

FERENC RUZSA

PARMENIDES' ROAD TO INDIA

Summary: Parmenides' philosophy is unique in the history of ideas in Europe, but it has a striking parallel in India, from about the same age. The unchanging Absolute, called 'Being' or 'Existent'; the depreciation of everyday objects as mere 'names'; and the construction of the empirical world out of elements called 'forms' are all found in the first text of the *Sadvidyā* (Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI 1–7). Comparing details and taking into consideration other old Indian material this paper tries to prove that convergence of thought or parallel development is out of the question – there must have been actual contact. Also it suggests that the most probable scenario is that Parmenides travelled to India, learned the language and some important philosophical texts, and brought them back to Greece.

Key words: Parmenides, Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Greek–Indian contacts in philosophy.

¹As was noticed quite early², the philosophy of Parmenides shows very interesting and significant parallelisms with the thought of the Upaniṣads, especially the teaching of Uddālaka Āruṇi as imparted to his son, Śvetaketu in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. Both present a strong monism, calling their absolute principle that pervades the whole universe Being (or Existent), and traditionally both are understood as denying the reality of the phenomena, calling them mere names (as opposed to the Truth of Being).

Such similarities might be (1) the result of independent, analogous thinking; or (2) either of the two authors may have influenced the other; or (3) both received some common or related external influence. The standard position seems to be the first: 'The views of Parmenides, therefore, must be deemed a parallel of interest to Indian thought, but not derived from India.' (KEITH 1925, p. 637.) (Of course this position can be called *standard* only with some reservations, as many Indologists and most Greek scholars don't seem to be aware of the question at all.³) An excellent representative of this approach with many new textual comparisons can be found in

¹ The fundamental idea of this paper and many of the details were first presented in RUZSA (1982). I thank Kornél Steiger for his valuable comments. My researches were supported by the OTKA (the Hungarian National Scientific Research Fund) project no. T 034446.

² A useful summary can be found in KEITH (1925), Ch. 29.

³ Most of them would have heard of the possible Indian connections of Pythagoras, but keep silent on it. FLINTOFF (1980, pp. 88–91) gives a good account of the typical attitude of Greek scholars.

NAKAMURA (1975, pp. 103–112); he, however, does not even consider the possibility of influence, as his interest is in universal thought structures.

Sometimes the third alternative is suggested, in two distinct forms. The analysis of WEST (1971) is generally sound and convincing: he suggests that there was a general flow and mixing of religious and philosophical ideas and motives throughout the classical world, even as far to the East as China; and that our authors may have derived their common themes from this common pool.⁴ (West proposes this as a general model, not specifically to explain the close correspondences of Parmenides and the Upaniṣads; and as a general theory probably nothing stronger is possible.)

A little surprisingly the second form of the third position has been brought forward quite recently and by JEŽIĆ (1992) in an otherwise excellent article that points out many significant correspondences that usually avoid detection. He suggests that the source of the parallels is the common Indo-European tradition: ‘that philosophy and ontology are inherited from the times before Uddālaka and Parmenides, from a far deeper past than historians of philosophy used to dream of’ (p. 434). Notwithstanding the inherent absurdity of the hypothesis (nomadic tribes developing such abstract philosophical views and remembering them for about a thousand years), the suggestion is methodologically unsound. If the common points were indeed parts of an old inheritance, many of those elements should have surfaced before our thinkers. Now their parallelism is so easily noticed and so interesting exactly because both are so different from anything before them in their respective traditions.

In this paper I shall try to argue for the second position, i.e., that our texts have directly influenced each other. Beyond the essential parallelism there are numerous minor analogies of expression that cannot be explained in any other way. And in the end, having weighed the admittedly meagre evidence, I will suggest that most probably it was Parmenides who travelled to India, learned the language and some texts, and used their ideas and words to build his new synthesis.

As my conclusion will not be that Parmenides accidentally got hold of a copy of the 6th chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, but that he went to India and familiarised himself with several philosophical texts and ideas, I will sometimes suggest Indian parallels from other texts as well, mostly from other old Upaniṣads. For the same reason the exposition will generally follow Parmenides (though the exact sequence of his fragments is sometimes debated), and try to find a possible source for a given idea or formulation.

THE FRAMEWORK

Parmenides wrote in hexameters, and his poem consists of three parts: introduction (*Prooimion*), ontology (*Alētheia*) and natural philosophy (*Doxa*). The *Sadvidyā* (‘The knowledge of the Existent’, Chāndogya Upaniṣad Chapter VI – prose),

⁴ His more precise suggestion, that the bearers of eastern influence to Greece were the Magi, refugees from Media after its conquest by Cyrus in 549 BCE (pp. 239–241), is far from convincing. E. g., this could not explain Indian influence, as at that time no Indian territory was yet under Iranian rule.

although this is frequently overlooked, consists of two separate texts: the first is contained in parts 1–2, 4–7 (*khaṇḍa* 3 is a later addition), while the second is in parts 8–16.⁵ The first text shows a similar structure: introduction (1), ontology (2, 4) and some elements of a philosophy of nature (5–7).

The introduction in both cases sets the scene for the instruction itself, and then promises to teach an important universal truth; the similarities end here. In the Upaniṣad Śvetaketu returns home after a twelve-year training in traditional Vedic lore, proud of his learning. But when his father asks him if he had received 'that teaching by which ... what had [hitherto] not been known, is known?',⁶ he confesses that he had not even heard of it. Thereupon Uddālaka starts to instruct him.

In the Parmenidean proem the poet journeys on a horse-drawn chariot to the gates of day and night, led by the daughters of the Sun; persuaded by them, Dikē⁷ (goddess of justice) opens the heavy gate, and starts to instruct Parmenides: 'you should learn all things, both the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth, and the opinions of mortals, in which there is no true reliance.'⁸

It is not at all unusual to have a frame story in an Upaniṣad where a man receives instruction from a god. Also in the Chāndogya, in Chapter VII, the sage Nārada goes to Sanatkumāra (son of the creator god) for teaching, and in VIII 7–12 the god Indra and the demon Virocana ask the Lord of Creation (Prajāpati) about the Self. In the Kauṣītaki (Chapter III) it is Indra who teaches the king Pratardana. In the Taittirīya, the sage Bhṛgu seeks wisdom from his father, Varuṇa, the ancient god of moral order.

But we have a really interesting parallel in the story of Naciketas as told in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad. This text has been more than once quoted in a Parmenidean context. BARUA (1921, p. 264) actually thinks 'that the place of Naciketas in Indian philosophy is very similar to that of Parmenides in the history of Greek thought. ... The analogy ... is in certain points very close.' Though this is partly based on unsubstantiated conjecture,⁹ there are noteworthy coincidences. In any case, the characters here and in the *Sadvidyā* suggest that the two texts are closely related: Naciketas is a grandson of Uddālaka Āruṇi.¹⁰

The story in the Upaniṣad is told in archaic, loose verse. Vājaśravasa gave away all his possessions at a great sacrifice; his son, Naciketas insisted that he should be given, too. The father finally declares: 'I'll give you to Death.' Now Death is away on some errand, and keeps Naciketas waiting in his palace for three days without offering him the hospitality due to a brāhmaṇa. As a compensation he offers the

⁵ HANEFELD (1976) pp. 142–143; on the intrusion of *khaṇḍa* 3 see pp. 146–149.

⁶ VI. 1.3, translation: GOODALL (1996), p. 132.

⁷ It is not entirely clear whether 'the Goddess' is really Dikē (named quite some lines before), or unnamed, or Nux.

⁸ Fr. 1. 28–30; translation: KIRK–RAVEN–SCHOFIELD (1983), p. 243.

⁹ 'There can be no doubt that the verse relating to the doctrine of Being is missing from the Kaṭhopaniṣad as we now have it. We supply it from the Bhagavad Gītā ...' (p. 272)

¹⁰ BARUA (1921, p. 265); OLIVELLE (1996, p. 376) understands the obscure patronymic in Kaṭha I. 11 as suggesting that Naciketas is a son of Uddālaka. MACDONELL–KEITH (1912, p. 432) probably rightly doubts the historicity of the attribution as 'due only to a desire to give Naciketas a connexion with the famous Āruṇi.' Still it shows that the two texts were considered as belonging to a related tradition.

boy three boons; and he selects to return to the earth alive and to get reconciled to his father. The third boon is the secret of whether there is existence after death: and with this topic the teaching starts.

Though it is far from apparent, COXON¹¹ has brilliantly demonstrated that Parmenides also travelled to the place of the dead. Quoting similar phrases from Homer and Hesiod he shows that the image of ‘the gates of the paths of Night and Day’ (1 11) recalls the gates of Tartarus. From the testimonies of Simplicius and Numenius we know that according to Parmenides the Goddess sends the mortal souls to birth, and then back to the gods (‘now from the visible to the invisible, and now in the opposite direction’ – Simplicius) through double gates. The epithet of Dikē, *polupoinos* (having many punishments, 1 14) identifies her as the goddess of retribution – judge of the dead. And the welcome in 1 26, ‘No ill fate [*moira kakē*] has sent you’ suggests the unusualness of Parmenides arriving here alive.

Coxon thinks that the route leads from the dark regions of the mortals through celestial gates to the gods, into the light, but this can be doubted.¹² As the terminology of Simplicius suggests (*tas psukhas pempein pote men ek tou emphanous eis to aides*¹³), the visible region of light must be understood as the world of men, and the invisible (*aides* ~ *Aidēs* = *Haidēs*) as the dark land of the dead. The expression ‘the daughters of the Sun ... having left the halls of Night’ (1. 9) clearly recalls the description in the Theogonia (744–766): the abode of the Night stands in Tartarus, and Day and Night meet daily on its threshold; in this palace live also the sons of Night, Sleep, and Death. So probably the divine maidens have left their dark home in the underworld to meet Parmenides and lead him there.^{14–15}

Though the divinities mentioned in the two texts are not identical, their functions come close to each other: as we saw above, here Dikē supervises birth and death, while the Indian god of death, at least from the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka on (KEITH 1925, p. 409), also judges the dead, and in the epic is identified with Dharma, Law.

The similarity of the frame-stories lends some extra weight to an otherwise not fully convincing comparison, brought up again recently by JEŽIĆ (1992, pp. 429–

¹¹ 1986, pp. 12–17 and 161–167 (in the notes ad 1 11; 1 14 [*dikē poluponos*]; 1 22; 1 26–27).

¹² So also SEDLEY (1999, p.113): ‘an allegorical description of Parmenides’ journey to the House of Night’. Actually BURKERT (1969) in his excellent study has already arrived at a conclusion very similar to the one suggested here: ‘Die Fahrt des Parmenides ist weder ein Übergang von der Nacht zum Licht noch eine Auffahrt ... Parmenides fährt auf dem Weg des Daimon zum Rand der Welt, wo an der Grenze von Himmel und Erde ein hochragendes Tor Diesseits und Jenseits scheidet. Aus dem Haus der Nacht kommen ihm die Heliaden entgegen, sie geleiten ihn durch das Tor in die große ‘Offenheit’, wo ihn die Göttin empfängt ... Eher wäre die Reise – mit Morrison – eine Katabasis zu nennen. Richtiger aber ist es, die Vertikale, das Oben und Unten überhaupt aus dem Spiel zu lassen.’ (pp. 14–15)

¹³ Simplicius *in phys.* p. 39, quoted from COXON (1986), testimonium 207 (p. 146).

¹⁴ That the proem describes a journey from the inferior sphere of light, the world of mortals, to the divine region of night, squares very well with the fascinating suggestion of POPPER (1998, pp. 68–104, esp. pp. 72–73, 87–88) that of the two forms that the mortals name (8 53–59, 9.), Night would be equivalent to Being, and Light (that should not have been mentioned) to Non-being. (But POPPER himself understood the journey to lead from darkness to light; see, e. g., p. 292.)

¹⁵ This argument is not central to our thesis, as in the older literature the Indian dead seem to live with the gods in heaven under their king, Yama. A little later Yama (already as god of Death) rules over both heaven and hell.

430). The Parmenidean journey is normally interpreted symbolically, as the progress of the seeker towards enlightenment; Sextus Empiricus (our only source for fragment 1) gives a more detailed 'translation'. His identifications are: horses: the unintelligent impulses and longings of the soul; journey on the road of the Goddess: contemplation through philosophical reasoning; maidens: the senses; wheels: the ears; daughters of the Sun: the eyes; and Dikē holding keys: the intellect grasping the facts.¹⁶ Though this analysis is normally discarded without giving it serious thought, the idea is old, as Plato also compares the soul to a chariot (Phaedrus 246 b ff.), and nothing excludes the possibility that it goes back to Parmenides. Now in the Kāṭha Upaniṣad we read:

Know this: the self is the owner of the chariot,
the chariot is the body.
Understanding is the charioteer,
and mind is the reins.

The senses, they say, are the horses,
and sense objects are their ranges. ...

The man whose charioteer is wisdom,
whose reins a mind [controlled],
reaches the journey's end,
Viṣṇu's highest step[, heaven].¹⁷

If Parmenides indeed had an allegorical interpretation of his poem, something like this could have been his model.

Besides having a mystical and a symbolic meaning, the description of the far-away journey in search of knowledge can also be a reminiscence of an actual chariot-ride some time in Parmenides' youth to India. If the reading *astē* in 1 3 is correct, then the characterisation of the road: 'which bears the man who knows over all cities' recalls the initial lines of the Odyssey; which is, after all, a (mythological) record of an earthly voyage.

METHOD AND CRITICISM

Parmenides begins his metaphysics with the following premise: Nothing, or the non-existent, does not exist; therefore there is only Being or (the) Existent (fr. 2, 6, 7). This strictly logical starting-point (and, in general, the formal-deductive mode of exposition) is alien to the Upaniṣads,¹⁸ and anything resembling it can be found only

¹⁶ *Adv. math.* VII, 111–113; in COXON (1986) testimonium 136 (p. 125). See STEIGER (1985) p. 46.

¹⁷ III. 3–4 and 9, translation based on GOODALL (1996), p. 175. A similar description is found at Maitrī Upaniṣad II. 6; further examples are listed in HUME (1931), p. 540.

¹⁸ The wording of Kāṭha VI. 12 seems Parmenidean, but the context is generally not argumentative. 'How could It be apprehended except by saying, *It is?*' *astīti bruvato'nyatra katham tad upalabhyate?*

in the Bhagavad-Gītā (probably several centuries later): ‘The non-existent cannot be, the existent cannot not-be: the boundary of the two has been seen by those who see their essence.’¹⁹

The Existent should be approached with the mind, not with the senses: ‘let [not] habit, born of much experience, force you down this way [of accepting non-existence], by making you use an aimless eye or an ear and a tongue full of meaningless sound: judge by reason the strife-encompassed refutation spoken by me.’²⁰ This warning also frequently recurs in the Upaniṣads, e.g.,

His form is not something that can be seen;
no one beholds him with the eye;
by heart, thought and mind is he conceived of.²¹

The insufficiency of the senses is also plainly stated by Uddālaka in the illustration of the fig-tree: the essence that cannot be seen in the tiny seed is the source of the gigantic *nyagrodha*-tree; and in the simile of salt water – the salt cannot be seen or grasped, but it is still there, dispersed in the water.²²

Frag. 4 of Parmenides, which is not entirely clear, seems to connect two ideas: with the mind we can see things far away, and (or because?) the ontological universe is homogenous. ‘Gaze on even absent things with your mind as present and do so steadily. For it will not sever Being from cleaving to Being, as either dispersing or gathering in every direction in every way in regular order.’²³ It is remarkable to find a very similar pair of ideas in India:

Whatever is here, the same is over there;
and what is over there is along here.
From death to death he goes,
who sees here any kind of diversity.

For that is this.

With your mind alone you must understand it –
there is here no diversity at all!²⁴

The vexed question of the relation of speech, thought and existence in Parmenides cannot be fully discussed here. Although some fragments suggest their identity,²⁵ it is safer to base our interpretation on the relatively clear places. ‘You can nei-

¹⁹ II. 16. *nāsato vidyate bhāvo, nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ / ubhayor api dṛṣṭo'ntas tv anayos tattva-darśibhiḥ*.

²⁰ Fr. 7. 3–6; translation: KIRK–RAVEN–SCHOFIELD (1983), p. 248.

²¹ Kāṭha Upaniṣad VI. 9, translation based on GOODALL (1996), p. 182. (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad IV. 20 is practically identical.)

²² Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI. 12 and 13.

²³ Translation: COXON (1986), p. 56.

²⁴ Kāṭha Upaniṣad IV. 10–11, translation based on OLIVELLE (1996), pp. 241–242. (Verse 11 occurs with small variation in Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad IV. 4.19.)

²⁵ Especially the frequently-cited fr. 3., *to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*, most easily understood as ‘for it is the same to think and to be’; and indeed all our sources interpret it that way. But it can

ther know what is not (for it is impossible) nor tell of it',²⁶ i.e., what can be cognised or expressed must exist.²⁷ On the other hand, thinking and saying do seem to be very close for Parmenides, and this connection is well established very early also in India. 'Thought (*mati*) is indeed speech: for he thinks all this with speech',²⁸ i.e., we express our thoughts in words.

In this part of the poem Parmenides repeatedly refers to the great tradition behind the argument about Being. To force the existence of non-existent things is a 'much-experienced habit' (*ethos polupeiron*),²⁹ while its refutation 'had many contests' (*poludēris elenkhos*)³⁰. And the third way is 'that on which mortals wander knowing nothing ... who believe that to be and not to be are the same and not the same'.³¹ In Greece we cannot think or talk about this tradition, as it does not exist. But in India the concept of Being as a cosmological principle has a decent Vedic ancestry.

In the *Sadvidyā* when Uddālaka finishes the ontological teaching in our first text, he says: 'It was, indeed, this that they knew, those extremely wealthy and immensely learned householders of old.'³² Of course this may be just to enhance the authenticity of the doctrine – we have no proof of its actual existence before Āruṇi. On the other hand when he talks about his opponents' view we are on safer ground. 'Of this some said – only the Non-existent was this [world?] in the beginning, one only without a second: from that Non-existent was born the Existent.'³³ Exactly this view is found in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (II 7.1): '[The] Non-existent was this in the beginning. Thence was born the Existent.' Similarly in an earlier chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, with some admixture of the third way: 'only the Non-existent was this in the beginning. That became [was] the Existent. That came to be.'³⁴ And the view appears even earlier, in the Brāhmaṇas: '[The] Non-existent was this in the beginning. Of that it was said: What was that Non-existent? The Non-existent was, indeed, those seers.'³⁵

also mean that 'the same thing can be thought of and can exist' (BODNÁR–KLIMA–RUZSA 1986, p. 288 = BODNÁR 1990, p. 62).

²⁶ Fr. 2 7–8; translation: COXON (1986), p. 52.

²⁷ If, however, Parmenides did mean to say that the Existent is essentially a conscious entity, then he was perfectly consonant with the Upaniṣads; indeed the canonical attribute of the Absolute will be *sat-cit-ānanda*, 'existence, consciousness and bliss.' Some early Upaniṣadic examples: 'Brahman is mind (*manas*)' (Chāndogya III 18.1), 'Brahman is understanding (*prajñā*)' (Aitareya III 3). In the *Sadvidyā* the Existent is also the Self (text 2), and in text 1 the origin of the phenomena is that the Existent 'thought' to itself: "Let me become many. Let me propagate myself." (VI 2.3, translation: OLIVELLE 1996, p. 149.)

²⁸ Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa VIII 1.2.7; for further examples see MEHLIG (1987), pp. 159–164.

²⁹ Fr. 7 3.

³⁰ Fr. 7 5.

³¹ Fr. 6 4–5, 8–9; translation: KIRK–RAVEN–SCHOFIELD (1983), p. 247.

³² Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI 4.5; translation: OLIVELLE (1996), p. 150.

³³ VI 2.1.

³⁴ III 19.1.

³⁵ Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa VI 1.1.1. (And again in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa II 2.9.1: 'Dieses All war im Anfang wahrlich nichts. Nicht war der Himmel, nicht war der Erde, und nicht war der Luftraum. Dieses Nichtseiende faßte den Gedanken (*manas*): »Ich möchte sein.«' Translation: MEHLIG (1987), p. 180.)

The earliest extant example of Being as a cosmogonical principle is in the Ṛg-Veda, again closer to the third way: ‘There was not the non-existent nor the existent then; there was not the air nor the heaven which is beyond.’³⁶ But even this text refers to previous thinkers³⁷ on the subject: ‘Sages seeking in their hearts with wisdom found out the bond³⁸ of the existent in the non-existent.’³⁹

In general, the paradoxical third way seems to have been very popular in unorthodox circles. In many dialogues of the Buddha four alternatives are suggested (*catuskoti*), all of them said to be possible: A, non-A, A and non-A, neither A nor non-A. This comes very close to Parmenides’ characterisation quoted above; e.g., when Māluṅkyāputta asks the Buddha whether ‘the Tathāgata is after dying, the Tathāgata is not after dying, the Tathāgata both is and is not after dying, the Tathāgata neither is nor is not after dying.’⁴⁰

The characteristic Jaina ‘doctrine of maybe’ (*syād-vāda*) increases the number of options to 7 by combining *is*, *is not* and *inexpressible*. Although this scholastic formulation may be quite late, allowing contradictory answers from different viewpoints (*nayas*) seems to be a very old part of the system.⁴¹ And finally, Sañjaya Belatṭhiputta, probably an older contemporary of the Buddha and the Jina, reiterates all positions, rejecting them all: I don’t think that A, and I don’t think that non-A, etc., and I don’t deny that etc.⁴²

THE EXISTENT AND ITS ATTRIBUTES

The Absolute, the final ground of everything, is called by Parmenides *to eon*, the Existent. This concept is labelled in the Upaniṣads in many ways, the most frequent and later canonised name being Brahman (‘magic, spell’). Though the Upaniṣads in general contain many heterogeneous doctrines, the parts dealing with the Absolute do have a certain unity; their central teaching is the identity of Brahman, the essence of the Universe, with the Self, the essence of the individual. This is strikingly

³⁶ X 129.1, translation: MACDONELL (1917), p. 207. – The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa adds the most interesting commentary: ‘It was thought [or mind: *manas*] only ... for thought is not exactly [*neva*] existent and not exactly non-existent.’ X 5.3.1.

³⁷ Clearly different from the author of X 129, as their position is criticised as one-sided: ‘Their [measuring-]cord was stretched horizontally. Was there below? Was there above?’ X 129.5, translation based on MACDONELL (1917), p. 210.

³⁸ This word, *bandhu*, normally means relation, relative, companion; bond would be *bandha* in Sanskrit.

³⁹ X 129.4, translation: MACDONELL (1917), p. 209. – Actually there is another, less philosophic and probably earlier reference to Being: ‘In the earliest age of the gods, the existent was born from the non-existent.’ X 72.1, translation based on DONIGER (1981), p. 38.

⁴⁰ Cūla-Māluṅkyā-Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya 63; translation: HORNER (1957), p. 97.

⁴¹ See e.g. FRAUWALLNER (1953–1956), pp. 199–201.

⁴² See e.g. BARUA (1921), pp. 325–332. He is normally labelled a sceptic. The most important original source is in the Dīgha Nikāya, Sāmañña-phala Sutta (Sañcaya-Belatṭhaputta-vādo = DN I. 179–181; PTS ed. Vol. I. pp. 58–59).

formulated by saying 'I am Brahman',⁴³ and finds its most beautiful mystical expression in the *Śāṇḍilya-vidyā* part of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.⁴⁴

This basic unity justifies the procedure followed here, i.e., that frequently attributes of the Absolute under different names will be cited as parallels to the Parmenidean *sēmata*. But of course whenever possible we will begin with the *Sadvidyā*, which is the only continuous *Upaniṣad* passage that calls the Absolute *sat*, the Existent. This word, accidentally, is not only semantically and syntactically analogous to Greek *eon*, but they are also etymologically equivalent, both being derived from an IE **(e)sont*.

The 'signs' of the Existent are discussed by Parmenides in a strictly logical way in his longest extant fragment, fr. 8.

(1) The Existent is ungenerated, 'For what birth will you seek for it? How and whence did it grow? I shall not allow you to say nor to think from not being: for it is not to be said nor thought that it is not; and what need would have driven it later rather than earlier, beginning from the nothing, to grow?'⁴⁵

The first argument is very close to Uddālaka's statement: 'Only the Existent was this [world?] in the beginning, one only without a second. Of this some said – only the Non-existent was this in the beginning, one only without a second: from that Non-existent was born the Existent. But indeed, my son, whence could it be then? he said. How could existent be born from non-existent?'⁴⁶ Again not only the logic but also the wording is related: the use of rhetorical questions, the same interrogatives (how and whence: *pēi pothen* – *kutas*, *katham*: again etymologically related), and most notably the concept of birth (instead of origin; Greek *gen-* and Sanskrit *jan-* are developments of the same IE root).

The second argument (lack of sufficient reason) is found in India only much later and in a more general form in the classical texts of the Sāṅkhya philosophy. This evidence is circumstantial, but not completely irrelevant, as the earliest roots of this school can be found exactly in our text and the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.⁴⁷ The Sāṅkhya *Kārikā* (4th cent. CE?) when proving the *sat-kārya-vāda*, the theory that an effect must have an existent cause, says: 'Because the non-existent does not act; ... because not everything comes to be ... therefore [the effect] is the effect of an existent.'⁴⁸ The first point is something of a tautology, presupposing the Buddhist definition of existence: *artha-kriyā-kāritva*, 'being the agent of an action',⁴⁹ and in its logical strictness parallels Parmenides; while the second is a generalisation of his second argu-

⁴³ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* I 4.10

⁴⁴ III 14. 'This self (*ātman*) of mine that lies deep within my heart – it is smaller than a grain of rice or barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller even than a millet grain or a millet kernel; but it is larger than the earth, larger than the intermediate region, larger than the sky, larger even than all these worlds put together. ... It is *brahman*.' (3–4; translation: OLIVELLE (1996), p. 124.)

⁴⁵ Fr. 8 6–10; translation: KIRK–RAVEN–SCHOFIELD (1983), p. 249.

⁴⁶ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VI 2.1–2.

⁴⁷ And to some extent in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. See, e.g., CHAKRAVARTI (1951), pp. 11–41.

⁴⁸ *a-sad-a-karaṇāt ... sarva-sambhavā-bhāvāt ... sat-kāryam*. Sāṅkhya *Kārikā* 9.

⁴⁹ DASGUPTA (1922), p. 163; he translates it as 'causal efficiency' or 'efficiency of causing any action or event.' This meaning is demonstrable only in Ratnakīrti (ca. 950), but he considers this the universally accepted definition of existence.

ment. That focused specifically on the time-aspect; but as the non-existent lacks any definition, anything could come out of it anywhere at any time.⁵⁰

The existent is also imperishable, but no specific arguments are given.⁵¹ In the Upaniṣads *akṣara* (indestructible), *avyaya* (undecaying), *amara* (undying), *amṛta* (immortal) are frequent epithets of the Absolute.⁵² That no need for extra proof was felt by either author is probably explained by the symmetry of origination and destruction, as their frequent occurrence together suggests. Uddālaka, in fact, seems to believe in a much stricter relation (later fairly generally accepted in India): whatever a thing originates from, into that will it return when destroyed. At least in the not perfectly coherent physiological theory he seems to suggest that at death a man's components return to the element from which they were taken (VI 5–7; 8.6; 15).

(2) The next *sēma* is closely related to the first; indeed, their exposition is not at all separate. 'It never was nor will be, since it is now, all together' 'And how could what is be in the future? How could it come to be? For if it came into being, it is not: nor is it if it is ever going to be in the future.'⁵³ Although the construal of the second quotation is problematic (COXON 1986, pp. 202–203), the minimal meaning of this sign is that the Existent is not a past or future state of the world, but it is so right now. On the face of it this may seem as a rebuttal of Āruṇi's 'in the beginning' (past); and in several places he says also that after death every creature will merge into the Existent (future).⁵⁴ However, this is rather a characterisation of the phenomenal world: the Existent itself is not past or future only, but also present. This is clearly emphasised by the ever-recurrent refrain of the second text: 'This finest essence – the whole universe has it as its Self: That is the Real: That is the Self: That *you* are, Śvetaketu!'⁵⁵

A stronger meaning of the Parmenidean *oude pot' ēn oud' estai* would be to suggest the atemporality of the Existent: it has never been, it will never be – because it has only an eternal present: it *is*. Instead of speculating on the plausibility of this interpretation (although it may be remarked that it is arrogance to underestimate the

⁵⁰ This is explicit both in the commentary Jayamaṅgalā and in the much later classical reformulation, the Sāṅkhya Sūtra I 116.

⁵¹ Unless in fr. 8. 12 ('Nor will the force of conviction allow anything besides it to come to be ever from <not> being') we emend *ek mē eontos* to *ek tou eontos*.

⁵² E. g. *akṣara* in Kaṭha III. 2 (immediately before the chariot-simile quoted); *avyaya* in Kaṭha III 15 (together with *nitya*, eternal), *amara* in Bṛhadāraṇyaka IV 4.25 ('And this is the immense and unborn self, unageing, undying, immortal, free from fear – the *brahman*', OLIVELLE (1996), p. 68.), *amṛta* in Chāndogya VIII 3.4–5 ('It is the Self ... it is immortal, free from fear: it is Brahman. And this Brahman has a name, Real (*satyam*). And these are those three syllables (*akṣara*): *sat-ti-yam*; there what is *sat* (existent), that is immortal ...')

⁵³ Fr. 8. 5, 19–20; translation: KIRK–RAVEN–SCHOFIELD (1983), pp. 249–250.

⁵⁴ All these belong to the second text: VI 8.6, 9, 10, 15. 'Now, take the bees, son. They prepare honey by gathering nectar from a variety of trees and by reducing that nectar to a homogeneous whole. In that state the nectar from each different tree is not able to differentiate: "I am the nectar of that tree", and "I am the nectar of that tree". In exactly the same way, son, when all these creatures merge into the existent, they are not aware that: "We are merging into the existent." No matter what they are in this world – whether it is a tiger, a lion, a wolf, a boar, a worm, a moth, a gnat, a mosquito – they all merge into that.' (VI 9.1–3; OLIVELLE 1996, p. 153.)

⁵⁵ VI 8–15; GOODALL (1996), pp. 137–140.

thinking powers of our great ancestors), a parallel thought and wording will be quoted from the Katha Upaniṣad: *anyatra bhūtāc ca bhavyāc ca yat*, 'other than what was and what will be'.⁵⁶ This passage clearly refers to atemporality, as it continues a description that suggests that the Absolute is beyond predication (or dualities).⁵⁷

(3) The existent is 'one, continuous'; 'whole and of a single kind'. 'Nor is it divided, since it all exists alike; nor is it more here and less there, which would prevent it from holding together, but it is all full of being. So it is all continuous: for the existent draws near to the existent.' 'For it needs must not be somewhat more or somewhat less here or there. For neither is there non-existent, which would stop it from reaching its like, nor is the existent in such a way that there would be more being here, less there, since it is all inviolate.'⁵⁸

The uniqueness of the Absolute is something of a commonplace in the Upaniṣads; Āruṇi starts his teaching with its declaration: 'Only the Existent was this [world?] in the beginning, one only without a second.' But the proof of Parmenides is unknown in India. Neither the logical analysis (the predicate 'to be' is incapable of degrees), nor the spatial (even geometrical) image of the Existent, would be at home there.⁵⁹ Much later the concept of indivisibility (*abheda*) will be widely accepted and 'partless' (*akhaṇḍa*) will be a standard adjective of Brahman.

But in a less formal way the connection of homogeneity with oneness is suggested by the simile of the bees (see fn. 54), more literally translated: the bees 'send the juice to oneness (*ekatā*). They do not get distinction there.' Some reflections in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad show an awareness of the connection between universality and non-duality, or between separation and duality: 'when there is a duality of some kind, then one can see the other ... But when all has become his very self, what could he see and with what?' (IV 5.15) 'it does not see ... there is no second, other than it, separate, that it could see.' (IV 3.23)

The attribute 'whole' has no exact counterpart in Sanskrit. *Sarva* (whole, all) typically occurs in contexts like *sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma*,⁶⁰ that could be translated 'This Brahman is, indeed, whole', but more naturally as 'All this [world] is Brahman'. *Pūrṇa* (full, whole), though not very frequent,⁶¹ is important as being the focus of the famous invocation of the Īśā Upaniṣad: 'That [Brahman] is whole, this

⁵⁶ II 14; the referent is clearly Brahman (II 16), grasped in the form of the mystical *OM* syllable.

⁵⁷ The whole stanza runs: 'Tell me that which thou seest beyond right and wrong, beyond what is done or not done, beyond past and future.' (Translation: RADHAKRISHNAN 1953, p. 614.) Śaṅkara's commentary is also clear: 'other than what was: than past time; and what will be: and future; also [other] than present. The meaning is: what is not limited [or divided, *paricchidyate*] by the three times.'

⁵⁸ Fr. 8 6, 4, 22–25, 44–48; translation: KIRK–RAVEN–SCHOFIELD (1983), pp. 248–53. (With minimal modifications: *what is* in line 25 was changed to *the existent*; *is it* in line 46 to *is there* and *is it existent* in line 47 to *is the existent*.)

⁵⁹ But the omnipresence of the Absolute can be expressed locally; e. g., Āruṇi illustrates that the Existent is everywhere, though unseen, by making Śvetaketu sip from the middle and two ends of a pan of salt water: though the dissolved salt is invisible and intangible, it is present everywhere in the water (Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI 13).

⁶⁰ Chāndogya Upaniṣad III 14.1.

⁶¹ In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad occurs only in III 12.9, *pūrṇaṁ apravartī*, whole and unmoving (said of Brahman as the outer space and the space within the heart). Similarly in Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad IV 8.

[world] is whole. From the whole rises a whole. Taking a whole of the whole, still a whole remains.⁶²

The adjective 'involute' (*asulon*) recalls the wording of the very important, four times recurring passage in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: 'It is the *not, not* Self: ungraspable ... cannot be hurt ... unattached ... unbound ... does not tremble ... is not injured (*na riṣyati*).'⁶³

(4) The Absolute does not move, it is 'unshaken' (cf. the previous quotation from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*). 'But changeless within the limits of great bonds it exists without beginning or ceasing, since coming to be and perishing have wandered very far away, and true conviction has thrust them off. Remaining the same and in the same place it lies on its own.'⁶⁴ Actually 'immovable'⁶⁵ or 'motionless'⁶⁶ seem to be more exact for *akinēton* than 'changeless'. Parmenides' proof is not very clear here, but he probably thought along these lines: if the Existent moves, it moves to where it, before, was not; and in that place the non-existent changes to existent, and that is coming to be – but that has already been rejected.

In the early Indian texts this immobility, though usually taken for granted, is seldom expressed.⁶⁷ The classical epithets appear only a little later, e. g. in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*: 'eternal, omnipresent, stable, unmoving (*acala*), everlasting' (II 24).

(5) The Existent in the Parmenidean poem seems to be limited and globular. 'For strong Necessity holds it within the bonds of a limit, which keeps it on every side.' 'But since there is a furthest limit, it is perfected, like the bulk of a ball well-rounded on every side, equally balanced in every direction from the centre.'⁶⁸ It is debated whether this description should be taken literally, and, if the answer is yes, whether Parmenides was following Xenophanes who probably⁶⁹ described his one god as spherical. In any case all this stands in strong contrast with standard Indian thinking, where the world usually has no end, the spatial aspect of the Absolute is not emphasised, and the frequent attribute *ananta* (infinite) is not normally understood in a temporal sense only.⁷⁰

⁶² Found also in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* V 1.1.

⁶³ III 9.26, IV 2.4, 4.22, 5.15.

⁶⁴ Fr. 8 4, 26–29; translation: KIRK–RAVEN–SCHOFIELD (1983), pp. 248, 251.

⁶⁵ SELLMER (1998), p. 107 (unverrückbar).

⁶⁶ BARNES (1979), p. 179 and STEIGER (1985), p. 10 (mozdulatlan). But BARNES (1979, p. 220) remarks that '*Kinēsis* in philosophical Greek regularly carries wider connotations than 'motion' in English: it covers any form of change'.

⁶⁷ E.g. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* III 17.6 *acyuta* 'unmoved', *Īṣā Upaniṣad* 4 *anejat* 'not stirring' and *sthita* 'standing'.

⁶⁸ Fr. 8 30–31, 42–44; translation: KIRK–RAVEN–SCHOFIELD (1983), pp. 251–252.

⁶⁹ KIRK–RAVEN–SCHOFIELD (1983), p. 170, fn. 1.

⁷⁰ E. g., in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, III 15: 'undecaying ... eternal ... without beginning, without end, beyond the great, stable' where *mahataḥ param* (beyond the great) suggest spatial infinity and, further, temporal infinity has been mentioned before separately (*avyayam, nityam*: undecaying, eternal). Contrast the specifically temporal *anarkhon apauston* of Parmenides in fr. 8 27: 'without beginning or ceasing', while spatially limited: 'within the limits of great bonds' (8 26).

THE WORLD OF PHENOMENA

The most conspicuous parallelism – and also a marked difference between our texts – can be found in the relation of the Existent to the phenomena. What we normally perceive are only *names*, contrasted with the deeper, metaphysical *truth*; and the intermediaries between those two worlds are called *forms*. But the differences are also significant: Parmenides has two forms, belonging to the *doxa*, while Āruṇi (in the first text) speaks about three forms, and they belong to the sphere of truth.

‘All those things will be name, which mortals fixed, believing them to be true: coming to be and perishing, to be and not to be, and to change place and to exchange their bright colour.’ ‘Men have fixed a name for them, as an emblem for each.’⁷¹ ‘They fixed two forms to name their cognitions’: ‘all have been named Light and Night.’⁷² These are Parmenides’ ideas on naming and truth; let us compare Āruṇi’s expressions:

‘As by one nail-cutter everything made of iron can be known, the modification being only a name arising from speech while the truth is that it is just iron.’ ‘What is red form in the fire, that is the form of Light; what is white, of Water; what is black, of Food. The fire-ness of fire has gone away, the modification being only a name arising from speech while the truth is that it is just the three forms.’⁷³

Both texts call the phenomena very clearly (using examples) *names*,⁷⁴ suggesting that they are *mere* names, and therefore not true or real (*alēthes* / *satyam*). This is traditionally understood as stating that the world as we see it is unreal.⁷⁵ Interestingly this interpretation should be rejected in both cases and for similar reasons: the contrast is not between truth and false appearance, but between unchanging, final, absolute and reliable reality and fleeting, subjective and doubtful experience.⁷⁶ The admit-

⁷¹ Fr. 8 38–41, 19 3 (in 8 38 reading *pant’ onom’ estai*).

⁷² 8 53, 9 1. The standard translation of 8. 53 (‘they made up their minds to name two forms’) could have been easily expressed, without violating the hexameter, by exchanging the order of *morphē* and *gnōmē*: **gnōmas gar katethento duo morphas onomazein*. In the other two occurrences of this verb, in 8 39 and 19 3, it always has this form, *katethento*; the subject is mortals or people (*brotoi*, *anthrōpoi*); and the object is names (*onoma*). Therefore it seems that the technical meaning of *katatithemai* for Parmenides is ‘to postulate, settle/fix for oneself’; I rendered it with ‘to fix’. *Gnōmē* in 8 61 means ‘opinion, judgement, thought’, i.e. what is in the head; here, before the first naming, a non-propositional word was needed – I picked ‘cognition’.

⁷³ Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI 1.6, 4.1; the translation of the refrain *vācārambhanam vikāro nāmadheyam*, *XX ity eva satyam* follows RADHAKRISHNAN (1953, p. 447).

⁷⁴ It might be worthy of a remark, that the worlds used for naming (*onoma katethento* / *nāmadheya*) both use the same IE words (the verb is **dhē*, to put).

⁷⁵ ‘It could hardly be stated more plainly that the Way of Opinion is a Way of Falsity ... Nor, after all, is it unusual for a philosopher to describe, at length, views with which he vehemently disagrees.’ (BARNES 1979, p. 156.) And DEUSSEN (1921, p. 156) remarks on Āruṇi: ‘This is the oldest passage in which the unreality of the manifold world is expressed. Not long after this, Parmenides in Greece attained to the same knowledge and uttered it almost in the same way...’

⁷⁶ A more detailed argument can be found on Parmenides in BODNÁR–KLIMA–RUZSA 1986, p. 294 = BODNÁR 1990, pp. 73–75. The original meaning of Uddālaka’s *vācārambhana*-refrain, unearthed from under the classical reinterpretation of Śaṅkara is suggested in RUZSA (2000): ‘The designation is the specific modification, as the (first) grasping by language; only “clay” is (constant) truth.’ I.e., though we first (or normally) designate things by their form, the material is constant, while the form is transient.

tedly striking, strong Parmenidean words on mortal opinion ('in which there is no true reliance', described by 'deceitful ordering of words'⁷⁷) do not mean anything more than that *doxa* is not necessary, logical truth; it is but the best description of the world based on perception. Therefore it is unreliable, and if it appears as certain truth, then it also deceives.⁷⁸

The apparent contradiction in Parmenides is rather the result of a literary device, emphasising the difference of *doxa* and *alētheia* in sharply contrasting words. When he says that there is no coming to be and destruction, movement and change or even difference, he denies these to the existent *as existent*. But when a dog dies, it dies *as a dog*, not as an existent: its carcass will still be there. There is no contradiction between movement and rest in the same locus, if viewed from a different angle: a man may sit perfectly motionless, still his thoughts, his blood, his heart and his eyes will move.

Parmenides clearly suggests that the perceptible word and the Existent are identical (or co-extensive – they occupy the same space). The wording of 8. 24 and 9. 3 is intentionally similar: *pan d' empleon estin eontos – pan pleon estin homou phaeos kai nuktos aphantou*, all is full of the Existent – all is full of Light and invisible Night.⁷⁹ Actually the relation is triple: it consists of the Existent, the two forms, and the empirical objects; and as a totality all three are identical. In the extant fragments the objects' similar status to that of the forms is noticeable in fr. 19, where the same idiom (people have fixed a name for them) is used for the phenomena as before for the two forms.

The same relation obtains between the Existent, the three forms and the objects in the *Sadvidyā*: they are coextensive. The three forms are the reality behind the different phenomena (fire, sun, moon, lightning, and, indeed, anything);⁸⁰ the Existent is the root of the three forms and of all creatures;⁸¹ and in the recurrent refrain of the second text the Existent is the self of everything.⁸²

The difference in the ontological status of the Greek and the Indian *forms* is important, but not as sharp as it appears at first sight. In the first text Āruṇi says that 'only the three forms is truth',⁸³ so while in Parmenides the forms belong to *doxa*, here they are part of metaphysical truth. But in the refrain of the second text Uddālaka says of the Absolute, 'that is truth', and the forms are not mentioned. In the simile

We say, 'This is a cup or spoon', not that 'This is metal'. But when we melt it, the metal will still be there, but the cup will be gone.

⁷⁷ Fr. 1 30, 8 52; translation: KIRK–RAVEN–SCHOFIELD (1983), pp. 242, 254.

⁷⁸ Unless we emend the deceitful *apatēlon* to the unusual *apatēton*, 'untrodden' with POPPER (1998, p. 100).

⁷⁹ STEIGER (1986, p. 208) and STEIGER (1985, p. 118–119) clearly notices this and draws the right conclusions, although he expresses this rather differently: he says that Parmenides boldly accepts the incompatibility of these two aspects of the world. '[D]iese Denker über die Widersprüchlichkeit der beiden Welten reflektierten und sich doch auch zu ihrer Unlösbarkeit bekannten.' '[D]as Verhältnis von *eon* und *morphē* zueinander ...: das homogene des Kugeluniversums und die zweigestaltige der physischen Welt sind zwei inkompatible Aspekte derselben Entität des Teils.' STEIGER (1986, pp. 203 and 208).

⁸⁰ Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI 4

⁸¹ Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI 8.4.6.

⁸² Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI 8–16.

⁸³ Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI 4.1–4.6.

of the introduction, even 'iron' is truth, as compared to the name 'nail-cutter'. And that means that in the Chāndogya the opposition name–truth (or convention–reality) is only relative, starting with everyday objects and going higher and higher up until it reaches the Existent. In an absolute sense, of course, only the Absolute can be called unchanging truth; and that is the usage of the second text. So in Parmenides we find only a stricter usage, no doubt motivated by the different epistemological status: for him, the attributes of the Existent are deducible, and therefore logically necessary – so truth (and also necessity, *anankē*; but cf. fr. 10 6) is appropriate only here.

It is interesting to speculate on the terminology of the fundamental elements of the physical world. They are called forms (*morphē, rūpa*), and that is a little surprising. An important philosophical concept first appears on the stage, and does not play its own proper role! Form should be contrasted to matter, but here the forms are the fundamental material constituents of the world. We could try to explain the problem away saying that they are forms of the Existent; that would be acceptable, but there is nothing in the texts to suggest it.

But in the Chāndogya we have some clues. 'What is red form in the fire, that is the form of Light...' ⁸⁴ – here the other meaning of *rūpa*, 'colour' is evident. ⁸⁵ So the forms appear to be first 'the visible aspect' of each basic component of the word; and then the meaning secondarily extended to the components themselves.

Far more informative is the term *nāma-rūpa* (name and form). In the *Sadvidyā* it occurs only in the spurious 3rd *khaṇḍa*, but name (e.g., fire) is contrasted with the three forms also in the 4th *khaṇḍa*. The concept of *nāma-rūpa* is old and vague, ⁸⁶ but the basic intuition is probably the diversity of the word as named (conceptual: genera) and as seen (perceptual: individuals). In fact in Buddhist philosophical language *rūpa* means body or matter. ⁸⁷ So here also *rūpa* would mean 'perceptual or empirical aspect' or even 'matter'.

The actual forms are quite different in our authors, but there are common points as well. Parmenides has 'Light', 'the aetherial Fire of Flame, gentle, very light' and 'unknowing Night, a solid and heavy body'. ⁸⁸ Uddālaka's first *rūpa* is *tejas*, 'light, heat, energy'; its colour is red. Then follows water, white and food, black. Clearly here we have a contrast solid–liquid–fiery. He also uses the concept of weight, although differently: he produces different parts of humans from the heavy, medium and light parts of the *rūpas* consumed. Both set of forms have temporal overtones: night and day for Parmenides, hot / rainy / harvest season for Āruṇi; ⁸⁹ both the year and the day can represent a full circle in time.

The classical successor of the *rūpa*-theory is the three *guṇas*, 'qualities' of Sāṅkhya. ⁹⁰ The age of the details is uncertain, but some further similarities are note-

⁸⁴ Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI 4.1.

⁸⁵ Actually it is not a different meaning, but a different translation of the same meaning, for which we have no word: 'visible quality'.

⁸⁶ See MEHLIG (1987), pp. 174–178.

⁸⁷ And *nāmarūpa* 'individual, person'.

⁸⁸ Fr. 9 1, 8 56–57, 59.

⁸⁹ VAN BUITENEN (1957), pp. 91–92.

⁹⁰ This has been doubted, but see RUZSA (1997), pp. 69–70 or VAN BUITENEN (1957), p. 95.

worthy. The last *guṇa* is called *tamas*, ‘darkness’; actually *tamas* is a very old cosmological principle, appearing already in the R̥g-Veda.⁹¹ The *guṇas* are bunches of qualities just like the *morphai*: the first, *sattva* (‘essence’) is kind,⁹² light, and illuminating; *rajas* (‘atmosphere’) is hostile, activating, supporting, and fickle; *tamas* is depressing, restraining, heavy, and covering.⁹³ Just by dropping *rajas*, the principle of strife, activity, and energy from the picture we get something very close to the Parmenidean arrangement.

The forms are not exactly like the usual elements, inasmuch as they do not normally appear singly, like fire, earth etc., but everything⁹⁴ is a mixture of all of them. ‘All is full of Light and invisible Night together, of both equally’,⁹⁵ says Parmenides, and in the Chāndogya even the fire and the sun have some admixture of Water and Food.

SOME DIFFERENCES

So far we have seen that most elements of Parmenidean philosophy could be borrowings from India, especially from chapter VI of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. Now we should consider the differences.

Two important traits of the *Sadvidyā* (second text) are missing from the Parmenidean account. Uddālaka clarifies the relation of the Existent to the everyday world, and also to the subject. The Existent is present everywhere, though invisible and intangible, like the lump of salt dissolved in a pan of water; and it is the essence not only of the material world, but ‘that is the Self: you are that, Śvetaketu!’ (VI 13.) Now Parmenides either did not know the second text (that is quite compatible with our thesis), or the omission was intentional.⁹⁶ Probably he made the gulf separating the Absolute and the empirical that much wider; or, he may have thought, like the Buddhists, that the Self is in fact our changing psyche, not the constant Being under it.

There are also two really significant innovations in Parmenides: logic and the number of forms. The logical mode of exposition has nothing parallel to it in India (nor in Greece); this seems to be Parmenides’ greatest contribution. In a sense he was forced to it: in India thinking about the Absolute already had a lengthy and respect-

⁹¹ E.g. X 129.4: ‘There was darkness hidden by darkness in the beginning.’

⁹² *prīti-...-ātmakam*, ‘has joy/kindness/love as its essence’.

⁹³ Sāṅkhya Kārikā 12–13. Here it is not specifically mentioned, but *sattva* is also principle of knowledge, *rajas* of passion and *tamas* of ignorance.

⁹⁴ According to Parmenides this is probably not true for the extremities of the world – in fr. 12.1 *pur akrēton*, ‘unmixed fire’, or perhaps of heavenly bodies: ‘the pure torch of the sun’ (10.2–3) and the moon, which is called *allotrion phōs*, ‘a light belonging to another’ [i.e., the sun] (14).

⁹⁵ Fr. 9.3–4. (reading *ison*; on the standard *isōn* we could translate line 4 as ‘... of both, that are equal, because neither has a share of Nothing’).

⁹⁶ Or the problematic fr. 1.31–32 refers to the first relation: the opinions/phenomena (*ta dokounta*) are acceptable because they reach everything (*panta*: the objects) through the All (*dia pantos*: the Existent). If *ta dokounta* stands for the two forms, this could mean that the three spheres pervade each other. But I think it more probable that Parmenides here suggests that his natural philosophy is better than others because it grows out of (and is coherent with) the teaching about the Existent.

able tradition, so a thinker could add to its description simply by saying 'it is so', or 'ancient seers knew it so'. This was clearly less viable with a Greek audience – argumentation was needed; and Parmenides was able to supply it. Of course the presence of logical demonstration should not make us blind to the transcendent source of his teaching – the divine revelation was probably not mere literary fiction. It was meant also to supply a little of the elevated status and traditional weight, missing in Greece, of the teaching about the Absolute.

Once he had perfected his demonstrations, he had to realize that their force could not be extended beyond the Existent; they cannot reach even the forms, not to speak of everyday phenomena. This forced him to emphasise the demarcation between an absolute, unchanging, and definitely knowable Existent on the one side, and changing and not fully reliable experience on the other. This made their relation less transparent, causing many misunderstandings among his interpreters. But it also gave him more freedom to reconsider the forms and their relation to the world.

Neither Greek nor Indian tradition had a very strong predilection for any particular fixed number of basic elements. E. g., in the Sāṅkhya philosophy we have two: soul and matter; three: the *guṇas*; five: the elements; and 25, the *tattvas* (factors: the elements, senses, etc.) So Parmenides decided here not to follow Āruṇi, but to find the theoretically best system, i.e., – applying Occam's razor – the minimal system of two different principles. In selecting a pair of opposites, Night and Light, he was following Indian as well as Greek examples (in Hesiod they come very early in the history of the gods). But by dropping the third *guṇa* of Sāṅkhya, he lost the principle of movement; his disciple, Empedocles had to re-introduce it as love and strife.

CONCLUSIONS

Having finished with the comparison, some questions must be answered, in order. First: about the nature of the parallels noted. Do they prove borrowing, or can they be accidental?

To my mind even the sheer number of correspondences seems to be decisive, but we have something more direct here. A similarity can be accidental; and there is a probability of such coincidence. This probability cannot be measured or calculated exactly, but it can be estimated. If we find a motive in a randomly selected group of 100 philosophers, say, twice, then we could say that its probability is around 2%. (Obviously we should filter for dependencies such as schools, but it is not that important here.)

Now I am proposing some probabilities (that I trust are higher than the actual ones) for three motives: a) An eternal, omnipresent Absolute that has its only designation as 'the Existent': 2%. b) The fundamental *material* components of the world are called 'forms'⁹⁷: 1%. c) The opposition phenomenal–essential is expressed as 'name–truth': 1%. For what follows it is extremely important that these motives are completely independent of each other – the acceptance of one would not make any-

⁹⁷ I.e., shapes (and colours), not meaning 'kind of'.

one more inclined to adopt another. If I call my Absolute 'Being', I can still name my elements roots, sources, parts, components, divinities, stuffs, beginnings or whatever; indeed, I can very easily go without any teaching on the elements. And similarly in all the other combinations.

This all means that the probability of their co-occurrence can be calculated with the standard methods of probability theory, and the result is 0.000002. That means roughly that we may expect to find a second thinker sharing these motives among half a million philosophers. Now, were there that many?

Or, to put it in other words: if we select our texts to compare on the basis of the first motive only (as I did), there is 0.01% probability (a chance of 1 : 1000) that the other two will occur as well. And such a remote possibility can safely be excluded – we may distinctly assert that our two texts cannot be independent.

The second question is whether there was direct borrowing or rather some more complicated relation is probable. Already in the introduction it has been shown that a common heritage is out of the question. Some intermediary (Persians, Magi) is theoretically possible, but highly improbable. The complexities of the ideas involved necessitate that the bearer should be a philosopher himself, and we do not know of any philosophy anywhere except in Greece, India, and China. Also a second translation could lead to more loss of information. And a direct contact could explain many of the parallelisms with texts other than the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. Occam's razor also points in the same direction. Instead of a man going somewhere to learn, returning home and then writing a book (not an unusual scenario) – we would have man 1 going somewhere to learn, then going somewhere else far away to teach man 2, who would then write the book.

The third question is, naturally, who borrowed. Both texts stand so far apart from anything around them⁹⁸, that an external influence seems inherently possible. But as we could show above for all common elements – notably for the terminology *existent, forms, name* – that they have clearly traceable roots and kinship in India that are lacking in Greece, it is practically clear that it was Parmenides who imported Indian ideas. The differences can also be seen as the result of an attempt at improvement, or at least adaptation to Greek soil, by Parmenides. (That, however, does not exclude the possibility of Parmenides also influencing Uddālaka Āruṇi, who is in several texts represented as quite unusually willing to learn, and even from non-orthodox sources.⁹⁹)

Our last question is: was it possible at all? Why and how could it happen? Chronologically we cannot really say much. According to OLIVELLE (1996) the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the Chāndogya, the earliest of the Upaniṣads, should be placed in

⁹⁸ For Parmenides this is very well known. On the *Sadvidyā* FRAUWALLNER (1953–1956, pp. 72) may be quoted: '... stands among the older Upaniṣads as completely sporadic and isolated.' 'It shows especially evidently how easily a judgement which blindly trusts the accidental character of tradition can easily go wrong and only takes into consideration the continuance of the text. Because, had not this one text remained preserved for us, nobody would have assumed or even conjectured a similar thought-process in this period.'

⁹⁹ See, e.g., the story of Śvetaketu, Jaivali Pravāhana and Uddālaka Āruṇi, especially in the version of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (VI 2; the other is in the Chāndogya, V 3–10).

the sixth to fifth centuries BCE, 'give or take a century or so.'¹⁰⁰ Parmenides composed his poem around 480, so we cannot know which text is older. Both authors are known to have travelled even at a fairly advanced age.¹⁰¹ When Parmenides was young, the city of his fathers (Phōkaia) and Gandhāra, mentioned by Āruṇi, both belonged to the same empire. And Darius took great care that his satrapies should be easily reached. His messengers travelled from Sousa to Sardeis on the Persian Royal Road in 9 days; that would be about half the distance to India. Of course a philosopher would not go that fast; starting from Elea in Southern Italy, the journey could take about half a year.

So the journey was perfectly possible, but why would Parmenides attempt it? Most probably not to learn philosophy. But probably he was a physician¹⁰² like his follower Empedocles, and he might have travelled to learn of new treatments and medicines. India has a strong old medical tradition, the *āyur-veda*; he could have heard of it (e.g., from the Indian soldiers fighting in Xerxes' army).

So the most probable scenario is that Parmenides travelled to India, learned Sanskrit (a language closely related to Greek) and came to know some Upaniṣadic philosophy. We cannot say exactly which texts, as the Upaniṣads as we have them are compound texts with many layers interwoven that are not of the same age. He could even have met Āruṇi or Śvetaketu, but we will never know. But he surely knew some version of the teaching that we now find in the *Sadvidyā* (text 1) and many others of which at least fragments survive elsewhere – among them the second text of the *Sadvidyā* and the Kaṭha Upaniṣad.

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¹⁰⁰ P. xxxvi. Actually he says 'seventh to sixth century', but in a footnote he adds that if Bechert's dating of the Buddha is accepted, 'then the dates of the early Upaniṣads should be pushed forward a century or so.' And, like Olivelle himself, I also accept Bechert's conclusions. Actually Japanese scholars have much earlier argued for ca. 386 BCE as the date of the Nirvāṇa, but it remained largely unnoticed in Europe; see NAKAMURA (1950–1956), p. 33 n. 23.

¹⁰¹ According to Plato, *Parmenides* 127b Parmenides visited Athens when he was about sixty-five. And Śvetaketu is already and independent, grown-up person (say, twenty-five) when Āruṇi follows him to get instruction from different princes (Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad I, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad VI 2, Chāndogya Upaniṣad V 3–10). At Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad III 7 he says that he had been living among the *Madras* (in the Punjab); as he belonged to the Kuru-Pañcāla territory around Delhi, that must be about 1000 km to the west. In the *Sadvidyā* (VI 14) he mentions Gandhāra further west.

¹⁰² The circumstantial evidence pointing in this direction is presented in COXON (1986), pp. 39–40.

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