰ πάντ' ἐτεῆ* (Usener); *κατὰ πάντα ἄδαῆ* (Karsten, Nestle, Riaux); *κατὰ πάντα φέρει πάντ' εἰδότα φῶτα* (Patin), and *κατὰ πάντα τατῆ* (Wilamowitz, Barnett, DK 2nd edn., Eisler).

¹⁰ An assumption that underlies the claim (made by Jaeger 1947, 98; Coxon 1968, 69; and Pelliccia 1988, 510), that being carried 'to all cities' is necessarily incompatible with 'travelling far from the beaten path of mortals'.

these) men And their descent...

Fränkel then observed how:

Both [Pindar and Parmenides] put themselves in the hands of suprapersonal powers in the journey; the power of the Muses carries and promotes, directs and leads what the poet is engaged in. Pindar gives an additional touch by making the team which 'leads the way' identical with the victorious mules. (p. 2)

Because Fränkel assumed that Parmenides' poem had been composed by the time Pindar had written *Ol.* vi (and that Pindar would not be likely to borrow material from Parmenides), he was led to postulate the existence of an earlier prototype on which both poets had drawn.

But, having just brought this interesting connection into view, Fränkel proceeded to ignore it by electing to explain the meaning of the phrase 'a knowing man' in light of the *Homeric* passage in which the poet speaks of 'one who has already travelled many places and who thinks in his mind (*vóoc*), "Would that I were here" or "Would that I were there"' (*Il.* xv 80 ff.). The thesis of Fr. 1.1-3 could then be paraphrased as 'I travelled in the path of mental presentation... which opens up every distant place to the man who knows' (p. 4). Thus, for Fränkel, as for Tarán (1965, 12) and Mansfeld (1964, 225), who followed Fränkel's lead,¹¹ the 'knowing man' had to be someone who had previously travelled the way and was already familiar with the destination.

Fränkel's account of the meaning of *εἰδώς* here in Fr. 1.3 reflected his oft-stated view (see the reference at his n7) that all of the early Greek expressions for knowledge implied some prior perceptual awareness, most commonly through the sense of sight. But in addition to the many difficulties inherent in that thesis generally,¹² the reference here to a man who knows the destination because he has already arrived at it makes for a jarring contrast with the implication of the goddess' remark at 1.31 that at this point the youth does *not* know (cf. the future form *μαθήσεται*—'you will learn'). To make the connection with *Il.* xv even remotely plausible, moreover, we have to: (1) read *ἄσση* not as a reference to cities, but rather to 'distant places' generally (even though not all cities are dis-

¹¹ As perhaps do KRS 1983, 244 who contend that 'Parmenides already begins his journey in a blaze of light, as befits one who "knows"'; and Verdenius 1947 who follows Fränkel in reading *κατὰ πάντ' ἄσση* as 'towards any place, up to the farthest end' (i.e., as a way of describing the power of thinking—the goddess can lead a person anywhere one needs to go in order to gain knowledge). As Verdenius noted, this more generalized version of the phrase would at least parallel Sextus' paraphrase of Parmenides' words: *ὅς λόγος προπομποῦ δαίμονος τρόπον ἐπὶ τὴν ἀπάντων ὄδηγεῖ γῶσιν*—'this reason like a divine guide points the way to knowledge of all things'. But I think *κατὰ πάντ' ἄσση* has a more specific meaning in Parmenides' poem than is reflected in Sextus' summary.

¹² The main question is whether during this earlier period, all the Greek expressions for knowledge were linked with the operation of the faculties of sense perception (a thesis defended on many occasions by Bruno Snell, Kurt von Fritz, and Fränkel; for critiques, see Barnes, Heitsch 1966, Hussey, and Lesher forthcoming, as well as the discussion of the meaning of *οἶδα* under item 4 following).

tant); (2) assume that Parmenides would have identified *knowledge* with Homer's 'far-ranging *thoughts*' (even though in Fr. 6.8 he refers to *thoughts* of *know-nothing* mortals); and (3) assume that Parmenides held that all knowledge was grounded in direct perceptual acquaintance (even though Fr. 7 makes it clear that this could not possibly have been the case).

It does not appear to have been noticed, either by Fränkel or by others, that the many points of correspondence between Parmenides' Fr. 1 and Pindar's *Olympian* vi suggest a clearly apposite meaning for 'a knowing man' and 'down to all towns': both reflect the idea, expressed often in Greek lyric poetry, that as the act of composition and performance begins, the skilled poet succeeds in drawing upon and capturing a divine power, one that enables poets everywhere to create and perform their work.¹³

II. Parmenides' Fr. 1.1-5 and the Vernacular of Greek Lyric Poetry

1. ἵπποι ταί με φέρουσιν...πέμπων...ἄγουσαι...ἄρμα τιταίνουσαι, κοῦραι δ' ὁδὸν ἡγεμόνευον—'The mares that carry me...were sending...leading...pulling the chariot, and maidens were leading the way.'

Pindar's choice of the chariot simile in *Ol.* vi was probably inspired by the fact that the honoree on that occasion had won the mule chariot race at Olympia. But the simile of the Muses' chariot appears often elsewhere in his poems: 'being led along in the Muses' chariot' (ἀναγεῖσθαι...ἐν Μοισᾶν δίφρῳ, *Ol.* ix 80-81); 'the Muses' chariot starting forth' (ἔσσυται...Μοισαῖον ἄρμα, *Isth.* viii 62-62); 'having yoked the four-horsed chariot of the Pierian Muses' (ἔζευξεν ἄρμα Πιερίδων τετράορον, *Pyth.* x 65); 'the men of old who mounted the chariot of the golden-wreathed Muses' (φῶτες, οἳ χρυσαμπύκων/ ἐς δίφρον Μοισᾶν ἔβαινον, *Isth.* ii 1-2); and of 'harnessing a song of praise' (ἐγκώμιον ζευξαι μέλος, *Nem.* i 7; cf. *Isth.* viii 61; Frs. 52h, 10-14; 124a; 140b). Similarly, Bacchylides: 'White-armed Calliope, stay your well-built chariot...and sing now' (λευκῶλενε Καλλιόπα/στᾶσον εὐποίητον ἄρμα/ αὐτοῦ...ὑμνησον, *Epin.* v 176-78); 'From Piera Urania has sent me (ἔπεμπεν) a golden throne laden with famous hymns' (11); and Timotheus: 'After Orpheus...Terpander yoked the Pierian Muse to poems ten in number' (ἐπὶ τῷ δέκα/ ζευξε μοῦσαν ἐν ᾠδαίς, 19, 234 ff.). The complete naturalness of the idiom is shown by the fact that although modern modes of transportation differ enormously from those known to the archaic poet we still employ transportation terminology in order to characterize our thought processes.¹⁴ Parmenides' reference to the horses and charioteers who

¹³ In a wonderful simile (*Ion*, 533d ff.) Plato likens the poet's 'chain of inspiration' to a series of magnetized iron rings; each 'link'—from the immortals, to the poet, to the individual members of the audience—receives a divine 'charge' and passes it on.

¹⁴ As when we speak of those who 'allow their thoughts and feelings to run away with them', or who 'get carried away by their emotions', or enter into a state of rapture or 'transport'; similarly 'flights of fancy or imagination', 'vehicle of expression', etc. Parmenides' reference to 'mares' also reflected current conditions; as Tarán 1965, 9 noted, mares were the horses of choice for chariot racing. Since mares were valued for their speed, their appearance here—along with the references to

sent and led him by pulling him in a chariot along a divine roadway would then have had a familiar ring to the ears of the members of his contemporary audience—as a reference to the immortal powers of inspiration routinely invoked—or yoked—by the poet as he is sets out along ‘the pathway of song’.¹⁵ So understood, the opening sentence of Parmenides’ proem would have served an obvious purpose: it would have signalled his audience that he-Parmenides, no less than any other poet-sage-teacher, had gained access to the divine powers that guide the creative imagination.

Parmenides departs from convention, however, when he states (at 1.9) that the maidens who led him on his journey were the Heliades or ‘Daughters of the Sun’. The significance of this feature remains a matter of debate. Perhaps (as Deichgräber, Fränkel and others have held), the reference to these powers of illumination is meant to reflect the fact that the business at hand is the acquisition of knowledge—an ‘illumination of the mind’, a truth that has recently ‘dawned’ on Parmenides (rather than a celebration of virtue, wealth, political rule, or athletic victory). Alternatively (and I suspect more likely), the reference to these powers of the sun in Fr. 1 foreshadows the important roles to be played by fire, light, and sun in Parmenides’ cosmology (cf. 8.56, 9.1-3, 10.2-3, 12.1-2), in the same way in which the goddess who teaches the youth is probably also the goddess who is spoken of in similar terms at Fr. 12.3 as *δαίμων ἢ πάντα κυβερνᾷ*—‘a goddess who steers all things’.¹⁶ Parmenides’ assertion that the Heliades ‘were leading his way’ might then have been meant as an assertion that his thoughts and forms of expression on that occasion were grounded in reality—the figures who had played the leading role in that act of creative thinking were the powers that ruled and ordered the natural world.

2. ὅσον τ’ ἐπὶ θυμῷ ἰκάνοι—‘as far as heart and mind might reach...’

Early Greek expressions for faculties of thought and feeling resist a simple

‘hastening’ and ‘pulling at full stretch’, the screeching noise of the wheels, and the glowing of the axle—contributes to the overall impression of enormous speed with which the guiding powers transported him (thereby providing another indication of the greatness of their power).

¹⁵ On the usual reckoning, Alcman, Archilochus, Sappho, Solon, Theognis, and Xenophanes would have been composing their poems before the period of Parmenides’ mature years (the second quarter of the 5th century BC); Bacchylides, Pindar, and Timocreon would have been his rough contemporaries; while Anacreon, Empedocles, and Timotheus would have overlapped with the later period of his life during their younger years.

¹⁶ See Verdenius 1949 and Coxon 1986, 231 ff. I am indebted to an unpublished paper by André Laks for the view that the proem prefigures the cosmology of the *doxa* section of Parmenides’ poem in a number of different ways. It would turn out on this reading that the theory Parmenides presented in the *doxa* section was as important a part of his teachings as the main or *alētheia* account, and I believe that is how we should read it (i.e., even if cosmology cannot attain the degree of reliable truth achievable along the ‘it is’ way of thinking about what there is, it can still be worth pursuing and attaining—just as many later philosophers would assign a high value to empirical knowledge even if no contingent statement ever qualified as a logical truth). The thesis that the contrast between the *alētheia* and *doxa* sections turns on a distinction between apodeictic and non-apodeictic truths has been defended by Finkelberg 1988, 66-67.

one-to-one correspondence with modern psychological terminology.¹⁷ *θυμός* is first and foremost a conative term, designating that faculty within a person that prompts action by means of desire, appetite, or emotion. Snell commented: '*noos* may be said generally to be in charge of intellectual matters, and *thymos* of things emotional' (1953, 12). Accordingly, it is not uncommon to find *θυμός* translated here as 'desire', 'heart', 'will', or 'impulse', and for the whole phrase to be read as 'the horses that carry me as far as my heart might desire' (lit. 'to as far as heart might reach'). But pretty clearly ἐφικνέομαι cannot actually have *meant* 'desire', and the idea of one's desire or will *reaching toward* a destination is not entirely perspicuous.

But since the goddess is about to speak of learning, thinking, knowing, reasoning, thought, mind, and judgement, it is entirely possible that *θυμός* serves here, as it does occasionally elsewhere (cf. LSJ s.v. *θυμός* II6), to designate that in us by which (or in which) we think, know, and can be instructed—in short, that to some extent *θυμός* corresponds with our terms 'mind', 'consciousness', or 'conscious spirit'. (Cf. *Il.* ii 409: 'he knew these things in his *θυμός*'; x 49: 'thinking these things in his *θυμός*'; *Od.* xxi 218 'knowing well and being convinced in your *θυμός*'). It was, after all, mortal *θυμός* rather than *νόος* that Archilochus claimed was 'such as Zeus may bring to him for the day, for he thinks such things as he meets with' (Fr. 70), and it was his own *θυμός* rather than his *νόος* that Archilochus commanded to 'know what sort of rhythm holds mankind in its sway' (Fr. 66).

θυμός, moreover, is commonly spoken of as that in us which can receive instruction (e.g., from a deity) and prompt the expression of one's thought: 'Now I will prophesy to you as the immortals put it in my *θυμός*' (*Od.* i 200); 'for to him [the minstrel Demodocus] above all others has the god granted skill in song, to give delight in whatever way his *θυμός* prompts him to speak' (*Od.* viii 44-45); 'but here there is a kindly *θυμός*, a sweet Muse, and sweet wine in Boeotian cups' (Bacchylides, Fr. 6); 'for in some way my *θυμός* prompts me to say' (Pindar, *Ol.* iii 38), etc. Each of these elements—calling on the Muse, *θυμός* as the agent of poetic thought, even the travelling *θυμός*—appears in Pindar's *Nemean* iii 26-28 when he asks:

...Θυμέ, τίνα πρὸς ἄλλοδαπὰν
ἄκραν ἔμὸν πλόον παραμείβειαι;
Αἰάκῳ σε φαμὶ γένοι τε Μοῖσαν φέρειν...
...Spirit, to what foreign headland

Are you turning aside my voyage?

To the kinsman Aeacus, I command you, and carry the Muse...

Parmenides' initial reference to the powers that carry him 'as far as *θυμός* might reach' may not, then, have been the somewhat idle remark that when he starts to

¹⁷ O'Brien 1967, 42 comments: 'many Greek words for faculties and activities of soul, as they are used before Plato, defy classification according to our categories. The intellect, the will, the character, and the emotions all seem to have no clear boundaries for the early Greeks'.

think he is carried as far ‘as (his) heart might desire’, but the more pointed claim that the powers that repeatedly¹⁸ guide his thoughts and forms of expression are able to take him as far as (any) mind can reach.

3. μ’ ἐς ὁδὸν βῆσαν πολύφημον...δαίμονος—‘(and) set me down on a goddess’ roadway rich in song...’

Parmenides now adds three more indicators of the provenance of his account: (1) he was brought to a roadway ‘of a goddess’; (2) he was ‘set down’ on it; and (3) it was, in some sense, a roadway ‘of much, or rich in song or voice’. Each term reinforces, as it is reinforced by, the others; and all three serve to confirm the expectation created in line one: Parmenides’ θυμός has been granted access to the usual powers of inspiration.

The use of βῆσαν (as noted by Deichgräber, Fränkel, and Heitsch) echoes the use of βαίνω and related forms by earlier poets to speak of ‘being set upon’ or ‘mounting’ the official place of song (cf. Hesiod’s reference to the Muses of Helicon who ‘first set me in the way of clear song’—ἐνθα με τὸ πρῶτον λιγυρῆς ἐπέβησαν αἰοιδῆς, *Works and Days* 659; as well as the βάσομεν in *Ol.* vi and ἔβαινον in *Isth.* ii quoted above). As we have seen, entering into the process of poetic composition and performance could be characterized as being brought to, set down on, and travelling along the pathway of song (cf. the κελεύθῳ, ὁδόν, and πύλας ὕμνων of *Ol.* vi, and ‘This was the theme which the bards of old found for their broad way—ὁδὸν ἀμαξιτόν, *Nem.* vi 56).¹⁹ It was also common for poets to pay homage to the goddess to whom they were indebted for their creative instincts and choices. Here, the ὁδός on which Parmenides is set down is ‘of a goddess’ not in the sense of a ‘journey’ in which she brings him along with her, but rather ‘hers’ in so far as the road he takes reaches all the way to her house (cf. *ἰκάνων ἡμέτερον δῶ*) where the instruction session proper will take place.²⁰

In the same vein, the ὁδός πολύφημος is best read not so much as a ‘famous’, ‘renowned’, or ‘much spoken of’ road (as proposed by Burnet, DK, Guthrie, KRS, Mansfeld, and LSJ III), nor as a ‘way of much discourse’ or ‘much asserting’ or ‘much speaking’ (as in Coxon, Deichgräber, and Mourelatos), nor even as

¹⁸ As is suggested by the use of the present tense form φέρουσιν, in contrast with the imperfections πέμπον, φερόμην, φέρον, and ἡγεμόνευον that point toward that period in the past when Parmenides was gaining the insights he now brings before his listeners. Although not conclusive, the use of the present in the first line (in reference to the powers that guide Parmenides’ thinking generally) provides some reason to take ὄσον τ’ ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἰκάνοι in conjunction with φέρουσιν rather than with πέμπον; i.e., as a characterization of the capacity of these powers of thought *generally*, rather than as a characterization of the powers they had *on some occasion in the past*.

¹⁹ As Tarán 1965, 30-31 commented: ‘That it was customary to talk of the way of song and of the chariot in a metaphorical sense is proved by the parallel in Pindar and others’; cf. also the ‘paths of song’ taught to bards by the Muse at *Od.* viii 479-481; Bacchylides, 19, 1; Pindar, *Pyth.* xi 38-40; etc.

²⁰ As explained by Diels 1897, 46-47 and Tarán 1965, 12, and at some length, 1977, 656. While ὁδός can also mean the ‘journey’ or ‘way’ itself (as at line 5 when the maidens are said to ‘lead the ὁδός’), only a road or pathway (of either a literal or a figurative sort) could be naturally characterized as (1) what one could be ‘set down on’, (2) what could ‘carry a knowing man’, and (3) something ‘on’ or ‘along which’ a youth could be carried.

a 'sagacious' or 'knowledge bestowing road' (of Tarán, Fränkel, and Jaeger), but rather as a 'road or roadway richly endowed in song' (or 'rich in voices') in precisely the same sense in which Homer speaks of a minstrel as 'richly endowed with song' (πολύφημος ἀοιδός, *Od.* xxii 376), and of an assembly that contained many individuals as 'many-voiced' (*Od.* ii 150). The pathway Parmenides was set down upon was 'rich' or 'well-stocked' in songs or voices in just the same sense in which Alcman asked, 'Come, clear-voiced Muse of many songs' (Μῶσα λίγη πολυμμελής, 14), Pindar alluded to the 'well-voiced Pierian Muses' (εὐφώνων...Πιερίδων, *Isth.* i 64), and Empedocles alluded to a 'much-remembering Muse' (πολυμνήστη...μουσα, Fr. 3). Through each of the three terms Parmenides employs in this second line he asserts but a single thesis: the way along which *his* heart and mind travelled in conceiving and composing his account was the usual, exceptionally rich, divine source of poetic inspiration.

4. ἡ...φέρει εἰδῶτα φῶτα...τῇ φερόμην· τῇ γὰρ με πολύφραστοι φέρον ἵπποι—
'(the road) which...carries a skilled man...on it I was carried, for on it very informative mares carried me'

As the most common and flexible Greek 'knowing' verb, οἶδα could designate either a knowledge consisting in simple perceptual awareness, or knowledge of facts or general truths, or the simple possession of thoughts and feelings, or knowledge in the form of special skills and practical 'know-how'. It has sometimes been suggested that we will make the best sense of the meaning of εἰδῶς here if we view Parmenides' words in the special context of early Greek mystery religion: either (as in Diels and others who have followed his lead) by reading it as a veiled reference to 'a knowing one' about to become 'an initiate' in the mysteries,²¹ or (as in Guthrie 1969, ii 7-11) by bearing in mind the traditional figure of the shaman who was believed capable of acquiring a vast knowledge by travelling throughout all space and time.

But one sort knowledge routinely mentioned by the poets of Parmenides' time was the special expertise they themselves possessed: 'For our expertise (σοφίη) is better than the strength of men and horses' (Xenophanes Fr. 2); 'I do not think that any maiden...will have such skill (σοφίαν) at any future time' (Sappho 56); 'Heaven grant that I...may be foremost in skill (i.e., of song—πρόφαντον σοφίαν) among Greeks in every land' (Pindar *Ol.* i 116; cf. σοφός as the poet's skill at *Ol.* xiv 7; *Nem.* vii 23; *Pyth.* i 41; and Fr. 52h.18-20); 'another one earns

²¹ Diels, Burkert, and Gómez-Lobo have based their reading of 1.3 on a number of ancient texts in which initiates into the mysteries are referred to as 'knowing ones' (e.g., Andocides, *de myst.* 30: ἡ γὰρ βάσανος δεινὴ παρὰ τοῖς εἰδῶσιν) along with (in Burkert's version) the linguistic thesis that when εἰδῶς appears without an object it must either serve as the object of a verb (e.g., πρὸς εἰδῶτας λέγειν—'to speak to the knowing ones') or else possess the special meaning of 'the initiate' ('der Eingeweihte'). But the usage of εἰδῶς fails to fit Burkert's thesis (cf. *Rep.* 337d: 'what other penalty is to be suffered by one who does not know (προσθήκει πάσχειν τῷ μὴ εἰδῶτι)...than to learn from the one who does know (μαθεῖν παρὰ τοῦ εἰδῶτος)?'; or the various 'skill' uses of the participle as at *Il.* i 608: ἰδυῖησσι πραπίδεσσι). Thus, while 'an initiate' would certainly count as one kind of εἰδῶς φῶς, that special meaning would not be compulsory.

his living in the gifts of the Olympian Muses, skilled in the measures of the charming art (ἡμερτῆς σοφίης μέτρον ἐπιστάμενος) (Solon 13.52); ‘I am skilled (ἐπιστάμενος) in the lovely gift of the Muses’ (Archilochus Fr. 1, cf. οἶδα διθύραμβον in Fr. 120); ‘for I sing graceful songs and know how to speak graceful words (χαρίεντα δ’ οἶδα λέξαι, Anacreon 374); ‘The truly expert poet (σοφός) is he who knows (or is skilled in) many things by nature’ (ὁ πόλλα εἰδὼς φυῶ, Pindar *Ol.* ii 86).²²

In the basic sense of the term, πολύφραστοι horses would be ‘much-indicating’ or ‘very informative’ (rather than, as is often suggested, ‘wise’, ‘discerning’, or ‘very understanding’), as we may infer from ἰὼν καὶ πέφραδε μῦθον—‘go and make known this word’ (*Od.* viii 142); γὰν φράδασσε—‘he made known the limits of the land’ (Pindar *Nem.* ii 26); the noun φραστήρ—‘teller, expounder’; as well as the adjective φραστικός—‘indicative, expressive’ (LSJ).²³ The fact that these transporting powers are characterized as ‘very informative’ confirms that (because it explains why) the relevant knowledge here is the poet’s expertise in crafting and expressing his ideas in verse. When, therefore, Parmenides speaks of travelling along ‘the song-rich pathway of the goddess which bears a skilled man...’ he asserts as true of himself what his audience would have assumed to be the case generally: that the creative abilities of the poet derive ultimately from a divine source; and when in the anaphoric τῇ φερόμην at 1.4 Parmenides makes a point of asserting that he travelled along the very same pathway, he links his own creative efforts to the same rich source.

5. κατὰ παντ’ ἄ(σ)τη—‘down to every town’

In a setting in which each one of a set of surrounding expressions—‘mares’, ‘chariot’, ‘being carried’, ‘being led’, ‘being escorted’, ‘being set down’, ‘mind and spirit reaching’, ‘divine roadway’, ‘richly endowed in song’, ‘very informative’, and ‘skilled man’—contributed in mutually reinforcing ways to making the single point that the words those in Parmenides’ audience were about to hear had been inspired by the usual immortal powers of song, we might expect that the one remaining element would fill out and complete that idea rather than introduce an

²² For οἶδα with the meaning of ‘cunning’ or ‘skilled’: LSJ s.v. εἶδω B1; Ebeling, εἶδω, ἴγ (*peritus sum uti possum*); Cunliffe, εἶδω (8); as for example: ‘Hephaestus by his cunning wits (ἰδύησι πραπίδεσσι) built a palace for each one’, *Il.* i 608; ‘he skillfully (εἰδῶς) applied soothing drugs’, *Il.* iv 218; ‘one well skilled in all manner of craft (πάσης/ εὖ εἰδη σοφίης)ψ’, *Il.* xv 412; ‘a man well skilled in boxing (εἰδὼς πυγμαχίης)’, *Il.* xxiii 665.

²³ Cf. also Ebeling 1963, s.v. φράζω I, *indico*; and Cunliffe 1963, 4: ‘to make known, communicate’. LSJ equates πολύφραστος with πολυφραδής—‘very wise’; cf. Tarán 1965, 12, and many others, and Pindar’s allusion to the ‘skilled’ or ‘knowing’ (ἐπίστανται) mules in *Ol.* vi establishes the complete appropriateness of the idiom. The choice between the two translations is neither large nor of critical importance, but there is still some reason to opt for the idea of *communication of knowledge* here. Parmenides claims to have been carried on the road along which an εἰδὼς φώς travels; but unless *he* has knowledge (and not simply his guides), *he* cannot claim to qualify as εἰδὼς. So not only is the basic meaning of the *phrad-* stem ‘show’, ‘tell’, or ‘indicate’ (rather than ‘know’ or ‘be wise’), but it is important that these figurative horses *convey knowledge* rather than simply *have the knowledge themselves*.

entirely novel or alien feature.²⁴ And, in fact, ‘a roadway of a goddess which carries a skilled man *down to every town*’, has a natural meaning in this setting: because poets everywhere draw from their inspiration the same immortal powers, one may speak of a single divine pathway of song which brings the skilled poet to every city or town.

Od. xvii 382ff. establishes that singers were spoken of as travellers from an early date. Who, asks the swineherd Eumaeus, would one expect to be visiting from abroad other than:

...τῶν οἱ δημοεργοὶ ἔασι,
 μάντιν ἢ ἰητήρα κακῶν ἢ τέκτονα δούρων,
 ἢ καὶ θεσπιν αἰοιδόν, ὅ κεν τέρπησιν αἰείδων;
 οὔτοι γὰρ κλητοὶ γε βροτῶν ἐπ’ ἀπίρονα γαίαν·
 ...one of those masters in some public craft,
 A seer or a healer of ills, or a worker in wood
 Or even a divine singer, who gives delight with his song?
 For these among mortals are welcome over the boundless
 earth.

In the later fantasy *Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, Homer is himself described as a traveller:

ποιήσαντα γὰρ τὸν Μαργίτην Ὅμηρον περιέρχεσθαι κατὰ
 πόλιν ῥαψωδοῦντα...
 For after he had composed the *Margites*, Homer went around
 from city to city as a rhapsode... (315)

When the rhapsode of Plato’s *Ion* claims the expertise of a general simply on the basis of his knowledge of martial passages in Homer, Socrates asks:

...ῥαψωδεῖς μὲν περιῶν τοῖς Ἑλλησι, στρατηγεῖς δ’ οὐ;
 ...and yet you go about Greece performing as a rhapsode, and
 not as a general? (541b13-14)

Similarly, the author of the *Hymn to Delian Apollo* refers to the life lived in service to Apollo, the god of poetry, in the terms of travelling to cities:

ἡμεῖς δ’ ὑμέτερον κλέος οἴσομεν, ὅσσον ἐπ’ αἶαν
 ἀνθρώπων στρεφόμεσθα πόλεις εὖ ναιεταώσας.
 And we will carry your renown as far over the earth

²⁴ As, e.g., in Guthrie’s (1969, ii 7) account: ‘[The youth] is crossing the sky in the sun’s own chariot, and this path, since it traverses the whole world, naturally carries him ‘over all cities’. Κατὰ can mean ‘on’ or ‘on top of’ (although not quite ‘over’ in the sense in which the sun passes ‘overhead’ in the heavens (which would be ὑπέρ as in Xenophanes Fr. 31 and Heraclitus *Allegoriae* 44.5 where the sun is said to move ὑπέρ the earth). Some support for Guthrie’s reading is provided by the fact that the mares are led (in v. 9) by the Heliades, the daughters of the Sun. But a claim to have received knowledge from the universally recognized sources of inspiration would have enjoyed far wider acceptance than would claiming to have gained it during a trip to the (all-seeing and all-knowing) Sun. Similarly, if we emend to ἀσινῆ—‘which leads a knowing man *unscathed* wherever he goes’, we can only try to imagine why Parmenides would have supposed (happy thought) that a goddess protected all those who had knowledge.

As we go round to the well-placed cities of men. (174-75)²⁵

Xenophanes employs the vivid metaphor ‘of tossing about’ (perhaps a reference to *overseas* travel) in order to characterize his long career as a poet and adviser:

ἦδη δ' ἑπτά τ' ἕασι καὶ ἐξήκοντ' ἐνιαυτοὶ
βληστρίζοντες ἐμὴν φροντίδ' ἄν' Ἑλλάδα γῆν
Already there are seven and sixty years

Tossing about my counsel²⁶ throughout the Greek land (Fr. 8)

These references to the poet’s exercise of his craft in terms of travelling to cities and towns reflect the historic reality that for an extended period of Greek history poets routinely travelled with their latest creations to various cities and towns in the ancient world.²⁷ A successful poet of Parmenides’ own era might have been invited by a city to serve as poet/adviser-in-residence (the Spartan practice mentioned by Aelian at *V.H.* 12.50), or to honor one of its citizens, or to take part in its festivals and poetic competitions (as depicted at Plato’s *Ion* 530a). Pindar prays that his Muse might ‘bring her tongue to the town of Protogeneia’ (φέροις δὲ Πρωτογενείας ἄσται γλῶσσαν, *Ol.* ix 41-42); and Bacchylides asks the Muse Clio to ‘steer the ship of his understanding to Aegina, there to adorn a god-built city (πόλιν)’ (39). Xenophanes’ Fr. 45 gives us the more literal version of his Fr. 8:

ἐγὼ δ' ἔμαυτὸν ἐκ πόλιος πόλιν φέρων ἐβλήστριζον.

I tossed about, bearing myself from city to city. (Fr. 45)

The *testimonia* depicting Empedocles as ‘a traveller to various cities’ (A 2, from the *Suda*: ἐπήγει τὰς πόλεις; A 18, from Philostratus: ἐσόβει περὶ τὰς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀγυῖας ὕμνους ζυντιθείς) are confirmed in the words of his own highly ornate²⁸ philosophical poem:

As soon as I arrive in flourishing towns (ἴκωμαι ἐς ἄστεα), I

²⁵ Cf. Keats, ‘On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer’:

‘Much have I travell’d in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold. (1-4)

²⁶ For φροντίς as ‘counsel’ cf. Aeschylus, *Persians* 140-143: φροντίδα κεδνὴν καὶ βαθύβουλον/θώμεθα (Leshner, 1992, 69-70).

²⁷ For πάντα (ἄσται) as ‘every’ (town), cf. *Od.* ii 55: ἦματα πάντα—‘every day’. Burnet 1930, 172n, who assumed that N actually read ἄσται, came close to drawing this conclusion when he understood the phrase to mean ‘through all the towns’ and understood the phrase to be Parmenides’ way of referring to himself as ‘an itinerant philosopher, like the sophists of the next generation’. The importance of the poet’s travels in the emergence of Panhellenic standards of truth and excellence is discussed in Nagy 1990, chs. 2-3.

²⁸ Cf. ‘And [you], know in the way that the assurances given by our muse urge, by dividing up discourse in your heart...’ (4). ‘And you maiden muse of the white arms, much-remembering/ I beseech you: what it is right for ephemerl creatures to hear,/send [to me] driving your well-reined chariot (πέμπε...ἐλάουσ’ εὐήνιον ἄρμα) from the halls of piety’ (3). ‘For if, immortal muse, for the sake of any ephemeral creature, <it has pleased you> to let our concerns pass through your thought,/answer my prayers again now Calliopeia,/ as I reveal a good discourse about the blessed gods (ἀμφὶ θεῶν μακάρων ἀγαθὸν λόγον ἐμφαίνοντι, 131; Inwood trans.).

am revered by all ... (Fr. 1, Inwood trans.)

To sum up: when Parmenides prefaced his novel philosophical account by speaking of being carried in a chariot pulled by horses led by immortal charioteers along a song-rich roadway of a goddess, he was speaking in the vernacular of Greek lyric poetry in order to explain to his audience the nature of the processes of creative thinking that led him to his discovery. And when he described that roadway as one 'which carries a knowing or skilled man down to every town', he adopted a common way of referring to the poet's exercise of his craft in order to assert that the powers that had inspired him were the same ones that enable poets everywhere to create and perform their works.

We should note that the goddess' assurance (at 1.27) that 'it is no evil fate which has sent you to journey along this road (for it is far from the beaten path of men)' does not contradict her earlier characterization of that road as one 'which carries a skilled man to every town'. Her later remark applies not to all poets generally but only to the youth, Parmenides himself. And, as is clear from *πάτος*—'the trodden path' (from *πατέω*—'to trample under foot'), the point of her comment is not to distinguish one particular road from another, but rather to express how far along the route of inspired thought the youth has advanced.²⁹ All inspired poets travel the same divine pathway, but Parmenides depicts himself—with good reason—as having advanced in his understanding far beyond any point previously reached by mortal men. (Empedocles subsequently distinguishes his philosophical proposal from those of his predecessors—including Parmenides'—in the very same manner [Fr. 2]: 'mortal cunning has certainly pushed no farther'.)

III. Reason and the Muse

It may be worth considering briefly how Parmenides, of all people, could have elected to preface his presentation of a set of powerful *philosophical* arguments with a claim to have tapped the usual powers of *poetic* composition and performance. Not only would versification and logical argument appear to be quite different enterprises, but the suggestion that Parmenides acquired his knowledge through divine revelation appears to be at odds with the terms of his own epistemology. When, for example, in Fr. 7 his goddess explains how knowledge of the true way of speaking and thinking about τὸ εἶναι is to be achieved, she directs the youth:

...κρίναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον
ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα.

...to decide by means of discourse the much-contested testing spoken by me (7.5-6)

This decision appears to involve the same binary choice stated at the outset of Fr. 2: between (on the one hand, ἡ μὲν, 2.3) thinking and saying only 'it is', and (on

²⁹ See Tarán 1965, 16, with the reference to the study by Kullman in which *πάτος* is shown to refer not to existing roads or pathways, but rather to the 'step' or 'wanderings' of men throughout a region.

the other, ἢ δ', 2.5) allowing that in some respects 'it is not' might be true. The grounds upon which that choice will be made appear to be provided, at least in large part, by the 'multiple contests' carried out along the length of Fr. 8, as a series of philosophical reflections on possible forms of 'not being' yields unmistakable σήματα or 'indicators' that what exists is ungenerated, indestructible, whole, single, and complete—in other words, that 'it is' passes all the tests and is true in every possible respect. In short, it seems clear that the youth acquires his set of completely persuasive truths—in other words, knowledge—about the nature of 'what is' through an extended critical review of all the possible options.³⁰ But if Parmenides supposed that knowledge emerged from a process of rational reflection along these lines, why would he have proclaimed his own discovery in the terms of a revelation from a deity?

It may be of some help to note that the figure of the Muse served several different functions in early Greek poetry (see Campbell 1983, ch. 8; Davison 1968, ch. 13). On occasion the Muse (addressed either as 'Muse' or 'goddess' or by name as Calliope, Urania, Clio, Terpsichore) would be invoked at or near the outset of the poet's work as a way of assuring his audience that the information it was getting was accurate and credible. Thus the second invocation of the Muses in *Iliad* ii:

Tell me who were the commanders of the Greeks and their chiefs.
I could not tell or name their number,
Not if I had ten tongues and mouths,
And an untiring voice and a heart of bronze,
Unless the Olympian Muses, the daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus,
Call to my mind all those who came to Troy. (487-492)

Bacchylides (15.47) and Pindar (*Pyth.* iv 70) request similarly specific information from their Muses. But on occasion the Muse might be spoken of as the source of the poet's artistic sensibilities, or skills in versification—'the gift of song'—rather than as a guarantor of the truth of his or her words (Homer, *Od.* viii 481; Hesiod *Theogony*, 104; Archilochus, 1; Solon, 13, 51-52; Bacchylides 19, 1-4; Theognis 6, 250; Pindar, *Ol.* ix 28-29; xiv 3-7; Frs. 52h, 198a; etc.). Alcman (30) invokes the Muse as an aid to his successful performance, and Bacchylides calls for a libation to the Muses (PMG 941) in the same pious spirit in which Xenophanes directs his fellow symposiasts to begin their celebratory songs with a libation and prayer to the deities (Fr. 1, 15-20). And Timocreon (728) and Bacchylides (3, 90-92; 9, 85-87) invoke the Muses in order to ensure that their songs and the fame of their subjects will be carried throughout Greece.

We can safely rule out the possibility that Parmenides' allusion to the goddess who inspired his poem reflected his personal opinion that anything uttered in verse form necessarily qualified as truth and wisdom. Extended warfare against the poets' claims to wisdom would not be waged until the time of Plato's *Ion* and *Republic*, but Heraclitus (Frs. 56, 57, 104,) and Xenophanes (Frs. 10-12) had

³⁰ For a defense of this 'peirastic' view of Parmenidean knowledge, see Leshner forthcoming.

already attacked (respectively) both the wisdom of the popular poets and the truthfulness of their stories. In his Fr. 34 Xenophanes also articulated the basic distinction between ‘saying what is true’ (succeeding in ‘speaking of what has been brought to pass’) and ‘*knowing the clear and certain truth*’. Even Hesiod’s Muses conceded that they knew ‘how to make many false things seem like the truth’, and Solon (29) and Pindar (*Nem.* vii 20-24) admitted that poets were capable of lies and deceit. When the goddess asserts (at Fr. 8.50-53), ‘Here I stop my trustworthy speech to you and thought about truth; from here onward learn mortal beliefs, listening to the deceitful ordering of my words’), it is clear that Parmenides could not have believed that being able to compose in verse form was a guarantee of either truth or knowledge.³¹

But, as has on occasion been suggested,³² Parmenides might well have believed that his ability to conceive and give expression to his extraordinary theory, as well as the prospects of its being grasped and appreciated by others, rested to some extent in the laps of divine powers. The specific idea that one’s *νοῦς* or intelligence was itself the ‘god in each of us’ will later become a poetic and philosophical topos,³³ but the broader view that the exercise of our creative powers might also involve the helping hand of a deity appears as early as Phemius’ striking boast to Odysseus (*Od.* xxii 347):

αὐτοδίδακτος δ’ εἰμί, θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἴμας
παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν.

I am self-taught; a god implanted all sorts of songs in my breast.

On this view, the creative achievements of a poet—even one ‘gifted’ in philosophical argument—could be credited to a combination of mortal and divine efforts. While there is no direct evidence that Parmenides subscribed to such a

³¹ *κόσμον...ἐπέων*, as recently pointed out by Floyd 1992, 262-263, is an ‘artful arrangement of words’; i.e., verse (cf. Solon Fr. 1.2: *κόσμον ἐπέων φῶδην ἀντ’ ἀγορήης*—‘an ornament of words—song instead of prose’). Whether Parmenides chose verse, as Floyd claims, because it facilitated his speaking in contrary fashion within the two parts of his account, seems to me uncertain, but even if Parmenides did not view poetic speech as the medium of choice for deception, it seems clear he believed it had that capacity.

³² Verdenius 1942, 67 comments: ‘The very fact that the goddess is anonymous and remains abstract (frag. 1,22 *θεά*) shows that Parmenides considered the truth revealed to him also as a discovery of his own.’ Similarly Bowra 1937, 106: ‘In fact she is to be anonymous. She is a symbol for the poet’s personal experience and his own discovery of the truth. This experience is unique to him, and therefore he can hardly attribute it to a goddess who is shared by other men’. But this conclusion seems more secure than the anonymity premiss from which it is derived. Parmenides could have also been referring to the exercise of his own powers even if his goddess had been named and had similarly inspired others. Indeed, it is clear from 1.1-5 that Parmenides supposed that the powers that were carrying him had carried others. Dodds 1951, chs. 1, 3 provides a useful discussion of the sorts of circumstances in which the occurrence of a thought or feeling might be thought to represent the intervention a deity.

³³ Cf. Diogenes of Apollonia, Frs. 4, 5; Aristotle *De an.* 403a; *De gen. an.* 736b27; *NE* 1177-1178; Diogenes Laertius, vii 135, 138; Menander (Meineke 434) following Euripides Fr. 1018: ‘Ο νοῦς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐστὶν ἐν ἐκάστῳ θεός.

view it would explain how he could have consistently regarded his highly rigorous critique of the various ways available for thinking and speaking about τὸ εἶν as a set of very persuasive truths once imparted to his θυμός by a friendly god-dess.³⁴

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³⁴ I am indebted to Rachel Barney, Patricia Curd, David Gallop, André Laks, Eva Stehle, and two anonymous referees of this journal for their criticisms of an earlier version of this paper. Deborah Boedeker, Robert Boughner, and Gary Meltzer have also made helpful suggestions.

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