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[Parmenides' "On Nature" *edited by Allan F. Randall from translations by David Gallop, Richard D. McKirahan, Jr., Jonathan Barnes, John Mansley Robinson and others.*]

[1]The mares, which carry me as far as my heart desires, were escorting me. They brought and placed me upon the well-spoken path of the Goddess, which carries everywhere unscathed the mortal who knows. Thereon was I carried, for thereon the wise mares did carry me, straining to pull the chariot, with maidens guiding the way. The axle, glowing in its naves, gave forth the shrill sound of a musical pipe, urged on by two rounded wheels on either end, even whilst maidens, Daughters of the Sun, were hastening to escort me, after leaving the House of Night for the light, having pushed back the veils from their heads with their hands.

Ahead are the gates of the paths of Night and Day. A lintel and stone threshold surround them. The aetherial gates themselves are filled with great doors, for which much-avenging Justice holds the keys of retribution. Coaxing her with gentle words, the maidens did cunningly persuade her to push back the bolted bar for them swiftly from the gates. These made of the doors a yawning gap as they were opened wide, swinging in turn the bronze posts in their sockets, fastened with rivets and pins. Straight through them at that point did the maidens drive the chariot and mares along the broad way.

The Goddess received me kindly, took my right hand in Hers, uttered speech and thus addressed me: "Youth, attended by immortal charioteers, who come to our House by these mares that carry you, welcome. For it was no ill fortune that sent you forth to travel this road (lying far indeed from the beaten path of humans), but Right and Justice. And it is right that you should learn all things, both the persuasive, unshaken heart of Objective Truth, and the subjective beliefs of mortals, in which there is no true trust. But you shall learn these too: how, for the mortals passing through them, the things-that-seem must 'really exist', being, for them, all there is.

The Way of Objectivity *(Aletheia)*

[2]"Come now, listen, and convey my story. I shall tell you what paths of inquiry alone there are for thinking:

> **#1.** The one: that *it is* and *it is impossible for it not to be*.
> This is the path of Persuasion, for it accompanies Objective Truth.
>
> **#2.** The other: that *it is not* and *it necessarily must not be*.
> That, I point out to you, is a path wholly unthinkable, for neither could you know what-is-not (for that is impossible), nor could you point it out.

[6]"Whatever can be spoken or thought of necessarily *is*, since it is possible for it to be, but it is not possible for nothing to be. I urge you to consider this last point, for I restrain you firstly from that path of inquiry (#2), and secondly from:

> **#3.** The one on which mortals, knowing nothing, wander, two-headed, for helplessness in their breasts guides their wandering minds and they are carried, deaf and blind alike, dazed, uncritical tribes, for whom being and not-being are thought the same and yet not

the same, and the path of all runs in opposite directions. [7]For never shall this be proved: that things that are not *are*. But do restrain your thought from this path of inquiry, and do not let habit, born from much experience, compel you along this path, to guide your sightless eye and ringing ear and tongue. But judge by reason the highly contentious disproof that I have spoken.

[8a]"One path only is left for us to speak of: that *it is*. On this path there are a multitude of indications that what-is, being ungenerated, is also imperishable, whole, of a single kind, immovable and complete. Nor was it once, nor will it be, since it is, now, all together, one and continuous. For what coming-to-be of it will you seek? How and from where did it grow? I shall not permit you to say or to think that it grew from what-is-not, for it is not to be said or thought that *it is not*. What necessity could have impelled it to grow later rather than sooner, if it began from nothing? Thus it must either fully be, or be not at all. Nor will the force of conviction ever allow anything, from what-is, to come-to-be something apart from itself; wherefore Justice does not loosen her shackles so as to allow it to come-to-be or to perish, but holds it fast.

"The decision on these matters depends on this: either *it is* or *it is not*. But it has been decided, as is necessary, to let go the one as unthinkable and unnameable (for it is no true path), but to allow the other, so that it is, and is true. How could what-is be in the future? How could it come-to-be? For if it came-to-be, it is not, nor is it if at some time it is going to be. Thus, coming-to-be is extinguished and perishing unheard of.

"Nor is it divisible, since it all alike *is*. Nor is there any more of it here than there, to hinder it from holding together, nor any less of it, but it is all a plenum, full of what-is. Therefore, it is all continuous, for what-is touches what-is.

"Moreover, unchanging in the limits of great bonds, it is without beginning or end, since coming-to-be and perishing were banished far away, and true conviction drove them out. Remaining the same, in the same place, it lies in itself, and thus firmly remains there. For mighty Necessity holds it fast in the bonds of a limit, which fences it about, since it is not right for what-is to be incomplete. For it lacks nothing. If it lacked anything, it would lack everything.

[8c]"Since, then, there is an ultimate limit, it is completed from every direction like the bulk of a perfect sphere, evenly balanced in every way from the centre, as it must not be any greater or smaller here than there. For neither is there what-is-not, which could stop it from reaching its like, nor is there a way in which what-is could be more here and less there, since it all inviolably *is*. For equal to itself in every direction, it reaches its limits uniformly.

[3]"The same thing is there for thinking of and for being. [4]Look upon things which, though absent, are yet firmly present in thought (for you shall not cut off what-is from holding fast to what-is, since it neither disperses itself in all directions throughout the order of the Cosmos, nor does it gather itself together). [8b]It is the same thing, to think of something and to think that it *is*, since you will never find thought without what-is, to which it refers, and on which it depends. For nothing is nor will be except what-is, since it was just this that Fate did shackle to be whole and unchanging; wherefore it has been named all things that mortals have established, persuaded that they are true: 'to come-to-be and to perish', 'to be and not to be' and 'to shift place and exchange bright colour'.

The Way of Subjectivity *(Doxa)*

[5]"Wherever I begin, it is all one to me, for there I shall return again.

[8d]"Here I stop my trustworthy speech to you and thought about Objective Truth. From here on, learn the subjective beliefs of mortals; listen to the deceptive ordering of my words. For they made up their minds to name two forms, one of which it is not right to name at all (here is where they have gone astray) and have distinguished them as opposite in bodily form and have assigned to them marks distinguishing them from one another:

#1. Here, on the one hand, aetherial flame of fire, gentle, very light, everywhere the same as itself...

#2. But not the same as this other, which in itself is opposite: dark night, a dense and heavy body.

"All this order I present to you as probable, so that no mortal belief shall ever outdo you. [9]But since all things have been named light and night, and their powers have been assigned to each, all is a plenum of light and obscure night together, both equal, since nothingness partakes in neither.

[10]"You shall know the nature of the aether and all the signs in the aether, the destructive works of the splendid Sun's pure torch, and whence they came-to-be. And you shall learn the wandering works of the round-faced Moon, and its nature, and you shall know also the surrounding heaven, whence it grew and how Necessity did guide and shackle it to hold the limits of the stars. [14]The Moon: night-shiner, wandering around the Earth, an alien light, [15]always looking towards the rays of the Sun. [15a]The Earth: rooted-in-water. [11]And you shall learn how Earth and Sun and Moon and the aether common to all, the Milky Way and the outermost heaven, and the hot force of the stars did surge forth to come-to-be.

[12]"For the narrower rings are filled with unmingled fire, the ones next to them with night, but a due amount of fire is inserted amongst it. In the midst of these is the goddess who governs everything. For she rules over hateful birth and union of all things, sending female to unite with male, and again conversely male with female.

[13]"She devised Love first of all the gods. [18]When man and woman mingle the seeds of love that spring from their veins, a formative power, maintaining proper proportions, moulds well-formed bodies from this diverse blood (for if, when the seed is mingled, the forces therein clash and do not fuse into one, then cruelly will they plague the offspring with a double-gender). [17]She placed young males on the right side of the womb, young females on the left.

[16]"According to the union within each person of disparate body parts, thus does mind emerge in humans. For it is the composition of body parts which does the thinking, and Thought (since it defines the plenum) is the same in each and every human.

[19]"Thus, according to belief, these things were born and now are, and hereafter, having grown from this, they will come to an end. And for each of these did humans establish a distinctive name. [20]One and unchanging is that for which as a whole the name is: 'to be'."