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## The Truth about Parmenides' Doxa

Christopher Kurfess  
*Gettysburg College*

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# The Truth about Parmenides' Doxa

## **Abstract**

In a recent article in this journal, Néstor-Luis Cordero has offered an interesting account of how scholars may have been misreading Parmenides' poem for centuries, as well as some provocative suggestions on how to correct that misreading. He calls into question the prevalent notion of the *Doxa* as Parmenides' account of the phenomenal world, and he challenges the standard arrangement of the fragments that assigns lines featuring 'physical' topics to that portion of the poem. The '*Doxa* of Parmenides', if that phrase is understood to imply that Parmenides himself embraced *doxai* of any kind is, Cordero claims, an imaginary fusion, like Centaurs or Sirens, of two independently legitimate notions. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Parmenides, Doxa, Nestor-Luis Cordero, doxai, poetry

## **Disciplines**

Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity | Classical Literature and Philology

## The Truth about Parmenides' *Doxa*

Christopher Kurfess

In a recent article in this journal,<sup>1</sup> Néstor-Luis Cordero has offered an interesting account of how scholars may have been misreading Parmenides' poem for centuries, as well as some provocative suggestions on how to correct that misreading. He calls into question the prevalent notion of the *Doxa* as Parmenides' account of the phenomenal world and he challenges the standard arrangement of the fragments that assigns lines featuring 'physical' topics to that portion of the poem. The '*Doxa* of Parmenides', if that phrase is understood to imply that Parmenides himself embraced *doxai* of any kind, is, Cordero claims, an imaginary fusion, like Centaurs or Sirens, of two independently legitimate notions. There was a Parmenides, and there are *doxai* presented in the poem, but to speak of Parmenidean *doxai*, Cordero maintains, is a twofold error: it is a mistake to regard what the poem speaks of as *doxai* as Parmenides' own views (because all *doxai* must be false) and it is wrong to place the surviving fragments of a 'physical' character (or at least many of them) under the heading of *Doxa*. In the new arrangement that Cordero proposes, only a few of the fragments generally included in the *Doxa* would remain there, the rest being placed earlier in the poem, as part of the *Aletheia*, where they may be regarded as endorsed truths of Parmenidean natural science.

Cordero's essay is a valuable reminder that the arrangements of the fragments that we encounter today are reconstructions by modern editors, a fact too easily and too frequently overlooked. However, his account of the history of scholarship on the *Doxa* calls for correction on a number of points, and his own proposed rearrangement of the fragments strikes me as at least as chimerical a production as the more familiar presentation that Cordero likens to the fantastic creatures of Greek myth. Thus, while I share with him a conviction that the orthodoxy about the *Doxa* is incorrect, my own view of where it goes wrong is rather different. In what follows, I begin by discussing several matters raised by Cordero which, though often neglected, are necessary preliminaries for a responsible reconstruction of Parmenides' poem. As we proceed, attending more closely to the ancient sources for the fragments and venturing into what

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<sup>1</sup> 'The "*Doxa* of Parmenides" Dismantled', hereafter 'Cordero 2010'. See also 'Postscriptum 2007' in Cordero 2008, 78-80 and Cordero 2011b. References to Cordero 2010 in the main body of the text are by page number(s) alone, given in parentheses. The abbreviation 'DK' refers to Diels and Kranz 1951. Items such as 'DK 10' or 'DK 7.5' are shorthand for referring to the 'B' fragments (and line numbers, if given) in the chapter in DK on Parmenides.

might seem like alien terrain, a different way of viewing the *Doxa*, including a ‘new’ fragment, will emerge.

### 1. Reconsidering the Reconstructions

Cordero begins with a story of how the contemporary view of the ‘*Doxa* of Parmenides’ arose, the moral of which lies in the salutary reminder that Parmenides’ text as we typically read it is a modern arrangement, several centuries in the making, of quotations collected from an array of sources spanning the millennium following Parmenides’ own lifetime. If we overlook the fact that what we are reading is a reconstruction, there is greater risk of accidentally and anachronistically reading our own expectations and interests back into Parmenides’ poem. The common notion of Parmenides’ *Doxa* as a presentation of Parmenidean ‘physics’ or natural science, Cordero claims, involves just such an accident. It just so happened, he says, that in the early attempts of Henri Estienne (in 1573) and Joseph Scaliger (c. 1600), in which lines drawn from the same ancient author were grouped together, fragments of a more ‘physical’ character were placed at the end of their collections. In time, this chance concatenation received the misleading title *Doxa*, a designation that Cordero dates to G. G. Fülleborn’s 1795 *Fragmente des Parmenides*. That presentation would prove decisive for how Parmenides would be read thereafter: ‘the poem was divided into three parts: A Prologue (fragment 1); a section Fülleborn titled *περὶ τοῦ νοητοῦ ἢ τὰ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν*; and one he titled *τὰ πρὸς δόξαν* (fragment 8.52 to fragment 18; fragment 19 was unknown at the time). Here we have the birth certificate of Parmenidean *Doxa*.’ (2010, 233)

That is not to say that the familiar division of the poem into a Proem, a Way of Truth, and a Way of Seeming was Fülleborn’s invention. Cordero recognizes that the division between an *Aletheia* and a *Doxa* is an ancient and genuine one. What he disputes is that fragments which appear to be concerned with ‘physics’ belong in the *Doxa*, claiming about the distribution of fragments, ‘we simply do not know today which verses belong to which section.’ (233) Still, Cordero’s story might mislead his readers, for neither did Fülleborn invent the names that serve as titles for the sections in his edition, nor were the earlier editors, in their arrangements, simply grouping together fragments preserved by the same author. In fact, both Fülleborn, in applying the titles, and the earlier editors, in arranging the fragments as they did, were guided by the evidence they found in the authors who quoted the fragments.

As Cordero presents it, the only certitude in the reconstruction of the poem is that the proem, preserved by Sextus Empiricus, ought to be placed before any of the other fragments. As for the rest, he says, ‘Most of the remaining eighteen quotations of the poem can actually be placed in any order.’<sup>2</sup> Both of these claims reveal some inattention to the source material, undervaluing in particular the contributions of the sixth-century C.E. commentator Simplicius of Cilicia. Simplicius’ writings on Aristotle are an indispensable resource for the reconstruction of Parmenides’ poem, supplying more than half of the lines now known and telling us enough about their contexts to determine the relative sequence of no fewer than nine of twenty fragments treated as genuine in DK.<sup>3</sup>

Despite certain oversights, Cordero’s reminder about our text being a reconstruction is an important point, and well worth emphasizing. Hermann Diels’ success in collecting and making accessible the fragmentary texts of Presocratic philosophy scattered throughout the vast range of Greek and Latin literature has made the DK arrangement of the fragments virtually canonical. An unintended consequence of this is that the fragments can be read and studied without adequate attention being given to the contexts from which they are drawn. Overly trusting readers may then suppose that the arrangement in which the isolated fragments are presented in DK is somehow definitive, while overly suspicious ones may imagine that the DK arrangement is essentially arbitrary. Cordero’s own account flirts with both excesses,<sup>4</sup> but that does not

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<sup>2</sup> Cordero 2010, 232. Cordero goes on to qualify this statement, ‘It is true that the rigorous method of Parmenides suggests, for the first time in a philosophical text, a certain organization’, thus implying that it was not the testimony of the sources, but the expectation of a logical exposition on Parmenides’ part, that determined the arrangement of the fragments in DK. Beyond overlooking the fact that much of that order was determined by the explicit testimony of the sources, it is problematic to assume that the organization of the material in the poem was determined by Parmenides’ ‘rigorous method’ when it is not obvious just what that is. The assumption that Parmenides’ methods match our own expectations of a logical exposition seems dangerously close to the kind of anachronistic reading Cordero warns us against.

It should also be noted that in the following paragraph Cordero grants, on the authority of Simplicius, that DK 9 and 12 must have followed DK 8, though he later returns to the claim that ‘the haphazard origin (with the exception of fr. 1) of the present arrangement ... allows us total liberty to place the “physical texts” ... anywhere (subject to one constraint...)’ (2010, 242-243). Simplicius is also appealed to for placing DK 19 after DK 8 (see Cordero 2010, 232, 234, 240, and 243). In Cordero’s new arrangement, DK 9, 12, and 19 are the only known fragments allowed to follow DK 8.50-61.

<sup>3</sup> For detailed discussion of the early editions and Cordero’s presentation of them, with a synopsis of the fragments present in each of the early editions discussed, see Kurfess 2013, 124-152, and 190.

<sup>4</sup> Describing the DK arrangement as haphazard does not give Diels and earlier editors their due credit. At the same time, Cordero is too trusting, I think, in adopting the division, by Walther Kranz, of Sextus Empiricus’ quotation of the proem into two separate fragments, DK 1.1-30 and DK 7.2-7a (leading without break into DK 8). In the latter supposition Cordero shares the company of nearly all the scholars to have treated the poem since Kranz reintroduced

invalidate the key point. Moreover, his characterization of the arrangement as arbitrary is truer of the material assigned to the *Doxa*, most of which comes from sources less helpful for reconstructing the poem than Simplicius. Few students of the poem will dispute that the reconstruction of the *Doxa* (in DK or comparable arrangements) is less secure than that of the *Aletheia*. Even to those uninitiated into the mysteries of the modern attempts at reconstructing the poem, the material that makes up the *Doxa*, compared with that of the poem or the *Aletheia*, appears plainly as a meager sampling of stray bits.

## 2. Problems with the *Doxa*?

According to Cordero, not only is what survives of the *Doxa* woefully incomplete, but most of the fragments generally believed to belong to the *Doxa* actually do not. The texts commonly grouped together as the *Doxa* are claimed to exhibit inconsistencies of style and content that tell against assigning them all to the same portion of the poem, and the failure of modern scholars to see this is linked with a confusion perpetuated among their ancient antecedents. Among the ancient, Simplicius, interestingly, is singled out for special blame. As the ‘stronger paradigm of the “Platonization” of Parmenides’, our unmatched source for so much of what survives of the poem is supposed to have communicated it with an overlay so foreign to Parmenides’ own thinking that modern interpreters have failed to recognize the difference, for Parmenides, between ‘physics’ or ‘appearances’ on the one hand and ‘mortal opinions’ on the other.<sup>5</sup>

As to the alleged inconsistencies of style and content, the case against the common arrangement is not particularly convincing. While it will be readily admitted that the standard *Doxa* is incomplete, there does seem to be a general coherence to it: the end of DK 8 and DK 9 lead us to expect a discussion of ‘all things’ in terms of heavy night and *aitherial* light; DK 10 adds that the addressee will know ‘all the signs’ of the *aither* and the works of the sun and the moon; DK 11 numbers the sun and moon among a list of other celestial lights that come to be (to which the mentions of the moon in DK 14 and 15 certainly seem, and the reference to the ‘water-rooted’ earth in DK 15a may be, related), while DK 12 associates bands of fire and night with a

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the change. For an argument against this consensus and for the integrity of Sextus’ quotation, see Kurfess 2013, 18-54.

<sup>5</sup> See Cordero 2010, 234-237. Although dismissive remarks about Simplicius’ (Neo-)Platonism are not uncommon, this portrayal seems an extreme one, likely to give a distorted impression of the relative merits of the ancient commentators. If there is any truth in the claim, ‘Indeed, one rarely finds in the ancient tradition of commentary anachronisms as numerous as are found in Simplicius with reference to Parmenides’ (2010, 236), that is only because, compared to what Simplicius provides, others in that tradition tell us so very little about Parmenides.

divinity directing male-female pairings (to which DK 13, which speaks of Eros, and the embryological fragments 17 and 18, would all seem linked); finally, in what is possibly the conclusion of the *Doxa*, DK 19 seems to be a summary of what has preceded, stating that ‘these things’ have grown, and now are, and will in time meet their end, all *κατὰ δόξαν*. DK 16, seemingly more concerned with human *noos* than the generation of the cosmos, seems like the only odd fit, but, given the recurrent pairing of *doxai* with mortals in the poem, it is far from being obviously out of place.<sup>6</sup> If these are loose connections, the content here nonetheless seems distinct from the material that runs from DK 2 through most of DK 8, over the course of which we hear little hint of celestial objects, or night and light, and where any talk of generation appears to deny its existence. Cordero claims that the standard *Doxa* material includes both obvious ‘physical’ truths and manifestly false *doxai*. Cordero’s solution to the problem this poses to the unity of the *Doxa* is to place the ‘physical’ fragments earlier in the poem. Without further elaboration, however, the ‘notorious imbalance’ of style and content that Cordero claims to detect in these fragments seems to be one uncomfortably forced upon the text, not one arising freely from an unbiased reading.<sup>7</sup>

As for the alleged consequences of viewing the *Doxa* through Platonic lenses, the case is also less than compelling.<sup>8</sup> When we consult the ancient sources (who had better access to the poem than we do) we find a widespread agreement in aligning the *Aletheia* with an intelligible, ungenerated unity and the *Doxa* with a sensible multitude of generated things. If this sounds like Platonism, perhaps it is plausible simply to suggest that Parmenides had a decisive influence on Plato.

### 3. A Physics-free *Doxa*?

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<sup>6</sup> As Cordero notes, Loenen 1959 and Hershbell 1970 offered arguments for placing DK 16 in the Way of Truth, but few scholars seem to have found these arguments persuasive. On DK 16 and its roles in the *Doxa*, see Kurfess (forthcoming).

<sup>7</sup> Cordero points out, e.g., that in the ‘physical’ fragments, the goddess speaks of celestial objects as things to be *learned* or *known*, language which is allegedly not used in connection with *doxai* (2010, 240-241). Given how little of the *Doxa* is left, such a claim, even if true, would not amount to much. As it happens, however, it is not true: the very first occurrence of the word in the poem, *δόξας* at B 1.30, is a direct object of *πυθέσθαι* in 1.28 (cf. *πέυση* at 10.4, included among the verbs for knowing physical realities at 2010, 240) while *δόξας* at 8.51 is the object of *μάνθανε* in the following verse. Similarly dubious is the remark that DK 16, which ‘describes the formation of the intellect in the case of men (*ἀνθρώποισιν*, 16.3) ... has hardly any sense in a context that presents the opinions of men.’ (2010, 241) Whatever the differences between human intellect and mortal opinion may be, it seems rash to insist that discussion of one cannot sensibly involve the mention of the other.

<sup>8</sup> On the ‘terminal Platonitis’ (Cordero 2011, 100) supposedly afflicting the ancient commentators, see Kurfess 2013, 143-152.

Apart from the claim of anomalies in the conventional *Doxa* and the allegation of a Platonizing prejudice among the commentators, Cordero's characterization of what *doxai* look like dissociated from 'physics' includes important observations on the text as we have it. The separation of 'physical' truths from *doxai* puts into greater relief certain aspects of the latter that can be underappreciated when the *Doxa* is regarded as a cosmology. Specifically, Cordero stresses two points: (i) where the word *doxa* appears in what is left of the poem, it is regularly mentioned in conjunction with *mortals*;<sup>9</sup> (ii) an activity repeatedly associated with these mortals is *naming* (cf. DK 8.38-39, 8.51-53, 8.61 with 9.1, and DK 19). Cordero insists that these points must be taken into account in any attempt to explain the *Doxa*. I think that he is right to do so, even without sharing his view that *doxai* have nothing to do with 'appearances'.

As Cordero interprets it, the linking of *doxa* with mortals establishes that the 'copyright' of anything the poem speaks of as *doxai* belongs to human beings, not to the goddess or to Parmenides himself. The second point, the association of mortals or humans with naming, provides a sense of what really constitutes *doxa*: it is something to do with mortals' use or misuse of language. More specifically, '*doxa* consists in assigning some names to the things, and to believe, as a consequence of this naming, that these words correspond to a certain reality.' (239).<sup>10</sup>

As to the first point, while the poem certainly links *doxai* with mortals, it is not so obvious that Parmenides' aim in repeatedly so characterizing *doxai* is to disclaim any involvement in *doxai* on his own part. That is not to say that we must understand Parmenides as promoting some particular set of *doxai*, but that some acquaintance with *doxai*, far from the truth though they may be, might well be part, and perhaps an important one, of the teaching that the goddess is giving. After all, are not the youth, Parmenides, and his audience themselves mortal? Perhaps it is precisely mortals who need to hear this teaching, which amounts in some sense to a corrective or remedy for what is a peculiarly mortal condition. The criticisms leveled by the goddess are not uncommonly understood to be directed at some more or less specific targets

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<sup>9</sup> The noun appears at DK 1.30 (which I have argued elsewhere represents three independent verses of the original poem; see Kurfess 2014 for a brief discussion), 8.51 and 19.1.

<sup>10</sup> For Cordero, however, this naming and believing has nothing to do with 'physics' or 'appearances', so the understanding of *doxa* in the poem is distinctly different from the later, Platonic understanding of *doxa*: 'a conjectural knowledge of the appearances, the cognitive state that ranges over "the 'opinionable'" (*δοξαστόν*) of Plato.' (2010, 236) I am prepared to agree with the description of 'Parmenidean *doxa*' as quoted, but do not see precisely why it is at odds with the Platonic one.



among Parmenides' predecessors or contemporaries, rival philosophers or cosmologists, but the term 'mortal' suggests a rather wider range.<sup>11</sup>

As for naming, while it does indeed appear to be a conspicuous feature of the *Doxa*, rightly connected with the dualism that the verses point to as typical of mortal speech, Cordero pursues this into ground where it is difficult to follow. Ultimately the 'copyright' over mortal *doxai* is granted to a group of theoreticians who—otherwise unknown to us—'pretended to explain reality by two principles, day and night ... without realizing that they are contraries'.<sup>12</sup> The purely hypothetical status of the group and the implausibility of the position imputed to them make this seem like a strained attempt to maintain the supposed separation between the Parmenidean and Platonic notions of *doxa*, and thus the distinction between 'non-doxastic physical texts' and 'doxastic' ones.

#### 4. Restoring 'Physical Truths'?

Might some of the material generally allocated to the *Doxa* belong in the *Aletheia*? Of the fragments normally included in the *Doxa*, Cordero departs from the DK arrangement by placing DK 10 and 11, 13-15, and 17 and 18, in that order, before DK 6, and in placing DK 16 either after DK 6 or before DK 4.<sup>13</sup> For at least one of these fragments (DK 13), Simplicius' text tells directly against this arrangement.<sup>14</sup> For the most part, however, the sources for these fragments give no very clear indication of where the lines quoted stood in the poem. Cordero's claim that we are allowed 'total liberty to place the "physical texts" that are non-doxastic ... anywhere (subject to one constraint ...)' (242-243) is an understandable reaction to the evidence, particularly as one generally encounters it in the form of extracts presented in DK. It is, however, an oversimplification, and a survey of the sources for the fragments in question will show that what evidence there is lends its support to the standard arrangement rather than to Cordero's.

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<sup>11</sup> Burnet 1930, 182-185, e.g., identified the 'mortals' as Pythagoreans. Cf. Coxon 1986, 218: 'the subject of κατέθεντο [at DK 8.53] is not merely Pythagoreans but (as in [8.39]) human beings in general'. According to Curd 1998, 124, the goddess uses 'beliefs of mortals' not to refer to 'any belief held by a mortal human being' but as shorthand for 'some particular set of beliefs or philosophic views'. Frère 2011, against what is claimed to be the 'common opinion' that by 'mortals' Parmenides refers to all human beings, argues for Heraclitus and the Pythagoreans as specific targets.

<sup>12</sup> Cordero 2010, 239-420. Cf. Cordero 2011b, 104-106.

<sup>13</sup> Cordero does not mention DK 15a, so it is not clear what he intends to do with this one-word fragment. In addition to the changes to the material from the standard *Doxa*, he also places DK 4 after DK 5, although he seems uncommitted to a precise location for DK 5 itself.

<sup>14</sup> See nn. 18 and 29 below.

The ‘one constraint’ mentioned is inferred from the verses of the poem themselves rather than the testimony of the quoting sources. Cordero’s account of it unfortunately relies on several questionable assumptions, and is, I think, ultimately mistaken, but the error is an instructive one if we consider it carefully. The argument is this: because DK 8.51 marks a transition from a discussion of realities to mere *doxai*, the texts presenting ‘physical truths’ must have preceded that transition. Further, since Cordero, like most other editors, takes DK 7 and 8 as an uninterrupted stretch of text, they must have preceded DK 7 also. Cordero’s collection of non-doxastic, physical texts is therefore placed between DK 4 and DK 6, before DK 7-8. Cordero finds confirmation of this placement in the goddess’ mention of a ‘much-contending *elenchos*’ in DK 7.5-6: ‘It is precisely the narration before the present fr. 7 of the physical events that is alluded to in the phrase πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον (7.5), that “has been announced” (ῥηθέντα). ... We must note that in the present state of the reconstruction of the text, there is not any ἔλεγχος (controversial or not) before fr. 7. This ἔλεγχος, surely, must be placed before fr. 7.’ (243)

There are problems at each step of this argument. In the first place, even if we grant that the texts at issue are obvious examples of ‘non-doxastic’ truths, we are not provided any reason for believing that every mention of such truths must have preceded the transition at DK 8.51. On any reconstruction, our ignorance about what the poem looked like following that transition is vast, and our grounds for excluding material from that portion of the poem virtually non-existent. Next, the common assumption that DK 7 and 8 constitute an unbroken stretch of text may itself be an unfortunate accident in the modern history of the reconstruction of the text.<sup>15</sup> The ancient sources preserve the bulk of DK 7 as part of the opening of the poem, not as a text continuous with DK 8. This needs emphasizing, given how unquestioned the DK reading has become. Part of the case in favor of the DK arrangement (against Diels’ own earlier—and better—judgment to keep Sextus Empiricus’ proem more or less intact and to print only two lines, equivalent to DK 7.1-2, as fragment 7) has been an appeal to the supposed ‘fact’ that the *elenchos* mentioned by the goddess has already been ‘uttered’ (*rhēthenta*). In DK 7.5-6, which are lines 34-35 of the beginning of the poem as Sextus quotes it, the goddess appears to invite the youth narrating the poem to ‘judge, by *logos*, the contentious *elenchos* spoken by me.’<sup>16</sup> It seemed to earlier

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. n. 4 above.

<sup>16</sup> κρίναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον / ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα. For an alternative construal of these lines, see Kurfess 2013, 76-77. For the case that the lines belong where Sextus has them, see Kurfess 2013, 18-54.

generations of scholars that such a reference was out of place in the proem, which contains no such *elenchos* in the preceding lines. Accordingly, they argued for the relocation of the final lines of Sextus' proem to DK 7. Cordero's suggestion to provide some of the 'missing' *elenchos* with the 'physical' fragments is an ingenious attempt to fill the imaginary lacuna, but in judging both his claims and those of earlier scholars, we need to appreciate that the tense of the participle *rhēthenta* does not, as they suggest, establish an absolute time by which the 'proof' has been spoken, but simply indicates that it will have been spoken by the goddess by the time the youth might judge it. We cannot, from the participle alone, conclude anything more about the timing of the *elenchos*. It thus cannot confirm the placement of the lines which Cordero thinks constitute that *elenchos*, nor provide straightforward guidance on where to place them in our reconstruction.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond showing that the text at this point provides no real constraint on the placement of the fragments in question, this example helps to highlight a problem with using the verses themselves as a guide to ordering the fragments. Any ambiguity in this notoriously problematic poem is an opportunity for reading our own presuppositions into it. Flattering though it may be to think that we have better insight into Parmenides' thought than did Simplicius, Theophrastus, Proclus or other figures in the ancient tradition, we would do well to remember that, even for the worst readers and thinkers among them, their access to the poem was superior to our own. When their text or interpretation appears to conflict with ours, we ought to reconsider the bases for our own reading before dismissing theirs as mistaken. It is all too easy to avoid inconvenient readings by invoking a source's habit of quoting from memory, tendency to rely on second-hand information, or bent for being blinded by doctrinal prejudices. All of these complications, as well as scribal corruption, willful misrepresentation and even deliberate tampering may be found in the sources for Presocratic philosophy, but the various alternatives ought to be considered carefully before we draw our conclusions.

In piecing together Parmenides' text, it is helpful to differentiate between indications of placement in the verses themselves and those provided by the authors who quote the fragments. Both sorts of information are needed, but the second, though not without its potential problems,

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<sup>17</sup> Cordero's additional claim, that the 'physical truths' of his reconstruction fit the goddess' description of her speech as a 'controversial proof' because 'it is a polemic against what one says, "the opinions"' (2010, 243) seems truer, on Cordero's view, of the fragments he considers parts of the *Doxa* than the fragments he relocates.

generally provides more straightforward guidance. Cordero's 'constraint' is an example of the first type, and of the problems that come with it. Simplicius' references, by contrast, are often helpful instances of the second type. We need not be committed to Simplicius' interpretation to allow that, when he says that the lines of DK 12 followed 'a little after' DK 8.61, we have decisive evidence on the relative placement of two of the fragments. It is a sounder strategy for reconstructing the poem to limit ourselves, initially, to evidence of the second type. This is apt to provide a guide for the layout of the text less influenced by whatever prejudices or shortcomings the quoting authors had, or we ourselves may have, as readers. Little evidence of this type will be as clear as Simplicius', but the distinction is a useful one. Since Cordero's placement of what he regards as 'physical truths' within the *Aletheia* relies on evidence of the first sort, the result often appears unpersuasive if one is not already inclined to share his views on various controversial points of interpretation.

### 5. Surveying the Sources

I have already let on that, even absent the supposed constraint that Cordero mentions, we are not quite entitled to the liberty that he claims we are when it comes to placing the fragments. Closer attention to the sources reveals a few fairly clear indications of placement overlooked by Cordero, as well as other material which, if not absolutely decisive on the matter, seems on balance to support the more traditional arrangement.

On Simplicius' testimony (evidence of the second sort), Cordero puts DK 9, 12 and 19 in the *Doxa*. He appears to overlook the fact that Simplicius clearly links DK 13 with DK 12, treating the divinity of 12.3 as the deviser of Eros in DK 13.<sup>18</sup> Among the other sources for DK 13, Plato has Phaedrus quote the line in the *Symposium* as what Parmenides says about *genesis*,<sup>19</sup> while in Plutarch's *Amatorius* the verse is quoted as what Parmenides wrote 'in the cosmogony'.<sup>20</sup> Cordero's placement of DK 13 among his 'physical truths' seems a mistake, and,

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<sup>18</sup> Cordero, while having DK 12 follow DK 8, would place DK 13 well before DK 8. This ignores that in the very passage which Cordero cites as evidence for placing DK 12 after DK 8 (*in Phys.* 39) Simplicius continues by quoting DK 13, understanding the δαίμων of 12.3 as the subject of the verb μητίσαστο in DK 13. For the passage, see n. 29 below.

<sup>19</sup> Plato, *Symposium* 178b9-11. Coxon's claims (1986, 243) that Plato regards Genesis (capitalized and personified) as the subject of μητίσαστο and that Aristotle ignores the personification, seem overconfident, despite the parallels that he adduces for the construction. Cf. Dover 1980, 91.

<sup>20</sup> Plutarch, *Amatorius* 756E. Eros is there spoken of as the oldest of 'Aphrodite's works', but that need not be taken, as Coxon and others do, to mean that Plutarch regarded Aphrodite as the subject of the verb. In the context in which

unless we imagine this to be one of the lines repeated in Parmenides' poem, it does not look good for Cordero's thesis of a 'physics' within the *Aletheia* that a line known from Simplicius to be in the *Doxa* is cited in Plutarch as from 'the cosmogony'.

Simplicius is also the source for DK 11, which Cordero regards as 'completing' the enumeration of the topics of Parmenidean physics begun in DK 10. The fragment is quoted at *in Cael.* 559, introduced by the remark, 'Parmenides, having begun to speak about the perceptibles, says: "how earth and sun and moon ...".'<sup>21</sup> While Simplicius does not directly connect the lines of DK 11 with other lines from the poem, since Simplicius elsewhere treats DK 8.50-51 as marking the transition from the intelligible (*to noēton*) to the sensibles or perceptibles (*ta aisthēta*), this comment is a clear enough indication that DK 11 comes from somewhere towards the beginning of the *Doxa*. Immediately following the quotation, Simplicius adds, 'And he sets out the coming to be of things that come to be and perish up to the parts of animals.'<sup>22</sup> This seems more or less in line with Plutarch's reference to a 'cosmogony', again suggesting that the common placement of the 'physical' texts in the *Doxa* is correct.

DK 10, which does cover very similar ground to DK 11, comes from Clement of Alexandria. He provides almost no context, but there might be a hint about placement in the little that he does say. Clement begins his quotation by saying, 'Having come, then, to the true study, let him who wishes hear Parmenides the Eleatic, promising: "You will know the *aitherial physis*, and all things in the *aither* ..."'<sup>23</sup> While the 'true study' (*alēthēs mathēsis*) that Clement has in mind as a proper propaedeutic to Parmenides' promises is Christian doctrine, I suspect that he also intends an allusion to Parmenides' *Aletheia*, only after which came the topics that DK 10 goes on to mention. This is not, of course, in itself decisive evidence on where to place the lines of DK 10, but it fits well with the other evidence about the major parts of the poem, and is supported by the close ties in content between DK 10 and 11 (which Simplicius, we have just observed, took from the *Doxa*).

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the line is quoted, it is clear that Plutarch (as a character in the dialogue) is taking interpretative liberties with the texts he is quoting.

<sup>21</sup> Mueller 2009, 33. Mueller's translation here adopts an emendation to Simplicius' text, but the textual difficulty involved does not affect the point at issue here.

<sup>22</sup> Mueller 2009, 33. 'As far as the parts of the animals' (μέχρι τῶν μορίων τῶν ζώων) is an interesting detail, to which we will return below.

<sup>23</sup> Clement, *Strom.* V.14.138.

Plutarch, who is the sole source for both DK 14 and 15, makes still more problems for Cordero's arrangement, which takes for granted that 'nothing suggests that in the case of the isolated verses 13, 14, 15 we are being offered mere *doxai*.' (241) In making this claim, Cordero appears to have in mind only the verses themselves, not the contexts in which they are quoted. Trying at present to keep to evidence of the second type, we may postpone the question of whether the verses themselves show signs characteristic of the *Doxa*. With respect to the contexts, not only is Cordero's claim untrue for DK 13, but Plutarch quotes DK 14 while speaking of the moonlight as an example of things that exist by way of participation in something more enduring, having just referred to such entities as *doxastic*.<sup>24</sup> DK 15 is quoted twice in other works of Plutarch's corpus, once directly connected with the phrase *allotrion phōs* of DK 14, and it is understood on both occasions as an expression of the moon's subordinate or derivative status.<sup>25</sup> Though this is all indirect evidence for their placement in the poem, it does associate these fragments with one another and with *doxai*.

Special problems are posed by the four sources that quote DK 16, a fragment which, as has been noted, other scholars have also argued belongs to the *Aletheia* rather than the *Doxa*.<sup>26</sup> The fragment appears in book Γ of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in Theophrastus' *de Sensibus*, and in commentaries on Aristotle's work by Alexander of Aphrodisias (c. 200 C.E.) and the Neoplatonist Asclepius (6<sup>th</sup> century C.E.). Neither of the commentators appears to have looked at Parmenides' lines independently of Aristotle's quotation of them, so I will pass them over here.<sup>27</sup> We will return to Theophrastus' passage in what follows, so for the moment it suffices to say that Theophrastus provides no very explicit information on where the lines were found in the poem, but quotes them as the place in Parmenides' poem that provides the closest thing to an account of how sensation occurs, suggesting that sensation varies according to the predominance of one or

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<sup>24</sup> See *adv. Colot.* 1115C -1116A, noting particularly *doxaston* at 1115D. In this passage, Plutarch's principal point of contention with the Epicurean Colotes (who had written against Parmenides, and all other non-Epicurean philosophers, claiming that it is impossible to live according to their doctrines) is that viewing the moon, say, as belonging to a different order than Being itself does not entail an outright rejection of the sensible world.

<sup>25</sup> See *Quaestiones Romanae* 282A-B and *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet* 929A-B.

<sup>26</sup> See n. 6 above. In addition to Loenen 1959 and Hershbell 1970, see Popper 1998, 74-76, 88-89, 103, and 281-285. Cf. Curd 2011, 127-128n30.

<sup>27</sup> For a more attentive treatment of the sources for DK 16, including Alexander and Asclepius, see Kurfess (forthcoming).

the other element in a blend of the two opposites hot and cold.<sup>28</sup> The blending of opposites, until we discover actual evidence for such a topic within the *Aletheia*, seems on balance to favor placing the lines in the *Doxa*, as does Theophrastus' additional remark that a corpse, lacking the hot, perceives only cold and silence, in light of the connection that Cordero rightly stresses between mentions of *doxai* and mortality.<sup>29</sup> Aristotle's passage, sometimes regarded as the source for Theophrastus' quotation of the fragment, intriguingly presents a different text at several points.<sup>30</sup> Aristotle quotes the lines to support the claim that Parmenides, like others (including Democritus, Empedocles, Anaxagoras and Homer) equated *phronēsis* with sense-perception, and it looks like he may be quoting second-hand. He gives no hint of the lines' location in the poem, making no further reference to Parmenides' views specifically.

Finally, there are two embryological fragments, DK 17 and 18. DK 17 is a single verse found in Galen, from a context which specifies only that in 'boys on the right, girls on the left', the right and left in question are the sides of the womb in which the male and female offspring are conceived or develop. DK 18 is a six-line fragment in Latin that the context presents, not particularly convincingly, as a description of the circumstances at conception that lead to homosexual or effeminate male offspring.<sup>31</sup> The source, *On Chronic Diseases*, is an adaptation, in large part a translation, by Caelius Aurelianus of a Greek medical work by the physician

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<sup>28</sup> Most of Theophrastus' passage is found in DK 28 A 46. While Theophrastus does not refer directly to the location of the lines in the poem, it seems implausible to suggest, as does Hershbell 1970, 6-7, that this or Theophrastus' 'repeated complaint about Parmenides, ὅλως οὐδὲν ἀφώρικεν and οὐδὲν ἔτι διώρικεν, may be based on lack of information about Parmenides' poem.'

<sup>29</sup> This surprising bit of information should be compared with the context of Simplicius' quotation of B 13 (*in Phys.* 39.17-21): 'He claims she [the divinity of DK 12.3] is the cause of the gods, too, saying, "Firstmost she devised Eros of all the gods" [DK 13] and what follows. He also claims that she sends the souls at one time from the manifest to the unseen, at another time back again. I am compelled to go on about these things at length on account of the widespread current ignorance of the ancient writings.' The student of the *Doxa* wishes that Simplicius had felt inclined to go on at least a little longer.

<sup>30</sup> Among other variants, the first line in Aristotle's quotation has the phrase μελέων πολυκάμπτων, while the text in Theophrastus is μελέων πολυπλάγκτων. Coxon comments that Theophrastus 'clearly has his master's argument and citation before him, but quotes the lines for a different purpose and from an independent text.' (1986, 247) The general tendency is to view Theophrastus' quotation as the more accurate (see, e.g., Tarán 1965, 169-170, Coxon 1986, 4, Palmer 2009, 386-387, and Kahn 1994, 17-24 on the relation generally). I am not convinced that Theophrastus had Aristotle's text before him. One alternative, given that the different adjectives paired with μελέων looks like a possible instance of the sort of repetition with variation that I think Parmenides engages in conspicuously elsewhere (cf. n. 9 above, and see § 6 below), may be that Theophrastus and Aristotle were quoting different lines of the original poem. Another alternative is that Aristotle had Theophrastus' book before him. I will argue elsewhere that there is much material of Theophrastan origin hidden unacknowledged in Aristotle's surveys of earlier thinkers. Scholars tend to take for granted that the commonalities between the two authors are due to Theophrastus' reception of the 'master's' thought, generally ignoring the possibility that Theophrastus may have influenced Aristotle as well.

<sup>31</sup> Diels took the lines as referring to hermaphroditism instead. Cf. Drabkin 1950, 903n9.

Soranus of Ephesus. While Aurelianus has been good enough to translate the fragment into Latin hexameters approximating Parmenides' style,<sup>32</sup> there is no indication of where the lines featured in the original poem, which he describes as Parmenides' 'books on nature'. That he refers to the fragment itself as an 'epigram' may be a sign that he knew the lines only from Soranus' work. These contexts offer no definitive suggestions about placement, but Galen does inform us of the embryological import of DK 17, which might otherwise have escaped us. It is simplest, absent clearer guidance from the sources, to suppose that these fragments are related to the pairings of male and female mentioned in DK 12, and thus to consider them part of the *Doxa*.<sup>33</sup>

While in some cases the evidence for placing these fragments in the *Doxa* is certainly slimmer than others, in none of the sources is there any positive hint for placing any of them within the *Aletheia*. There seems to be no real support, then, for the hypothesis of a 'physical' section within the 'Way of Truth', and it seems sounder to assign the material to the *Doxa*.

#### 6. Something Else We Owe to Simplicius

I mentioned at the beginning of this essay that I shared with Cordero a conviction that something in the standard presentation of the *Doxa* was incorrect. In what remains I indicate what I think a couple of the mistakes are, and what this might mean for how we ought to read Parmenides' poem. Like Cordero, I believe that DK has inherited from its antecedents a number of errors in the reconstruction of the poem and that a second look at the sources for the fragments is required to correct them. Unlike Cordero, I do not find fault with the placement of DK 10, 11, or any of the other fragments generally assigned to the *Doxa*. The totality of the ancient evidence supports the placement of these fragments in the latter part of the poem, and it does not seem to me that we have good reasons to place them elsewhere. In at least one case, however, I want to suggest that DK and other arrangements go astray in what they *leave out* of the *Doxa*.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Caelius explains: 'cuius quia graecum est epigramma, et hoc versibus intimabo. latinus enim ut potui simili modo composui ne linguarum ratio misceretur.' (Drabkin 1950, 902)

<sup>33</sup> I do not know that either fragment presents claims that Cordero would want to insist upon as 'physical truths'. Those who aim to promote Parmenides' positive contributions to natural science are more likely to cite his reputed astronomical discoveries than his embryological speculations.

<sup>34</sup> This is perhaps the point to register a disagreement with another proposal for moving material from one part of the poem to the other. John Palmer has recently praised Theodor Ebert's revival (in Ebert 1989) of a suggestion by Guido Calogero for the relocation of DK 8.34-41 from the *Aletheia* to the *Doxa*, following DK 8.52. Palmer calls the emendation 'the most important advance in Parmenidean textual criticism in recent years' (2009, 352) and scolds scholars for not having taken sufficient notice of it. Ebert argues that relocating the lines eliminates the strangeness of finding remarks about mortal opinions in the middle of the series of arguments of DK 8 and that it resolves a number of supposed problems with the transition from DK 8.52 to 8.53. Such arguments are only persuasive if we



Since the publications of Amedeo Peyron and C. A. Brandis in the early nineteenth century, editions of the fragments have made use of material from not only Simplicius' *Physics* commentary but his *de Caelo* commentary as well. DK 11 and 19 are known from the *in Cael.* alone. The same passage from which those fragments come also provides four and a half lines which editors have universally, as far as I am aware, taken as lines 28-32 of the proem. This is understandable, given that the first two and a half lines of Simplicius' quotation are a close match for lines 28b-30 of the proem preserved by Sextus. Nevertheless, I think that the identification is an error. The lines are a close match, but not an exact one: in what are imagined to be variants of the twenty-ninth line of the proem, Simplicius and Sextus give different adjectives modifying the noun Ἀληθείης.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the two additional lines that follow in Simplicius' text do not feature in Sextus' proem, and editors are wrong, I claim, to add them.<sup>36</sup> The proper place for the lines quoted by Simplicius is, I submit, in the *Doxa*, as part of a second

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can assure ourselves that Parmenides did not intend for his audience to find something strange about his verses. Unassured as I am that Parmenides was seeking to arrange everything as unproblematically as possible, I do not find those arguments convincing. There are however, other considerations which supposedly support the relocation. For those disinclined to doubt the ordering in Simplicius' text, Palmer adds, 'We know, however, from the end of Sextus Empiricus' long quotation of the opening of Parmenides' poem (S.E. *M.* 7.111) that in later antiquity the text of Parmenides was capable of falling into serious disorder. It is crucially telling, moreover, that in none of the many quotations from Parmenides fr. 8 by other ancient authors does v. 34 follow v. 33, v. 42 follow v. 41, or v. 53 follow 52. Ebert's effort to make scholars recognize that vv. 34-41 have suffered transposition within fr. 8 should not be allowed to pass into oblivion like Calogero's original proposal. Unfortunately, editions appearing since the publication of Ebert's study have inexcusably failed to take account of it.' (2009, 354)

Since Palmer's remarks touch on our present concern with taking a proper account of the ancient evidence for the poem, it is worth addressing them briefly here. As to the first point, while errors in transmission are always a possibility, the 'serious disorder' of Sextus' text is, as I have argued elsewhere and shall touch on immediately below, an example of the hazards of meddling by overconfident editors rather than the errors of scribes, and the lines of the proem should be kept in the order in which Sextus gives them. In any case, a problem with Sextus' text would not tell us anything about the quality of Simplicius'. Palmer's second point, that 'in none of the many quotations from Parmenides fr. 8 by other ancient authors does v. 34 follow v. 33, v. 42 follow v. 41, or v. 53 follow 52', deserves some scrutiny. Since some portion or other of DK 8 is quoted on dozens of occasions by perhaps as many as fifteen authors, this initially sounds like weighty evidence indeed. If all of the other authors who quote from the fragment are in agreement against Simplicius, then we may have to allow that his text was faulty here. Palmer neglects to mention, however, that of those 'many quotations' from DK 8 by authors other than Simplicius, while it is true that in none of them does DK 8.34 follow 8.33, or 8.42 follow 8.41, or 8.53 follow 8.52, it happens that none of them quotes DK 8.33 or DK 8.34, none of them quotes DK 8.42 or 8.41, and none of them quotes DK 8.52 or 8.53. That is, Simplicius is the only source for *any* of the relevant lines. When the supposedly 'crucially telling' evidence against Simplicius is so illusory, editors may perhaps be excused for overlooking Ebert's suggestion.

<sup>35</sup> Ἀληθείης is εὑπειθέος, 'persuasive', in Sextus' proem (and in a few other authors), but εὐκυκλέος, 'well-wheeled', in Simplicius' lines. Proclus in his commentary on the *Timaeus* provides a couplet with yet another adjective, εὐφειγέος ('brilliant'), among other variants. The identification of Proclus' couplet with DK 1.29-30 is, I believe, also mistaken. Cf. n. 9 above.

<sup>36</sup> This intrusive addition to the proem helps to contribute to the widespread acceptance, mentioned earlier, of the division of Sextus' quotation into two parts, with the lines of the second part transferred into DK 7. See above, nn. 4 and 9.

proem there. The assumption that Simplicius' quotation is from Sextus' proem, that is, from toward the beginning of the entire poem, adds difficult and unnecessary problems to what is already a puzzling enough text. Both the text and meaning of the two unparalleled lines in Simplicius are intensely debated, as is the question of the proper reading of the adjective modifying 'Truth' in the lines that precede them. Placing Simplicius' quotation (let us call it 'fragment Y') in the *Doxa* instantly resolves the latter impasse (for when we no longer assume that Simplicius' and Sextus' quotations come from the same place in the poem, the conflict over which source preserves the right reading vanishes), and may provide us a better foundation for discussing the former.

But why place these lines in the *Doxa*? Simply put, because it is the *Doxa* that Simplicius seems to have in mind in the passage that supplies us those lines, along with DK 11 and 19. The passage comes from early in Simplicius' commentary on the third book of Aristotle's *de Caelo*. Aristotle, having discussed the nature of the eternal, unaltering material of the heavenly bodies in the first two books, and turning now to the sublunary simple bodies that are subject to change, observes that treating the elements involved in coming-to-be assumes the existence of such change. On this point, Aristotle says, some of those who 'earlier philosophized about the truth' expressed opposing views, and Parmenides and Melissus are named as examples of thinkers who generally abolished coming-to-be, saying that nothing that *is* comes to be or passes away, but only *seems* (*dokein*) to us to do so. Aristotle deftly avoids dealing with these figures in detail by saying that, even if they speak well in other respects, they must not be considered to be speaking *physikōs*, that is, in a manner suited to the study of nature. Their concerns, says Aristotle, properly belong to a different and prior study. In his commentary on Aristotle's remarks, Simplicius explains the views of Parmenides and Melissus as follows:<sup>37</sup>

those men hypothesised a double reality (*hupostasis*), one consisting of what really is, the intelligible, the other of what comes to be, the perceptible, something which they did not think it right to call being without qualification, but only apparent being [δοκοῦν ὄν]. And so Parmenides

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<sup>37</sup> Simplicius, *in Cael.* 557.21–558.17, as translated in Mueller 2009, 31–32, with material in brackets added. In order to follow Simplicius' train of thought adequately, we must recognize that he is quoting texts that feature Parmenides' use of *doxa* and related words in order to illustrate Aristotle's reference to the distinction Parmenides and Melissus drew between being and seeming (*dokein*). Mueller's translation obscures Simplicius' illustration somewhat by using too wide a range of translations for those terms for the English reader to see the connection between them and by using 'belief' to translate both *doxa* and *pistis* in Parmenides' verses, despite the repeated rejection of the combination of those terms in the poem. To help illustrate Simplicius' thought, I have added the Greek for these and other expressions which deserve attention in square brackets.

says [φησι] that truth concerns being, and opinion [δόξαν] what comes to be. For he says [λέγει γοῦν ὁ Παρμενίδης]:

You should learn all things,  
both the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth  
and the opinions [δόξας] of mortals in which there is no true belief [πίστις].  
But nevertheless you must also learn these things: how things which are  
believed [τὰ δοκοῦντα]  
should be acceptably [δοκίμως], since they permeate all things everywhere. [DK 1.28-32]

But also, having completed his account of what really is and being about to explain perceptibles, he says [ἀλλὰ καὶ συμπληρώσας τὸν περὶ τοῦ ὄντος ὄντος λόγον καὶ μέλλων περὶ τῶν αἰσθητῶν διδάσκειν ἐπήγαγεν]:

Here I end my trustworthy account and thinking  
about truth; hereafter learn the opinions [δόξας] of mortals,  
listening to the deceptive ordering of my words. [DK 8.50-52]

And in setting out the ordering of perceptibles, he again says [παραδοὺς δὲ τὴν τῶν αἰσθητῶν διακόσμησιν ἐπήγαγε πάλιν]:

Indeed in this way, as belief has it [κατὰ δόξαν, according to *doxa*], these things  
were born and now are  
and hereafter they will grow and reach an end;  
for them humans have laid down a name, a distinctive one for each. [DK 19.1-3]

So in what sense did Parmenides, who philosophized in this way about the intelligible, assume that only perceptible things exist – this is now an extraordinary charge to make. And how did he transfer things which fit intelligibles to perceptibles when he clearly sets out the unity of the intelligible, which really exists, and the ordering of the perceptibles, each separately, and does not think it right to apply the word ‘being’ to the perceptible?

In this passage, Simplicius quotes three selections from the poem, typically identified as indicated in the bracketed references to DK. Mueller so identifies each of the fragments in his endnotes, duly remarking that DK 19, like the second sentence of the lines identified as DK 1.28-30, is quoted only here.<sup>38</sup> DK 19 is typically placed at the end of the collection of fragments deemed authentic by Diels because of the comment with which Simplicius introduces the lines. Similarly, Simplicius helpfully identifies his second selection (DK 8.50-52) as coming from the transition from the discussion of (intelligible) being to that of the sensibles, and, thanks to his

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<sup>38</sup> See Mueller 2009, 124 nn26, 27 and 29.

lengthy quotations of DK 8 in the *Physics* commentary, we have a comparatively good grasp on what the poem looked like at that point. As for the lines tagged ‘DK 1.28-32’ (i.e., fragment Y), it deserves stressing that Simplicius does not, as he is sometimes claimed to do, attribute these lines to the goddess, tell us that he took them from the proem, or otherwise make any sort of overt reference to where these lines were situated in Parmenides’ poem.<sup>39</sup>

Even without an explicit reference to their location, however, one might well imagine that we are justified in identifying the verses of the first quotation with the similar lines in Sextus’ proem. After all, Simplicius first quotes the lines in question, then goes on to quote from the end of *Aletheia*, and finishes up by quoting DK 19, generally taken as the end of the *Doxa* if not the whole poem. This is, I grant, a natural enough assumption, and, given that I am claiming that we ought to place the lines in the *Doxa*, my suggestion might seem at odds with the sequence in which the texts are quoted, since the second of the three texts that Simplicius quotes would have to have come from an earlier point in the poem than the first one. Were that so, Simplicius might have mentioned the fact.

Actually, while he is not very explicit about it, Simplicius does give a subtle indication of just such an ordering. Mueller’s translation unfortunately obscures it by rendering each of the verbs with which Simplicius introduces the three quotations with ‘he says’. It is, however, only the first quotation, the lines that I would like to put in the *Doxa*, which Simplicius introduces with ‘he says’ in the present tense. Before each of the other two quotations, it is not λέγει that introduces them, but ἐπήγαγε(v), ‘he continued’ or ‘he went on’.<sup>40</sup> The shift in tense between the verb introducing the first quotation and the verb introducing the second reflects, I propose, Simplicius’ turning back to an earlier point in the poem. The sentence introducing the third quotation then simply carries on with the newly established tense. That is, for the main point about Parmenides’ dual attitude toward the two ‘hypostases’, Simplicius quotes lines that provide its clearest articulation, taken from somewhere near the beginning of the *Doxa* (where, in addition to echoing lines of the proem, Parmenides adds the two additional lines particularly concerned with *doxai*) with ‘At any rate, Parmenides says ...’. The use of the present tense ‘says’ in relating the thought or words of an author (even a much earlier one) is very common, another

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<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., Owen 1975, 49, where it is claimed that DK 1.31-32 ‘occurs, according to Simplicius’ quotation, at the end of the goddess’ opening remarks.’ Cf. Mansfeld 1999, 39 and Bett 2005, 24n49, invoking Simplicius’ authority against Sextus’ quotation of the proem.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Coxon 2009, 232, where each instance of ἐπήγαγε(v) is translated ‘continues’ (present tense).

such instance occurring in the previous sentence with φησι. Using a past tense for the same purpose is just as natural, but one does not generally want to alternate between them when making a series of points from a single source. The switch to a verb in the aorist tense in the introduction to the next quotation (‘having completed the account of being and being about to teach the sensibles, he continued, “Here I end ...”’) therefore stands out, and I suggest that what it indicates is that DK 8.50-52 were found earlier in the poem than the lines just quoted. The use of two participial phrases to pinpoint the location of the second set of lines would be particularly appropriate if Simplicius is not here, as he often does, quoting the lines in the order in which they appeared in the poem. The use of ἐπήγαγεν re-sets the sequence of tenses for the passage as a whole, so that when Simplicius moves forward to lines from the end of the *Doxa* (or a part of it), he retains the tense: ‘and having handed down the *diakosmēsis* of the sensible things, he again continued, [DK 19]’.<sup>41</sup>

To repeat, this is far short of an explicit statement of where the lines were found. Still, the broader context of Simplicius’ quotations (that is, an explanation of Parmenides’ and Melissus’ attitude(s) towards sensible, generated objects, which includes not only DK 8.50-52 and DK 19 but the quotation of DK 11 less than a page later) makes the suggestion that the first quotation came from the *Doxa* a reasonable one. Moreover, there is an interesting feature of Simplicius’ reading of Aristotle’s text that might be explained by supposing a repetition, within Parmenides’ poem, of lines from the proem (i.e., lines 28-30 of Sextus’ quotation) at the beginning of the *Doxa* (i.e., in fragment Y). Just before his discussion of Parmenides and Melissus, in his comments on the opening of the third book of the *de Caelo*, Simplicius makes a special point of explaining that Aristotle himself has given a second introduction to his treatise at the beginning of his third book, echoing language from the opening of the first book. Simplicius comments as follows: ‘That he discusses these topics as concerning simple, primary bodies, just as he did in discussing the heavens is made clear by the fact that he again uses the same proemium and shows that the subject of the study of nature is bodies. This will also be made clear by what will be said in <this> proemium.’<sup>42</sup> Simplicius had forecast this repeated proem when discussing the

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<sup>41</sup> While Simplicius reports these lines as coming at the end of a section, his words do not seem to suggest that the poem as a whole ended with them. The recurrence of ἐπήγαγε need not mean that the poem carried on for very long afterward, but if DK 19 were indeed the ending of the entire poem, it is perhaps a little odd to introduce the lines in this way.

<sup>42</sup> *In Cael.* 551.21-23, as translated in Mueller 2009, 25.

beginning of the entire treatise, and mentions it again later in the commentary on the third book.<sup>43</sup> Is it possible that Simplicius' sensitivity to Aristotle's repetition of his own proem was due in part to the observation that Parmenides had done the same thing when making a related transition in his poem? Simplicius does not come out and say so directly, but he may have left it for his readers to pick up on their own. To have to reveal the strategy outright might spoil the readers' appreciation of his own arrangement when they see that Simplicius himself has done the same thing in his commentary.

Even if Simplicius' concern with prooemia is no more than an interesting parallel, the lines of the first quotation of Parmenides are suggestive of a proem themselves. Moreover, the differences from the lines of Sextus' proem all well suit a second proem belonging to the *Doxa*. Even better, the four and a half lines that Simplicius preserves can be combined seamlessly with those of DK 10. This suggestion had essentially been made by P. J. Bicknell several decades ago, although he, believing for various reasons that DK 10 could not have come from the *Doxa*, proposed placing it immediately after DK 1.32 (that is, the last of Simplicius' lines when fused with Sextus' proem). Bicknell observed that, with DK 10 following immediately upon Simplicius' quotation, 'the goddess quite naturally goes on to give a brief synopsis of the topics which the opinions of men embrace.' (1968, 631) Bicknell does not in that article indicate what variant adjective he prefers in DK 1.29, but it is worth noting that Simplicius' εὐκυκλέος nicely anticipates the use of κύκλωπος in DK 10.4. While Bicknell was mistaken to believe that DK 10 could not have belonged to the *Doxa*, DK 10 does indeed make a natural sequel to 'DK 1.28-32' (i.e., fragment Y). If we resist the identification of Simplicius' lines with Sextus', there is nothing to prevent us from adopting Bicknell's suggestion of having DK 10 follow the final line of Simplicius' quotation without break, and placing the combined fragments in the *Doxa*. To allay suspicion about such a placement based on any awkwardness the reader may feel with the goddess repeating the words χρεὼ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι ('and you must needs hear all things'), I suggest borrowing the opening half-line of Empedocles, DK 31 B 17.15, ὡς γὰρ καὶ πρὶν ἔειπα ('For as I also said before'), in order to repair that awkwardness and to complete the line. The composite fragment will read:

< ὡς γὰρ καὶ πρὶν ἔειπα,> χρεὼ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι	Y.1
ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμὲς ἦτορ	Y.2

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<sup>43</sup> See in *Cael.* 4.4-13 (translated in Hankinson 2002, 21) and at 552.22-24 (translated in Mueller 2009, 26).

	ἡδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής.	Y.3
	ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσεται, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα	Y.4 = B 1.31
5	χρῆν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περῶντα.	Y.5 = B 1.32
	εἴση δ' αἰθερίαν τε φύσιν τὰ τ' ἐν αἰθέρι πάντα	B 10.1
	σήματα καὶ καθαρᾶς εὐαγέος ἠελίοιο	B 10.2
	λαμπάδος ἔργ' αἰδήλα καὶ ὀππόθεν ἐξεγένοντο,	B 10.3
	ἔργα τε κύκλωπος πεύση περίφοιτα σελήνης	B 10.4
10	καὶ φύσιν, εἰδήσεις δὲ καὶ οὐρανὸν ἀμφὶς ἔχοντα	B 10.5
	ἔνθεν ἔφν τε καὶ ὡς μιν ἄγουσ' ἐπέδησεν Ἀνάγκη	B 10.6
	πείρατ' ἔχειν ἄστρον.	B 10.7

I would not insist on the wording of the opening half-line, but words to that effect do not seem unlikely, and given Empedocles' many borrowings from Parmenides, this seems like a fair trade. In line 5, where there is some uncertainty over the reading at the end of the line, I print περῶντα rather περ ὄντα, but would not insist upon it at this stage either. Apart from the textual reading, there is considerable debate on how to understand the lines, and determining how best to interpret them is also a task for another time. In any event, the two extra lines, where δοκοῦντα makes it look pretty certain that ταῦτα refers to the 'doxai of mortals' in the preceding line and there is surely some play on words intended with δοκίμως,<sup>44</sup> are clearly suited to the *Doxa*. I would insist that the adjective εὐκυκλέος here is right. Its appearance in a proem for the *Doxa*, that is, a point of transition from discussion of divine truth to mortal concerns, is entirely appropriate. As pointed out by Edwin Floyd, uses of *eukuklos* in Homer and Pindar and uses of the Sanskrit cognate *sucakra* in the *Rig-Veda* indicate that 'well-wheeled' was a traditional Indo-European expression associated with transitions, particularly those between divine and mortal spheres.<sup>45</sup>

Once again, Simplicius has helped us clarify matters where editors had muddled things unnecessarily and has provided us with 'new' material from the *Doxa* which we can use in future attempts to determine whatever it was Parmenides was doing there.

### 7. Doubts about the *Doxa* as Cosmology

While the attempt to place a number of fragments generally (and rightly) regarded as belonging to the *Doxa* earlier in the poem marks a decided break with other presentations of Parmenides'

<sup>44</sup> Cf. the similar wordplay in Heraclitus, DK 22 B 28: δοκέοντα γὰρ ὁ δοκιμώτατος γινώσκει, φυλάσσει.

<sup>45</sup> See Floyd 1988 where this point is made (without reference to Parmenides) in relation to the uses of *Sūryā* in *Rig-Veda* 10.85. Floyd 1992, 263 refers to Durante 1976 for connections of *Sūryā* with Parmenides' Heliades and chariot.

poem, some of Cordero's motivation for doing so is less unique. His placement of what he takes to be Parmenidean physical truths in the *Aletheia* is in part an effort to present Parmenides as a respectable investigator of the natural world. A number of other interpreters share the aim of situating Parmenides squarely in the tradition of Presocratic *physiologoi* by stressing the positive contributions he is thought to have made to natural science. Those contributions may have included the discoveries of the sphericity of the earth, of the reflected nature of the moon's light, and of the identity of the Morning and Evening Stars, as well as the division of the earth into tropical, temperate and polar 'zones'.<sup>46</sup>

Giorgio de Santillana, for whom the *Doxa* was obviously 'a physics',<sup>47</sup> remarked critically of the metaphysical approaches to Parmenides that he considered dominant in the mid-twentieth century:

One should like to ask those bold modernizers: who would imagine Fichte, Hegel or Heidegger proceeding from cryptic statements on Being and Non-Being to a treatise concerning the mechanism of the planets and the illumination of the moon, or the sterility of mules? For these are the subjects in the second part of Parmenides' poem. And if the inattention and the prejudice of commentators had not left us with the pitiful shreds we have of it, no one would have entertained the idea that Parmenides' physics was an insignificant appendix to his doctrine of Truth. (de Santillana 1968, 83)

De Santillana is cheating a bit. One will look through the testimonia in vain, I believe, for any report of Parmenides' view on the sterility of mules.<sup>48</sup> There is no doubting that Parmenides spoke of the illumination of the moon, but whether it is accurate to describe whatever he had to say as a 'treatise' on celestial mechanics is another matter, about which I do have my doubts. That is not to say that the *Doxa* was an insignificant appendix, but simply to admit that, given the 'pitiful shreds' that we have, it is rash to assume that anything about the general character of the *Doxa* as it appeared in Parmenides' poem is obvious.

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<sup>46</sup> One or another source credits Parmenides with each of these discoveries, but one or another source also credits Pythagoras (among others) with each of them. For both figures, the testimonies in question are late and suspect. Putting aside the question of *discovery*, that Parmenides was aware of these ideas and made use of them in his poem seems to me reasonably certain.

<sup>47</sup> The first part of de Santillana's 1964 essay, 'Prologue to Parmenides', makes an especially interesting companion to Cordero's, using similar tactics to trace a nearly parallel path to precisely contrary conclusions about the *Doxa*. In his own answer to the riddle posed by the 'Sphinx of Metaphysics', de Santillana claims that the preconceptions of generations of modern scholars, the misappropriations of centuries of ancient authors, and the misreading of the such terms *doxa* and *apatēlos* has obscured the 'obvious fact' that the *Doxa* is a physics (de Santillana 1968, 89).

<sup>48</sup> A chapter (V. 14) in Aëtius' doxographical work seems to have recorded views on this topic, but there is no trace of anything from Parmenides. See Diels 1879, 424-425.



Variations on de Santillana's outlook are readily met with in the literature since. One standard resource informs us, 'The second half of the poem did not simply describe or analyse current opinions about the cosmos. It contained an elaborate and distinctive theogony and cosmology reminiscent in parts of Hesiod, in parts of Anaximander. Parmenides' object, as we shall see, is to present mortal opinions not as they actually are, but as they might be at their best.'(KRS, 254) David Gallop dismisses the suggestion that the *Doxa* might have been an explanation of human illusion by claiming that such an aim 'would hardly call for an elaborate cosmology of the sort that the Way of Seeming appears to have contained. Eight of the eleven extant fragments (10-15, 17-18) deal with astronomical, biological, or theological matters, whose bearing upon universal mortal illusions is, to say the least, remote.'<sup>49</sup> For Panagiotis Thanassas, DK 10 and 11 are 'central fragments of the poem ... which promise some insight into the nature of the – altogether real – world of phenomena.'<sup>50</sup> Giovanni Cerri takes the cosmology to have been so extensive that he describes B 10 as coming from the 'protasis' of 'the astronomical section of the poem, or from one of its subsections'.<sup>51</sup> Of DK 10 and 11, he asks,

Can one doubt that in these two fragments Parmenides is doing anything other than promising exactly an extensive and detailed astronomical treatment? Or that the facts followed the promise, that is, that the rest of the poem tallied with the protasis? If one cannot reasonably doubt either possibility, we are prompted to admit that, at least in large part, Parmenides' poem had to belong to the same genre and to be quite similar to the later *Phaenomena*, Aratus' didactic-astronomical poem; and further that, thanks to this section, Parmenides' was the oldest astronomical poem of Greek literature, since it seems that in Xenophanes' poem *On nature* there was not anything so full-fledged, rather just the dispersed cues of astronomical teaching. (Cerri 2011, 86)

In light of evidence that he considers 'objective and indubitable', Cerri finds it curious that 'for the most part, modern scholars of Parmenides keep on discussing his philosophical thought and his poem as if it were bereft of a scientific-astronomical dimension, as if —literally—it had not a dense section set out as a sort of map of the heavens.'<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Gallop 1984, 22. Cf. Gallop 1984, 21 with 37n63.

<sup>50</sup> Thanassas 2007, 20. At 2007, 61 DK 10 is described as an outline of '[t]he plan and content of *Doxa*, the second and longest part of the poem', while DK 11 'promises to describe in detail' the various items listed in its verses.

<sup>51</sup> Cerri 2011, 83. The evidence for the *Doxa* is supposed to also include 'unmistakable' allusions to a 'cosmogonic history' with a 'double outlay, synchronic on the one hand, that is, a depiction of the structure of the starlit sky as it is or appears, diachronic on the other hand, that is, a tentative reconstruction of the probable origin of the stars and their orbits.'(Cerri 2011, 84)

<sup>52</sup> Cerri 2011, 93. The next sentence reads, 'Hundreds, if not thousands of lines, as has already been shown, are similar in content to Aratus' *Phaenomena* or Manilius' *Astronomica* (just to mention poems which have reached us

Some of these descriptions involve more outlandish claims than others, but the common element which I wish to question is the assumption that the *Doxa* presented an extensive, elaborate or detailed cosmology, an assumption often coupled with a claim about how the verses of the *Doxa* outnumbered those of the *Aletheia*.<sup>53</sup> To answer Cerri's rhetorical questions: one can indeed reasonably doubt that DK 10 and 11 are best read as Parmenides' 'promise' to provide an 'extensive detailed astronomical treatment' and that the other passages that survive from the *Doxa* are appropriately described as 'facts' fulfilling the promise of those programmatic passages. It does not seem to me true that modern scholars treat the poem as though it were 'bereft of a scientific-astronomical dimension', but it should not be surprising if they do not always have a great deal to say about it.

The assumption I am calling into question is not without evidence to support it. The doxographical tradition does record tidbits about Parmenides' supposed cosmological opinions, but on the whole, this is evidence of a rather poor sort. We hear, for instance, that according to Parmenides, among others, the heaven is fiery (DK 28 A 38). So too are the stars (DK 28 A 39), the sun (DK 28 A 41), and the moon (DK 28 A 42). Even for twenty-five hundred years ago, this hardly seems like cutting-edge science. More informative, perhaps, is the claim that, according to Parmenides, the sun and moon were separated off from the circle of the Milky Way, with differing densities and degrees of heat and cold (DK 28 A 43). Nonetheless, it takes more than a few imaginative leaps to get from the testimonia to something that could be considered an elaborate and detailed cosmology, and most of the testimonia look suspiciously like attempts to extract physical opinions out of some extant but obscure portion of the surviving verses.<sup>54</sup> Still,

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by means of direct tradition) and are much closer to these poems than to the first part of Parmenides' poem itself, usually known by the name of ἡ Ἀλήθεια.' This appears to be claiming that the *Doxa* might have run to thousands of lines, and that it has somehow been 'shown' that at least hundreds of them (which we do not have) are closer to Aratus' and Manilius' poems than to the *Aletheia*. I do not think that the comparison with Aratus and Manilius is not worthwhile, but it cannot be conceded that Cerri has 'shown' anything at all about the number of lines in the *Doxa*, let alone their comparative closeness to the verses of Aratus and Manilius.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Gregory 2014, 16: 'not only does the cosmological part of the poem tell us how the cosmos is arranged, it also tells us how the cosmos, humans and animals all came into being. Although more of the truth has survived, the cosmology originally made up some 2/3 to 3/4 of the poem. The poem claims it will give the "complete ordering" and Parmenides is perceived to have "completed all the phenomena". Parmenides also seems to have made some important contributions to cosmology. These I take to be important facts which any explanation of the nature of the cosmology must account for.'

<sup>54</sup> The most extensive testimonium of this sort is DK 28 A 37, a report of Aëtius (II. 7. 1) which reads something like an attempt to elucidate the passage to which DK 12 originally belonged. For a recent, detailed analysis of the composition of this passage in light of the findings of an ongoing reassessment of Diels' work on the doxographical tradition, see Mansfeld and Runia 2009, 394-408.

this is more evidence than exists to support the various estimates of the number of verses that the *Doxa* contained. Diels' (qualified) estimate that we possess nine tenths of the Way of Truth but only one tenth of the *Doxa* (which would suggest a *Doxa* of four to five hundred lines) is not based on any ancient stichometric report.<sup>55</sup> Diogenes Laertius says that Parmenides, like Melissus and Anaxagoras, left a single composition (DK 28 A 13), but provides no estimate of its length. From the fact that Simplicius does not ever mention the book or scroll from which a quotation of Parmenides comes (as he does do on occasion when quoting Empedocles), it may be safe to infer that Parmenides' entire poem fit on a single scroll, but even this much cannot be counted as certain.

Those who would present the *Doxa* as a serious cosmology, however, have better evidence to adduce. The favorite item, to which most of the scholars mentioned refer, is a passage from Plutarch's *Reply to Colotes*.<sup>56</sup> Colotes, an Epicurean who had written a polemical piece attacking all other philosophies, apparently claimed that Parmenides, in saying that 'all is one', effectively abolished the world as we know it. Plutarch makes a spirited rebuttal:

But Parmenides for one has abolished neither 'fire' nor 'water', neither 'a precipice' nor 'cities lying in Europe and Asia' in Colotes' words, since he has actually made a cosmic order, and by blending as elements the light and the dark produces out of them and by their operation the whole world of sense. Thus he has much to say about earth, heaven, sun, moon, and stars, and has recounted the genesis of man; and for an ancient natural philosopher—who has put together a book of his own, and is not pulling apart the book of another—he has left nothing of real importance unsaid.<sup>57</sup>

As is repeatedly pointed out by those who cite this passage as evidence for the extensiveness and the level of detail of Parmenides' cosmology, Plutarch shows signs of first-hand acquaintance with Parmenides' poem (he implies elsewhere that Colotes' book does not) and there is a clear correspondence between the topics Plutarch mentions and those listed in DK 10 and 11 (although the addition of 'the genesis of man' is noteworthy). I agree that Plutarch's testimony is trustworthy, but we must not press it too far. We need to recognize that in his rebuttal he is putting the best possible face on the argument and that there are qualifications on the claims about Parmenides' production of 'the whole world of sense'. In saying that Parmenides has made a 'cosmic order' (διάκοσμον) and the 'whole world of sense' (τὰ φαινόμενα πάντα, 'all the

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<sup>55</sup> Diels 1897, 25-26: 'Von der Ἀλήθεια sind etwa neun Zehntel erhalten, von der Δόξα nach einer weniger sicheren Abschätzung vielleicht ein Zehntel.'

<sup>56</sup> Cf. de Santillana 1968, 88; KRS, 257; Thanassas 2007, 15-16; Cerri 2011, 81-83; Gregory 2014, 21-22.

<sup>57</sup> Plutarch, *adv. Colot.* 1114 B-C, as translated in Einarson and Lacy 1986, 231.

appearances'), he is careful to use Parmenides' own terms. It is not clear from the verses, however, just how extensive a range the words *διάκοσμος* and *πάντα* actually have there. While the close correspondence between Plutarch's list and the items in DK 10 and 11 may assure us that Plutarch had the poem before him, there is a vagueness about Parmenides' having had 'much' to say that makes it seem as though the poem itself may have been short on details (or perhaps short on details that Plutarch felt comfortable paraphrasing with any precision). This tone of caution is reinforced by the way that Plutarch qualifies his final claim, shifting some of the attention away from Parmenides toward Colotes himself (it is Colotes who is 'pulling apart the book of another') and suggesting that we must judge Parmenides as an *early* practitioner of natural science; it is only by that standard that Parmenides οὐδὲν ἄρρητον ... τῶν κυρίων παρήκεν, which does *not* mean 'he left nothing of real importance unsaid' but merely 'he left none of the chief points unmentioned'.<sup>58</sup> There is a world of difference, so to speak, between mentioning all the main points and leaving nothing important undiscussed. Plutarch is careful to claim only the former of Parmenides, who may have left any number of things without a detailed or elaborate treatment.

Plutarch's passage can be compared to remarks Simplicius makes just after his quotation of DK 11. We saw a bit of this above. The fuller passage is:

And he sets out the coming to be of things that come to be and perish up to the parts of the animals. And it is clear that Parmenides was not unaware that he himself came to be, just as he was not unaware that he had two feet, even though he said that being is one.<sup>59</sup>

Given the correspondence between the celestial objects of DK 11 and the early items in Plutarch's list of things about which Parmenides said 'much', it seems that we should perhaps associate Simplicius' reference to 'the parts of animals' with Plutarch's mention of 'the genesis of man'. Both authors make the point that Parmenides' understanding of the oneness of being did not keep him from seeing the multiplicity of the everyday world. Like Plutarch, Simplicius gestures at the scope of what the *Doxa* covered, but offers little basis for determining just how extensive or detailed a treatment any of the topics mentioned received. Neither author provides

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<sup>58</sup> οὐδὲν ἄρρητον, ὡς ἀνὴρ ἀρχαῖος ἐν φυσιολογίᾳ καὶ συνθεῖς γραφὴν ἰδίαν οὐκ ἀλλοτριᾶν διαφορῶν, τῶν κυρίων παρήκεν. It is insensitive to the meaning of ἄρρητος and gives Parmenides credit for more than Plutarch does to translate 'he has left nothing of real importance unsaid', a translation repeated word for word in Gallop 1984, 101. It is even more inaccurate to say he left nothing important 'undiscussed', as in KRS, 257 and Coxon 2009, 168.

<sup>59</sup> Simplicius, *in Cael.* 559.26–560.1, as translated in Mueller 2009, 33.

quite the evidence that Cerri and others suggest they do when they are cited to support the notion that the *Doxa* presented an elaborate and lengthy cosmology that would have dwarfed the *Aletheia*.

Indeed, when one considers the paraphrases that each author offers along with the fragments as we have them, one may begin to wonder if the *Doxa* was not far less sweeping than is often supposed. Something on the scale of Lucretius' and Manilius' works would be ruled out if we are right to infer that Parmenides' poem was contained on a single scroll, but even something like Aratus' poem may be far longer than whatever the *Doxa* contained. I suspect it is significant that the accounts of Plutarch, when replying to Colotes' attack, and of Simplicius, in what seems an almost off-hand remark about what followed DK 11, coincide as neatly as they do not only with one another but also with the extant material from the *Doxa* that happens to have survived in other authors. All of the fragments of the standard *Doxa*, with the possible exceptions of DK 16 and 15a, fall readily into one of the two main categories in the paraphrases of each author. We have 'astronomical' fragments (or better, fragments that talk about various heavenly lights) on the one hand (DK 9, 10, 11, 14, 15), and those to do with one or another aspect of human generation on the other (DK 12, 13, 17, 18, 19).<sup>60</sup> Some of these might be assigned to both groups (most obviously DK 12), but this only reinforces the impression that the *Doxa* was curiously focused on these two domains. That we do not even possess significant testimonia that take us beyond the confines of these topics again suggests that the *Doxa* was both shorter and more focused than is generally supposed.

Additional, albeit indirect, evidence for a less extensive *Doxa* is the pervasiveness of the attitude towards Parmenides of which Colotes was but one representative. Even if Colotes' criticism of Parmenides relied on a polemical mischaracterization of Parmenides' views, it is reasonable to suppose that there was something about the poem that made it susceptible to the attack that in saying that what *is* is one, Parmenides effectively abolished 'all things'. Colotes was not the first to think that Parmenides did away with nature in some manner. The suggestion was an early and a persistent one, present in Socrates' explanation, in Plato's *Parmenides*, that the aim of the writings of Zeno and Parmenides is to assert, 'contrary to all the things that are said' (παρὰ πάντα τὰ λεγόμενα), that things are not many but one (*Parm.* 127e). Later Aristotle,

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<sup>60</sup> For discussion of how DK 16 does indeed fit with these groups, see Kurfess (forthcoming).

evidently reacting to the rejection of nature entailed by their apparent denial of movement, reportedly called Parmenides and Melissus *stasiōtai* ('partisans of the standstill faction') and *aphysikoi* ('unnaturalists').<sup>61</sup> Though also capable of prejudiced and distorted views of his predecessors, Aristotle, like Colotes, must have had some reason for separating Parmenides and Melissus from the regular run of *physikoi*. These characterizations would probably not have been customary had the *Doxa* presented an elaborate and detailed 'treatise' on the whole of the natural world. It is noteworthy that in Aristotle's many volumes on nature Parmenides' name appears only rarely. Where it does, it is generally in connection with his supposed rejection of the reality of change.<sup>62</sup> On the very few occasions where Aristotle has something to report about Parmenides' 'physical' views, there is nothing to suggest that he treated a wider range of phenomena than is exhibited in the extant fragments.<sup>63</sup> To judge, then, from the regrettably meager reports we have about it, it looks as though the *Doxa* included neither an elaborate cosmology including separate subsections for various astronomical topics nor so wide-ranging an account of more mundane topics as to allow for detailed speculations on the unhappy reproductive prospects of mules, but was a writing of a somewhat different sort.<sup>64</sup>

#### 8. A Deceptive Ordering of Verses

That the *Doxa* was short on satisfying details is a point made by Theophrastus. Let us, before concluding, revisit the passage in which he quotes DK 16. This will provide us with another important impression of the general character of the *Doxa* and will also help us formulate a guess as to why 'astronomical' and 'embryological' material might be so prominent among the traces that remain of it. The text is Theophrastus' *de Sensibus*, an extended survey of the views of

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<sup>61</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *adv. Math.* X. 46 (= Aristotle, *On Philosophy* fr. 9 (Ross)). Aristotle's pun on *stasiōtēs* seems to come from Plato, *Theaetetus* 181a6. The evidence of this attitude toward Parmenides seems to be ignored by Giovanni Casertano when, in support of the supposed 'fact that Parmenides was a φυσιολόγος, that is, a scholar of nature, was well-known in ancient times', he follows two rather dubious references to Iamblichus and Simplicius with: 'even Aristotle himself, who ... is mainly responsible for the distortion of some aspects of the Elean's philosophy, does not hesitate to place Parmenides inside what he saw as a trend shared by the whole line of research of the first Greek philosophers. Parmenides, philosopher of being, metaphysical thinker, "father of western metaphysics," is thus not an idea stemming from ancient times, but rather a modern (from Hegel on) and contemporary (from Heidegger on) reading.' (Casertano 2011, 23-24)

<sup>62</sup> See *Physics* I. 2-3, 5 and 8-9; *de Gen. et Corr.* I. 3 and 8; and *de Caelo* III. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Aristotle's brief report at *de Gen. et Corr.* II.3 330b13-15 is a vague reference to a mixing of fire and earth that seems to echo DK 8.52-60 and DK 9, and *de Part. An.* II.2 (with which cf. *de Gen. An.* IV.1) can be related to the embryological fragments.

<sup>64</sup> As for the scientific discoveries, mentioned earlier, in which Parmenides is sometimes said to have played a role, Aristotle again gives no indication of Parmenides as a pioneer in these researches, although discussions of the sphericity of the earth and its zones as well as of the moon's light are to be found in his corpus.

various predecessors, from Alcmaeon to Plato, on the nature of the senses and sensible objects. Diels regarded the *de Sensibus* as a fragment of Theophrastus' massive work on physical opinions, and viewed that larger collection as the source for the entire later doxographical tradition. Both judgments are subject to doubt,<sup>65</sup> but whether we ought to regard the *de Sensibus* as an independent work or not, and whether or not we hypothesize some doxographical tradition anterior to Theophrastus, the present passage is relevant not only for how we read the verses it preserves, but the bulk of the later, indirect reports about Parmenides as well.

Theophrastus' testimony is as objective and well-informed as any that we possess. It is not the most informative, to be sure, but Theophrastus is operating with less obvious bias (either doctrinal or as a result of the distortions that may be due to literary form) than any other major source, and was clearly familiar with the poem first-hand. It is unfortunate that in the broader context of the brief passage in question, Parmenides' poem is something of a side issue.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, there is value for us in what he does say. Particularly when we read the stray bits of information that make up most of the doxographical record on Parmenides, where one may suppose that the substance, if not the form, of Parmenides' physical opinions is preserved in a matter-of-fact manner, it is good to bear in mind that the key source for that tradition had a hard time extracting definite doctrines from the poem.

Theophrastus' remarks on Parmenides are introduced by way of contrast with Empedocles' fuller treatment of the individual senses:<sup>67</sup>

Parmenides gives no definition whatsoever, saying merely that there are two elements, and that our knowledge depends upon the excess of one or the other. [ὅλως οὐδὲν ἀφώρικεν ἀλλὰ μόνον ὅτι δυοῖν ὄντων στοιχείῳ κατὰ τὸ ὑπερβάλλον ἐστὶν ἡ γνῶσις.] For according as the hot or the cold predominates does the understanding vary, there being a better and purer understanding derived from the hot; yet even such knowledge requires a certain proportion.

‘For ever as it finds the blend in their far-wandering members,’ he says, ‘so does mind come to men; for that which has intelligence in men each and all is the same,—the substance of their members; since what is there in greater measure is their thought.’  
[DK 16]

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<sup>65</sup> See Baltussen 2000, 239-245 for doubts on both points.

<sup>66</sup> Our passage (like the remarks on Plato that follow it) is more a digression at the beginning of Theophrastus' treatment of Empedocles than a separate exposition on Parmenides' views on the senses.

<sup>67</sup> *De Sensibus* 3, as translated in Stratton 1917, 69, with material in square brackets added. Angled brackets indicate Stratton's own supplements.

For to perceive by the senses and to have intelligence are treated by him as identical [τὸ γὰρ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ φρονεῖν ὡς ταὐτὸ λέγει]; consequently both remembering and forgetting arise, by the mixture <of the elements mentioned>. But if there should occur an exact equality in the mixture, he does not make it clear [οὐδὲν ἔτι διώρικεν] whether there would or would not be thought, nor what would be the general state <resulting>. But that he also attributes perception to the opposite <element> in its own right is evident [φανερὸν] from the passage where he says that a dead man—since now the fire has left him—does not perceive light and warmth and sound, but does perceive cold and silence and the other contrasting qualities; and that absolutely all being possesses some power of knowing [καὶ ὅλως δὲ πᾶν τὸ ὄν ἔχειν τινὰ γνῶσιν]. Accordingly by this thesis he seems arbitrarily to preclude discussion of the difficulties attending to his position [οὕτω μὲν οὖν αὐτὸς ἔοικεν ἀποτέμεσθαι τῇ φάσει τὰ συμβαίνοντα δυσχερῆ διὰ τὴν ὑπόληψιν].

I shall reserve the many problems presented by DK 16 itself for treatment on another occasion and concentrate here on what the context tells us about Theophrastus' more general impression of Parmenides' poem. Theophrastus remarks repeatedly on the indefiniteness of Parmenides' writing: 'In general, he gives no definition'; 'he speaks of perceiving (*aisthanesthai*) and thinking (*phronein*) as the same thing'; 'he makes nothing further definite' than that memory and forgetting arise by blending. For anything specific, it seems, Theophrastus has to draw inferences from Parmenides' indistinct and cryptic generalizations. What Theophrastus takes to be 'apparent' or 'evident' (that perception occurs by the contrary 'in its own right') seems to be deduced from the curious statement that a corpse, deprived of fire, does not perceive light and warmth and sound but cold and silence, and Theophrastus complains that Parmenides curtails treatment of potential difficulties by assertion rather than offering explanations. It does not seem credible to chalk these complaints up to limited access to the poem,<sup>68</sup> nor in fact do Theophrastus' complaints seem unfair reactions to DK 16 or to the other verbatim quotations that we have of the poem.

Indeed, the indefiniteness of which Theophrastus complains is a characteristic of Parmenides' poem generally. Very little, at least, is firmly and determinately fixed in a way that readers can feel especially sure that they have grasped exactly what is being communicated. Where we are offered specifics, they tend to be exasperatingly ambiguous. In the *Doxa*, as Cordero stresses, the goddess specifically alerts the youth to the deceptive *kosmos* of her verses. It is worth lingering a moment, however, over just what that might mean. While this has been taken as a blanket rejection of anything that follows, there is a subtlety to these words that calls

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Hershbell 1970, 6-7 and n. 28 above.



for careful attention. One aspect of this pregnant phrase is revealed by considering, quite literally, the order of the words in her verses. For instance, in DK 12.3,

ἐν δὲ μέσῳ τούτων δαίμων ἢ πάντα κυβερνᾷ  
[in the middle of these, the divinity who steers all things],

the word δαίμων, ‘divinity’, is placed precisely in the middle of the verse, reflecting her position in the middle of things.<sup>69</sup> How this may be deceptive deserves fuller consideration elsewhere, but for the moment I suggest that mortal *doxai* may lack true trust because their apparent confirmation by impressive arrangements of words—that is, by naming—may ultimately prove misleading. There is something similar in the description of the moon in DK 14:

νυκτὶ φάος περὶ γαῖαν ἀλώμενον ἀλλότριον φῶς  
[in night a light, around earth roaming, an alien light].

Here ‘earth’, though not at the exact metrical center of the verse, is at the center of the seven words in it, once we restore the opening of the line preserved in the manuscripts.<sup>70</sup> On this fragment John Newell very perceptively points out: ‘At the start, we get a light where it does not belong (in the darkness of night) and at the end we are told that the light comes from elsewhere. The middle of the line reports that the moon wanders around the Earth, which sits at the line’s center. The line, therefore, models the geocentric orbit of the moon.’ (Newell 2002, 717n887) Yet another intriguing instance of the *kosmos apatēlos* of the verses in the *Doxa* is DK 17:

δεξιτεροῖσιν μὲν κούρους, λαιοῖσι δὲ κούρας  
[on the right, boys, on the left, girls].<sup>71</sup>

Again I quote Newell:

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Empedocles’ borrowing of this at DK 31 B 35.4: δίνης, ἐν δὲ μέσῃ Φιλότης στροφάλιγγι γένηται.

<sup>70</sup> The opening of the verse in the manuscripts is νυκτὶ φάος. DK prints νυκτιφαῆς, which is Scaliger’s emendation.

<sup>71</sup> As given by Galen, the verse does not scan: δεξιτεροῖσι μὲν κούρους, λαιοῖσι δ’ αὖ κούρας. The above is Karsten’s restoration, which serves well enough to illustrate the point. Gallop, 1984, 88, prints δεξιτεροῖσι [μὲν] κούρους, λαιοῖσιν δ’ αὖ <κτίσε> κούρας, following Wenkebach and Pfaff. Coxon, 2009, 253, describes Karsten’s restoration as ‘simpler and better’.

The line is composed in a way that is typical of the whole poem. It begins by placing the word for ‘right’ in the position that is furthest to the *left*, and places the girls (who belong on the left) as far to the *right* as possible. The boys, who should be on the right, are in the left half of the line while the word for ‘left’ occupies the center. Everything is in the wrong place! ...What we have here would appear to be one of the worst possible arguments. Given what we have seen elsewhere in the poem, however, it would be a mistake to see this as faulty craftsmanship. Instead, what we have here is a deliberate structural confusion which allows the author to signal to the reader that the speaker does not know what she is talking about.<sup>72</sup>

I am not ready to say that the goddess does not know what she is talking about, but Newell is surely right that the line is deliberately constructed with each element out of order, and that this sort of wordplay is a recurrent feature of the poem, present, as the above examples illustrate, in the various phases of Parmenides’ supposedly scientific treatments. If such involved wordplay would seem ill-suited to a detailed and elaborate ‘treatise’ on natural philosophy, once again it seems desirable to entertain an alternative model for how to envision the *Doxa*. Theophrastus’ mention of corpses provides us a hint of an alternative ‘genre’ which, if less ‘scientific’, is more consistent with the entirety of the evidence for the *Doxa*. Recalling Simplicius’ mention of the *daimon* sending souls from the visible to the invisible realm and back again,<sup>73</sup> it appears that the *Doxa* contained some sort of description of the souls of the dead, the things that they saw or failed to see, and what they may have remembered or forgotten.

A moment’s reflection supplies a ‘genre’ in which the souls of the dead, the basic elements of a cosmology, and an account of human generation would all be at home: the myth of Er in Plato’s *Republic*, the ‘Somnium Scipionis’ of Cicero’s own *Republic*, and related stories such as Timarchus’ vision in Plutarch’s *de genio Socratis* might provide better models for imagining what the *Doxa* looked like. Each of those relatively brief episodes features the journey of some select figure beyond the sphere of everyday human affairs, where he hears of the fates of the departed, attains a unifying (but scarcely straightforward) vision of the cosmos, and learns about the (re)birth of souls into bodies, which is associated in some manner or other with the

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<sup>72</sup> Newell 2002, 718n890. Newell reads Gallop’s text (in which *λαιοῖσιν* occupies a more central position than in Karsten’s), but his observations apply to either reading.

<sup>73</sup> See above, n. 29.

circular movements of the celestial lights.<sup>74</sup> A central lesson to be learned in each episode is how the ‘true’ life differs from that which is conventionally so called.

Taking these texts as a guide, the seemingly unrelated astronomical and embryological fragments of the *Doxa* can be bridged by Theophrastus’ and Simplicius’ references to the dead and to souls’ being sent to the ‘invisible’ realm and back again by the divinity. The *Doxa* then begins to look like some sort of account of the fate of the reincarnated soul. The tales in Plato, Cicero, and Plutarch link the character of human births to the cycles of the heavenly bodies, and it is worth considering whether the same might have been true in Parmenides’ *Doxa*, which is. let us not forget, the *Doxa* of *mortals*. DK 12 appears to offer some such connection between the cosmic *stephanai* and male-female pairings, and the earlier mention in DK 6 of unknowing mortals ‘wandering’ a ‘back-turning path’, confusedly borne between being and non-being, would not be an inapt description of the cycle of rebirth.<sup>75</sup>

While the Er narrative has been connected with Parmenides’ poem before,<sup>76</sup> the point of comparison has typically been that of Parmenides’ *stephanai* and the ‘whorls’ of the Spindle of Necessity in Plato’s story, with the aim of clarifying the arrangements of each author’s presumed cosmology. DK 17 and 18 are rarely if ever included in such discussions, but they clearly add to the comparison if we simply pay attention to what follows the cosmic vision in Er’s account. The emphasis in Plato’s dialogue is on the choice that precedes a soul’s next incarnation, but this ends in a departure towards its birth. Supposing that Parmenides’ poem provided a more graphic description of the stages involved in the soul’s assumption of its new identity in the womb, we

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<sup>74</sup> In line with his presenting the episode as a dream rather than a divine visitation or shamanic-style journey, Cicero mutes the element of reincarnation in his work, but in other ways echoes Parmenides more closely than does Plato. Cf., e.g., DK 14 with Cicero’s description of the moon *quae ultima a caelo, citima terris, luce lucebat aliena*. (*De Re Publica*, VI. 20 [16]; 139.19-20 Powell).

<sup>75</sup> Tarán 1965, 248-249n51 declares that the connection of Simplicius’ remarks to ‘the Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration ... cannot be accepted’ and that ‘there is nothing in the text of Simplicius to suggest that the souls which the goddess sends back to Hades and from Hades to life are the same, which is a necessary condition for metempsychosis.’ Apart from the inaccuracy of Tarán’s paraphrase of the text (the souls are not sent *back* to Hades, but *back* to ‘life’, which is the crucial point for reincarnation), that they are sent ‘back’ anywhere suggests that the souls are in some sense the same souls. Exactly *how* they are the same is, I believe, a central puzzle of the poem.

There is further evidence for reincarnation in Parmenides (and a connection with Plato’s myth) in Porphyry’s essay, *de Antro Nympharum*, where it is reported (21.3) that Parmenides mentioned the celestial gates (identified by earlier commentators as the solstitial points on the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn) whereby souls descend into human births and return to the gods. On this, cf. Coxon 2009, 371.

<sup>76</sup> E.g., Morrison 1955; Tarán 1965, 233nn10 and 11; Mourelatos 1970/2008, 28n56; Popper 1998, 123 and 126; Coxon 2009, 371.

would have a considerably more concrete scenario in which to place the fragments generally viewed as isolated bits of Parmenides' otherwise lost 'biology'.<sup>77</sup>

Clearly, this suggestion is something that needs to be pursued more fully elsewhere. A compelling case for it can only be made through a close reading of the fragments, the relevant testimonia, and related accounts in other authors (by no means limited to the three examples mentioned). For the present, I simply submit that the hints from some of our best sources that the *Doxa* dealt with reincarnation should not be ignored. They offer a ready explanation for why the evidence for the 'astronomical, biological and theological matters' in the *Doxa* seems to fall short of the 'elaborate cosmology' that many commentators assume. Moreover, in an account of reincarnation, such matters will hardly seem remote from an explanation of 'universal mortal illusions'.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, this more focused conception of the *Doxa* not only gives a tighter coherence to the fragments there, but raises prospects for a more unified account of the whole poem. The otherworldly character of the journey in the proem has long been recognized (whether we regard it as a descent or an ascent may make little difference), and the ties between the Way of Truth and Way of Seeming might become clearer when we read the insistence in the *Aletheia* that what *is* is ungenerated and unperishing in light of the *Doxa*'s seeming concern with the mortal death and rebirth.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Such a setting might well suit DK 20, three verses preserved in Hippolytus, and ascribed simply to 'the poet'. Meineke 1852 suggested that 'the poet' might be Parmenides. Diels thus included the fragment in his collections, but labeled it 'Dubium', and Parmenidean scholars since have by and large ignored it. For a recent discussion, see West 2008.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. the comments of Gallop above, with n. 49.

<sup>79</sup> In an earlier incarnation, this paper appeared as a chapter of my dissertation, and I renew my thanks to all I thanked there. For encouragement and comments on the various revisions that have resulted in this paper, I thank Will Altman, Néstor-Luis Cordero (again), Brad Inwood, Ron Polansky (again), and Sarah Star (again and again).

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