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# The Journey of the Soul in Parmenides and the Katha Upanishad

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## Abstract

*In the terse and compressed language of poetry, the Presocratic philosopher Parmenides of Elea expressed, for the first time in the West, the deepest ideas of nondualistic metaphysics. These ideas bear a close resemblance to, but are not necessarily derived from, the Vedantic philosophy which informs the Upanishads and other metaphysical texts of ancient India. The proemium to the poem of Parmenides contains a graphic metaphor in which the soul's progress towards ultimate truth is represented by the journey of a chariot. In developing his metaphor, Parmenides shows how it is Justice which determines the progress of the soul. His vision of Justice is both individual and universal.*

*This article examines Parmenides's parable of the chariot in comparison with a remarkably similar image which occurs in the Katha Upanishad.*

The Presocratic philosopher, Parmenides of Elea,<sup>1</sup> may rightly be said to have introduced the deepest ideas of nondualistic metaphysics to the West.<sup>2</sup> And he expressed his teachings, not in the discursive and often prolix prose used by most philosophers, but in the terse and compressed language of poetry.<sup>3</sup> His poem *On Nature*, precisely because so much of it has survived, has exerted an enduring influence on Western thought. This influence is reflected in the vast literature which the poem has spawned.<sup>4</sup> In the proemium to this poem, there occurs a graphic metaphor, in which the soul's progress towards ultimate truth is likened to the journey of a chariot. This article attempts to elucidate the meaning of Parmenides's parable of the chariot, by calling in aid a remarkably similar image which occurs in one of the *Upanishads* of ancient India.

In Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus*, Socrates declares:

[I] have a kind of reverence, not so much for Melissus and the others, who say that 'all is one and at rest', as for the great leader himself, Parmenides, venerable and awful. . . . I met him when he was an old man, and I was a mere youth, and he appeared to me to have a glorious depth of mind. And

I am afraid that we may not understand his words, and may be still further from understanding his meaning. . . .<sup>5</sup>

The reverential awe with which Socrates speaks of Parmenides is bestowed on no one else in the Platonic corpus. The reason, surely, was the recognition that this 'great leader, Parmenides, venerable and awful' had seen more deeply into the nature of reality than Socrates and Plato themselves. I argue, controversially perhaps, that the discoveries of Parmenides of Elea and his fellow Eleatics, represent the very pinnacle of Greek philosophical inquiry: in the Eleatic ontology, Hellenic thought attained a level of abstraction which no later Western philosopher has surpassed.

It was Parmenides who first taught the West that ultimate reality or absolute truth is approachable only by man's inner faculty of reason, and never by the use of the senses.<sup>6</sup> This teaching, which Parmenides elaborates in the *Way of Truth*, the first part of his poem, stands in direct opposition to our Western empirical, scientific outlook. Grounded in the physical world of the senses, this outlook derives ultimately from the philosophy of Aristotle.<sup>7</sup> Sadly, the spiritual brilliance of the Parmenidean vision has been forgotten, and, instead, this secular Aristotelian mindset has increasingly held Western thought captive during recent centuries. The result has been that while the manifold benefits of modern science have been laid at our disposal, we have paid the price in the form of a spiritual void which has robbed our lives of real meaning.

This judgment, of course, runs counter to the view of many modern commentators. Thus, according to Barnes:<sup>8</sup>

In the second phase of philosophy, a thicker and darker cloud loomed: it threatened to cut off all light from empirical science, and it must have seemed almost impenetrable. The cloud blew in from Elea – from Parmenides, Melissus, Zeno.

This statement epitomises the almost total failure of modern scholarship to come to terms with the great achievement of the Eleatic school,<sup>9</sup> for the nondualistic teachings of Parmenides and Melissus are an expression of the highest truth. These teachings are harbingers of light and hope for mankind, not of darkness.

The point of departure of this study is that the poem of Parmenides is the product neither of theoretical speculation, nor of logical analysis, nor even of objective scientific investigation as we know it. Thus any attempt to understand Parmenides by the unaided use of the logical-analytical mind, referred to in this paper as the lower mind, must of necessity fail. This study rests on the premise that Parmenides's poem can only have been the product of his own direct, transcendental experience of truth, which lies

entirely beyond the reach of the lower mind. His teaching, in other words, derives from a realm which is accessible only to those rare individuals who have attained his level of inner development, who have been where he has been.<sup>10</sup> What follows below is an attempt to determine the meaning of the allegory or parable<sup>11</sup> of the chariot in the prooemium, and thereby to substantiate the views expressed in this paragraph.

The chariot features in the prooemium as a powerful metaphor for the journey of the human soul towards the realization of ultimate truth. As Radhakrishnan<sup>12</sup> points out, the idea of the self riding in the chariot, which is the psycho-physical vehicle, is a familiar one. Remarkable, however, are the points of correspondence, discussed below, between the description of Parmenides, dating perhaps from about 475 BC,<sup>13</sup> and that occurring in a Vedantic text, the *Katha Upanishad*, which belongs to the eighth or seventh century BC.<sup>14</sup> The similarity is all the more remarkable for the fact that there appears to be no compelling evidence of a direct connection between the earlier Indian text and the Greek. As we shall see, the tenor of the Upanishadic text is overtly spiritual, while in the prooemium of Parmenides, the spiritual meaning is clothed in graphic and concrete images.

Given the similarity between the texts, I shall now proceed to a reading of the *Upanishad* as an invaluable preliminary step towards a proper elucidation of Parmenides's parable. The former text reads as follows:<sup>15</sup>

3. Know the Self (*ātman* in Sanskrit) as the lord<sup>16</sup> of the chariot, and the body as, verily, the chariot, know the intellect (*buddhi*) as the charioteer and the mind (*manas*) as, verily, the reins.
4. The senses (*indriyāni*), they say, are the horses; the object of sense (*arthā*) the paths (which they range over); the Self, associated with the body, the senses and the mind – so wise men declare – is the enjoyer.
5. He who has no understanding, whose mind is always unrestrained, his senses are out of control, as wicked horses are for a charioteer.
6. He, however, who has understanding, whose mind is always restrained, his senses are under control, as good horses are for a charioteer.
7. He, however, who has no understanding, who has no control over his mind (and is) ever impure, reaches not that goal, but comes back into mundane life.
8. He, however, who has understanding, who has control over his mind and (is) ever pure, reaches that goal from which he is not born again.
9. He who has understanding as the driver of the chariot, and controls the rein of his mind, he reaches the end of the journey, that supreme abode of the all-pervading.

10. Beyond the senses (*indriyāni*) are the objects of the senses (*arthā*) and beyond the objects is the mind (*manas*); beyond the mind is the understanding (*buddhi*) and beyond the understanding is the great self (*atmā mahān*).
11. Beyond the great self is the unmanifest (*avyaktam*); beyond the unmanifest is the spirit (*purusha*). Beyond the spirit there is nothing. That is the end (of the journey); that is the final goal.'

This passage paints a precise and vivid picture of the inner world of the human being. The Self or *ātman*, corresponding to the passenger in the chariot, is the still, innermost, invisible, indestructible, immutable, immortal, divine essence of every human being. It is Truth.<sup>17</sup> The body, corresponding to the chariot, is the transient, perishable vehicle of the Self. The intellect (*buddhi*), the higher organ of mind, is the faculty of reason and understanding, which corresponds to the charioteer.<sup>18</sup> The lower organ of mind (*manas*) is the discursive, analytical, thinking mind, represented by the reins. The horses stand for the senses (*indriyāni*) of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing. Finally, the roads over which the horses and chariot range stand for the objects of sense (*arthā*).<sup>19</sup>

Consider the chain of command or control implicit in the description. The Self (*ātman*), as the lord of, and passenger in the chariot, is the animating presence, the formless essence, the source which remains perfectly still, does nothing at all, and yet enables all the activity of the chariot and horses.<sup>20</sup> The function of intelligence or intellect, for which the charioteer is a fine analogy, is to integrate the different elements of our nature and to harness these to the highest end, namely the discovery of truth. Notwithstanding differences of detail, the *Katha Upanishad* and Plato agree in looking upon intelligence as the ruling power of the soul (called *buddhi* or *vijnāna* in the Upanishad, and *nous* by Plato).<sup>21</sup> In order for the faculty of intelligence or understanding to perform these functions on a continuous basis, it must first be awakened or activated by the sustained practice of inner disciplines such as study and meditation. Absent such sustained practice, this faculty remains inactive or dormant: verses 5 to 9 above describe the active and inactive states of the faculty of understanding, and the effects on the individual of these respective states.<sup>22</sup> Only in its fully awakened state is this faculty capable of guiding and directing the lower mind in the direction of ultimate truth. In its dormant state, which at any one time is the condition of all but a few human beings, this faculty is unable to exercise proper, continuous control over the lower mind, which consequently roams about without aim or direction. The chief consequence of an unrestrained mind, the *Upanishad* reminds us, is that the senses are out of control: instead of performing the function of valuable and obedient servants, they become our masters, with predictably ruinous consequences. This is the common human condition which we may observe within ourselves

as well as in others. The analogy of a charioteer who lacks the ability to exercise effective control over his team of horses by means of the proper use of the reins is an accurate one: thought which is not restrained and guided by the intellect is unconnected with the vast realm of consciousness. In this condition, thought quickly becomes barren, insane, destructive.<sup>22</sup>

The thrust of this passage is that the awakening of the higher faculty of understanding is indispensable to human evolution: the task is laid upon every individual of engaging in the inner work which alone can effect this awakening. And only this awakening can produce the state of continuous inner harmony, coherence and stillness, which is described by the *Upanishad* as 'the final goal' and 'the end of the journey, that supreme abode of the all-pervading'.<sup>24</sup> This final goal is nothing less than the discovery of absolute truth.

This brief analysis of the meaning of *Katha Upanishad* 1.3.3-11 will serve as a template for the study of Parmenides's parable, to which I now turn. The prooemium reads:<sup>25</sup>

1. The steeds that carry me took me as far as my heart could desire,
2. When once they had brought me and set me on the renowned way
3. Of the Goddess, who leads the man who knows through every town.
4. On that way was I conveyed; for on it did the wise steeds convey me,
5. Drawing my chariot, and maidens led the way.
6. And the axle blazing in the socket —
7. For it was urged round by well-turned wheels at each end —
8. Was making the holes in the naves sing, while the daughters of the Sun,
9. Hasting to convey me into the light,
10. Threw back the veils from off their faces and left the abode of night.
11. There are the gates of the ways of Night and Day,
12. Fitted above with a lintel and below with a threshold of stone.
13. They themselves, high in the air, are closed by mighty doors,
14. And avenging Justice controls the double bolts.
15. Her did the maidens entreat with gentle words
16. And cunningly persuade to unfasten without demur the bolted bar
17. From the gates. Then, when the doors were thrown back,
18. They disclosed a wide opening,
19. When their brazen posts fitted with rivets and nails
20. Swung in turn on their hinges. Straight through them,
21. On the broad way, did the maidens guide the horses and the car.
22. And the Goddess greeted me kindly, and took
23. My right hand in hers and spake to me these words:
24. "Welcome, O youth, that comest to my abode
25. On the car that bears thee, tended by immortal charioteers.
26. It is no ill chance, but Right and Justice, that has sent thee forth to travel
27. On this way. Far indeed does it lie from the beaten track of men.
28. Meet it is that thou shouldst learn all things,
29. As well the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth,
30. As the opinions of mortals in which is no true belief at all.

31. Yet none the less shalt thou learn these things also — how the things that seem,  
32. As they pass through everything, must gain the semblance of being.

The proemium describes, in vivid and concrete terms, man's spiritual journey from darkness to light, from ignorance to truth. It depicts Parmenides as a 'man who knows' (*eidota*), a mature aspirant who has attained an advanced level of inner development, and is thereby qualified to tread the divine path, the 'renowned way of the Goddess' which leads to the discovery of truth.

The graphic and dramatic imagery of the parable partially conceals its inner meaning which, as I shall seek to show, is remarkably similar to that of the Upanishadic metaphor. I have already contended that Parmenides is here describing, in richly veiled language, his own transcendental experience.<sup>26</sup> Such an experience, located entirely beyond the reach of the logical-analytical or lower mind, may be recognizable only by those very few individuals who have undergone a similar experience of their own. These individuals are the ones in whom the higher faculty of mind, variously described in the *Katha Upanishad* as understanding, intelligence and reason, is fully awakened.<sup>27</sup> Small wonder, then, that Parmenides inspired Socrates with feelings of reverential awe.<sup>28</sup>

The parable opens with Parmenides being conveyed in a chariot driven by maidens, who are described as 'daughters of the Sun' and 'immortal charioteers'. The chariot is drawn by 'wise steeds'. Provided the parallels between the Indian and Greek texts are exact — and I suggest they are — these images can readily be decoded.

The Greek text makes it clear that the steeds<sup>29</sup> which draw the chariot are in fact mares, and thus a pattern begins to emerge from the outset: all the key figures and images in the proemium are feminine, from the horses to the charioteers<sup>30</sup> ('daughters of the Sun') to the deities invoked by Parmenides, namely Justice, the keeper of the doors of destiny, and the Goddess herself, the revealer of truth.<sup>31</sup> Later in the poem, Parmenides mentions also *Moirai* (Fate or Destiny) and *Ananke* (Necessity). All the divinities invoked by Parmenides are emblematic expressions of aspects of truth.<sup>32</sup> The emphasis which Parmenides places throughout on the sacred feminine is inescapable.

The 'wise steeds', by setting the passenger on the way of discovery of truth ('the renowned way of the Goddess'), show themselves to be well capable of taking him as far as his 'heart could desire'. Of all human desires, the deepest is the desire for Self-knowledge or Self-realization. In a mature aspirant such as Parmenides, this desire is stronger than all the lesser desires which assail the human being. In most people, however, the ultimate desire for truth is swamped by the unrelenting assault of myriad

mundane desires for material goods and worldly success. For the highest desire to prevail, the inner being of the aspirant must be well-ordered: the senses (steeds) must reside under the dominion of the discursive or lower mind (the reins), which must in turn defer to the authority of the intellect or higher mind (the charioteers). It is precisely the alignment of these three faculties in this hierarchical sequence that characterizes the aspirant in the poem. Absent this harmonious co-ordination, the discovery of truth is impossible.

The imagery in verses 6-8 vividly conveys the swift movement of the chariot under the astute direction of the charioteers. The rapid rotation of the axle, 'blazing in the socket', engenders heat and fire. This image suggests a highly evolved soul, fired by spiritual ardour, in occupation of a strong, finely-tuned body (the chariot). The sense of harmony, wholeness and completeness conveyed by the image of 'well-turned wheels' finds an echo later on in 'well-rounded truth'.<sup>33</sup>

The dramatic gesture of the charioteers in throwing back the veils from their faces signifies that a vital stage of the journey is at hand. This is the arrival at the gates of the ways of Night and Day, which mark the transition from darkness to light,<sup>34</sup> from ignorance to truth. In the all-pervading light of truth, there can be no concealment: all is open, all is revealed. The gesture of the charioteers is a graphic acknowledgment of this transition.<sup>35</sup>

The keeper of the gates of the ways of Night and Day is avenging Justice (*Dikē polypoinos*). It is this deity who weighs in the balance the aspirant's qualifications to enter the abode of truth.<sup>36</sup> Only one who has lived a life of righteousness and justice — for example, the aspirant in this poem — may pass through the gates. Chance or fortune, man's favourite scapegoats, have no part to play here.<sup>37</sup> Plato makes the point explicitly:<sup>38</sup>

[A]ccording to the ancient story, there is a god who holds in his hands the beginning and end and middle of all things, and straight he marches in the cycle of nature. Justice, who takes vengeance on those who abandon the divine law, never leaves his side. The man who means to live in happiness latches on to her and follows her with meekness and humility. But he who bursts with pride, elated by wealth or honours or by physical beauty when young and foolish, whose soul is afire with the arrogant belief that, far from needing someone to control and lead him, he can play the leader to others — there's a man whom God has deserted ... Many people think he cuts a fine figure, but before very long he pays to Justice no trifling penalty, and brings himself, his home and state to rack and ruin. Thus it is ordained.<sup>39</sup>

This passage describes justice in relation to the inner world of the individual. This aspect of justice needs to be strongly emphasized in our age of ignorance: we shirk personal responsibility for the ills that befall us, preferring to see ourselves as victims of circumstance. We have chosen to forget the ineluctable relationship of cause and effect between, on the one

hand, what we do or think, and, on the other, the state of our lives. Thus we neglect at our great peril the operation of justice within our own being, choosing instead to focus our attention on external justice in its political, social, legal and economic aspects. The discourse on justice in the media, in books and in academic debate is almost always located within these fields. But more important and immediate by far than any of these is the operation of justice within the individual, for without the assiduous cultivation of inner justice by individuals, there can be no external justice in society or in the state. Justice, like all other aspects of truth, originates in the individual, and from the individual it diffuses into society and the state. To this principle, which Plato emphasises repeatedly, there is no exception.<sup>40</sup> It follows that close, sustained observation of the workings of justice within oneself is an indispensable discipline for the seeker of truth. The poem of Parmenides, like the teaching of Plato, has the power to awaken us to the operation of justice in relation to our every thought, action, desire and feeling, from the deepest to the most trivial.

One puzzle remains: Justice — balanced, austere, impartial and unswerving — ought never to be open to cajoling, entreaty or persuasion.<sup>41</sup> Yet here<sup>42</sup> the gentle words of the charioteers do indeed succeed in swaying the deity to throw open the gates to the aspirant. The explanation, surely, is that the immortal charioteers, 'daughters of the sun', standing as they do for the fully awakened intellect, speak only words of truth and reason. Justice responds to such words and to no others.

Having passed safely through the gates, the chariot arrives at last at its destination, the abode of the Goddess.<sup>43</sup> The Goddess is to be understood as the revealer of truth, or as the truth which reveals itself. As such, she is inherently present as the innermost, immortal essence of every being. Thus she can be no stranger to the young aspirant. She welcomes him and assures him<sup>44</sup> that his arrival at her abode owes nothing to chance, for he is well-prepared to receive the teaching which she is about to impart to him. He must learn to distinguish absolute, unchanging truth (in the *Way of Truth*, the first part of the poem proper) from the false, relativistic realm of ever-shifting opinion (in the *Way of Seeming*, the second part of the poem proper).<sup>45</sup> Significantly, the aspirant is told that he may not neglect the things that seem ('the opinions of mortals in which is no true belief at all'), but must learn how they, as they pass through everything, gain the appearance of Being.<sup>46</sup> This injunction is psychologically sound: an aspirant who has not learnt, through wise instruction and keen observation, to recognize untruth (or that which is not) whenever it appears in others and especially within himself, will be repeatedly deceived by the manifold guises, wiles and subtleties of the ever-changing ego.<sup>47</sup>

First, however, the aspirant must learn what Parmenides so



memorably describes as 'the unshaken heart of well-rounded truth'.<sup>48</sup> These words emphasize both the steadfast, immovable, immutable nature of absolute truth, and its wholeness and completeness.<sup>49</sup> In the *Way of Truth*, which follows on from the prooemium, the key notion is Being, or that which is. This notion is well described by Jaeger:<sup>50</sup>

Being is without birth and therefore deathless; it is one; it is complete; it is immovable, eternal, ubiquitous, a unity, inter-connected, indivisible, homogeneous, boundless, impenetrable.<sup>51</sup>

A comparison of the subject-matter of the Upanishadic text with that of the prooemium of Parmenides reveals differences which are superficially striking, but ultimately insubstantial. For example, the discrete stages of the spiritual journey from ignorance to truth are sharply demarcated in the Greek text, but are not identifiable in the Indian. In contrast, the *Upanishad* expressly connects the physical elements of the parable (the chariot, passenger, charioteer, reins, horses and roads) with their psychological counterparts in the human make-up. This Parmenides does not do. Yet can it be doubted that, in pointing towards human realization of ultimate truth, the two texts, the Greek and the Indian, speak with one voice?

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## Endnotes

1. Parmenides was born between 515 and 510 BC, and appears to have been in his prime around 475 BC. According to Diogenes Laertius (9.21–3), the Pythagorean Ameinias converted him to the contemplative life. Strabo holds that both Parmenides and Zeno were Pythagoreans. Parmenides is said to have legislated for the citizens of his state, Elea in Italy. So admirable were his laws, according to Plutarch (*adv. Colot. 32, 1126A*), that the government annually swore its citizens to abide by them. Parmenides is said to have visited Athens late in his life and to have met the young Socrates: their conversation is recorded in Plato's dialogue, *Parmenides*. He was the founder of the Eleatic school of philosophy, of which Melissus of Samos and Zeno of Elea were adherents. Parmenides was the first Greek philosopher whose doctrines survive almost intact; they are preserved in his didactic poem, *On Nature*. Written in hexameters, the poem consists of a prologue or prooemium, followed by two sections called the *Way of Truth* and the *Way of Seeming*. According to Waterfield (p49), 'Parmenides remains probably the single most important Presocratic thinker . . . After Parmenides, Presocratic thought could not remain the same, since later thinkers felt they had to respond to the challenges he offered to all scientific thought'.
2. Less compelling is the claim of Heraclitus of Ephesus, whose surviving fragments do not add up to a coherent statement of the nondualistic position, such as we find in Parmenides's poem. Melissus and Zeno built upon the foundations laid by Parmenides.
3. According to Plutarch (quoted in Reale p81), Parmenides adopted as his vehicle the dignity and metre of poetry in order to avoid the prosaic.
4. For comprehensive surveys of the scholarly literature, see Capizzi p119–167; Reale p155–182. The bulk of this literature, however, deals with the main body of the poem, namely the *Way of Truth* and the *Way of Seeming*: less attention is devoted to the prooemium, and less still to the elucidation of the parable of the chariot. As for academic writings which examine, as this article attempts to do, Parmenides's metaphor of the chariot in the light of similar imagery in the Vedantic literature of ancient India, these appear to be scarce indeed: the two bibliographies cited above contain not a single overt example. See, in general, Staal, Conio, Hinze *passim*; McEvilley p52-9.
5. Plato *Theaetetus* 183e–184a (Jowett p284). Socrates, towards the end of this passage, is indeed prescient: he himself, despite his misgivings, would have been well

able to understand the words and meaning of Parmenides, but most modern scholars, by their own admission, are not. Here are some typical views: '... in many ways a bizarre and puzzling production', and '... some lines of the poem are obscure to the point of unintelligibility' (Barnes p130); 'His diction . . . is often exceedingly obscure: the precise meaning of some of his sentences will probably never be unanimously agreed' (Kirk and Raven p265); 'In devilishly obscure terms, and prosaic and somewhat tortured verse, [the *Way of Truth*] lays out the heart of Parmenides's extraordinary philosophy' (Waterfield p50). The reason for this perplexity may well be the one suggested in this article: Socrates, a man of wisdom in whom the intellect or higher faculty of mind was awakened, would have been well able to bring reason to bear on the poem. While every human being possesses this faculty, it remains underdeveloped in the great majority of persons at any one time. Thus the principal tool left to such persons (of whom I am one) is the discursive, analytical, lower faculty of mind, which may well prove inadequate for the purpose of penetrating to the deepest meaning of the poem. This is not to suggest that all commentators have been perplexed by the poem. Thus Proclus (quoted in Reale p83) holds that Parmenides, although compelled by his choice of poetic form to make use of metaphor and figures of speech, adopts in his poem an unadorned, sober and pure form of exposition. For a clear, understandable elucidation of the poem, see McEvilley p52-4.

6. The Vedantic teaching of India is entirely consonant with this position: compare, for instance, *Ribhu Gita* 2.34 and 4.6 (Krishnamoorthi Aiyer p3). The memorable words of Werner Jaeger are worth recalling at this point (Jaeger p177): 'Our salvation depends on our abandoning the world of opinion for the world of truth. Parmenides considered this conversion to be violent and difficult, and yet a great act of liberation. He presents his reasoning with a majestic sublimity and a deep religious emotion which makes it inspiring as well as convincing. For it is enthralling to watch him, in his search for knowledge, freeing himself and men for the first time from the appearances which impose on sense and discovering reason to be the organ through which alone the totality and unity of being can be apprehended.... [H]is discovery ... brought into action one of the fundamental forces of the Greek genius for educating humanity and comprehending the universe. Every line he wrote pulsates with his ardent faith in the newly discovered powers of pure reason.'

7. For views of Aristotle on the poem of Parmenides, see *Physics* 188a19-22; *Metaphysics* 986b27-987a2; *On the Heavens* 298b14-24. These views, as one would expect, are mostly hostile.

8. Barnes p39-40.

9. See, for example, the views quoted in note 5 above.

10. See note 5 on this point.

11. I use the terms allegory and parable interchangeably on the authority of *Fowler's Modern English Usage* (2<sup>nd</sup> revised ed, Gowers (1968) 558).

12. Radhakrishnan p623.

13. Kirk and Raven p265.

14. Radhakrishnan p22.

15. *Katha Upanishad* 1.3.3-11 (Radhakrishnan p623-4). The transliterated Sanskrit terms given in brackets in this passage are my insertions.

16. 'Lord' here evidently means the passenger in the chariot.

17. This true or higher Self is not to be confused with the perishable, ever-changing lower self or ego (*ahankāra*), the seat of desires, fears, passions, anger, envy and sloth in the individual.

18. According to Goodall (pL), *buddhi* is a key concept that corresponds fairly exactly to our word 'soul'. He adds: 'For [*buddhi*], most translators use such words as 'intellect' or 'intelligence', and this, of course, is what it often means; but the concept seems to be broader than this, for in *Bhagavad-Gītā* 2.41 we read that the essence of *buddhi* is will. *Buddhi*, then is the combination of intellect and will, and this is almost exactly what Catholic Christianity understands by 'soul' .... For in our Western tradition it is the soul that is the responsible and perduring element in man; it is the soul that is saved or damned. This is equally true of *buddhi*; it is man's highest faculty and ultimately responsible for whether a man continues to be reborn or is finally released. It is not the Self or *ātman*, which has no responsibilities and is a mere onlooker at the drama of 'works' enacted in this world. *Buddhi* and *ātman* are nevertheless closely interconnected...'

19. The Sanskrit original here is elsewhere translated as 'objects of desire' or 'mazes of desire': see Prabhavananda and Manchester p28.

20. A fair analogy would be the battery of a motor vehicle.

21. Radhakrishnan p623.

22. The translation of these verses speaks of 'he who has understanding' and 'he who has no understanding'. These phrases should not be taken to affirm the presence of the faculty of understanding in certain persons, and its absence in others. The meaning, rather, is that in certain persons — a very small number at any given time — this faculty exists in an awakened, active state, while in the great majority of people it remains dormant. Thus, while everyone has the potential to undergo this awakening of intelligence, very few people do so in practice.

23. By no means every formulation of the concept of mind in Hindu philosophy is expressed in terms of this duality of the lower, analytical mind and the higher mind or intellect. For example, in the following statement by the great modern Indian sage, Ramana Maharshi, mind is described as an organic, undivided entity (Godman p49):

The mind and the ego are one and the same. The other mental faculties such as the intellect and the memory are only this. Mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), the storehouse of mental tendencies (*chittam*), and ego (*ahamkara*); all these are only the one mind itself. This is like different names being given to a man according to his different functions.

It matters little in practice whether the faculties of reason and understanding, on the one hand, and of analytical thought, on the other hand, are regarded as different functions of a single organ of mind (as in the above passage) or as two distinct organs of mind, the higher and the lower (as in the *Katha Upanishad*).

24. *Katha Upanishad* 1.3.9, 11. But this description (or any other) is nothing more than a pointer or a signpost, for the ultimate state cannot be expressed in words or comprehended by the ordinary, lower organ of mind (*manas*).

25. We owe the survival of the prooemium in its entirety to Sextus Empiricus, who preserved it in his work *Against the Mathematicians* 7.111. The translation used in the text is by Kirk and Raven p266-7. I have also consulted translations by Burnet (p172), Barnes (p130-1), Freeman (p41-2) and Waterfield (p56-7).

26. It was an experience, moreover, which Parmenides must have undergone relatively early in his life, for the Goddess welcomes him with the greeting 'O youth'.

27. See text to notes 22 and 24 above.

28. See text to note 5 above.

29. Compare Pindar *Olympian* 6.22-7.

30. Compare Lucretius 1.74.

31. I read verse 3 to mean that this Goddess is the constant inner counsellor or companion of the seeker of Truth. According to Jaeger (p178): 'If we study [Parmenides's proemium], we find that the image of the 'man who knows' travelling towards truth is an essentially religious symbol.... The 'man who knows' is an initiate who is called to watch the mysteries of truth: a symbol of the new knowledge of Being. The road by which he travels .... to his goal is the road of salvation. That philosophical research could be described in the terminology of the mysteries ... is a very significant fact: it shows that philosophy was consciously taking the place of religion. ... It was the consciousness of his high mission which led Parmenides, in the prelude to his poem, to draw the first real picture of a philosopher — the 'man who knows', led by the daughters of light, far from the paths of men, along the hard road to the house of truth'.

32. See Reale p130n6.

33. Verse 29.

34. According to Waterfield p318: 'Homeric and Hesiodic echoes by Parmenides guarantee that he is locating this gateway in the underworld, not towards a transcendent upper realm of light'. This view runs completely counter to the tenor of the proemium. And against it may be cited *Aeneid* 6.124-130 (West p134). In this passage, the prophetess addresses Aeneas: 'Trojan, son of Anchises, sprung from the blood of the gods, it is easy to go down to the underworld. The door of black *Dis* (Pluto) stands open night and day. But to retrace your steps and escape to the upper air, that is the task, that is the labour. Some few have succeeded, sons of the gods, loved and favoured by Jupiter or raised to the heavens by the flame of their own virtue.'

35. McEvilly (p57) holds: 'In terms of the iconographies of goddess religions, the gateway represents the transition between Being and non-Being, or One and Many, the birth gate from which the forms of the Many arise, and at the same time the cosmic drain through which they return to the zero point of pure Being. Poetically, Parmenides's gates, like much else in his poem, seem based on Hesiod's *Theogony* (744ff)'.

36. Verses 11-17.

37. The Goddess herself confirms this later in verse 26: 'It is no ill chance, but Right and Justice, that has sent thee forth to travel'.

38. *Laws* 715e-716b (Saunders p174-5).

39. See also Lami p275n19.

40. See, for example, *Republic* 435e.

41. It is precisely in this feature that justice differs from mercy and compassion. Justice must, however, always be tempered by these qualities.

42. Verses 15-17.

43. Verse 22.

44. Verses 24-27.

45. Verses 28-32.

46. Verses 30-32.

47. See note 17.

48. Verse 29.

49. The theme of roundness resonates with the earlier image of 'well-turned wheels' (in verse 7).

50. Jaeger p176.

51. It is arguable that Jaeger's description of Being as 'boundless' misrepresents Parmenides, who in his poem describes Being as spherical in form and, therefore, limited. It was another Eleatic philosopher, Melissus, who specified that Being is unlimited (See notes 1 and 2).