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Did India Influence Early Greek Philosophies?

In the belief that this intriguing nest of problems needs to be re-examined, I recently spent some months in India, Greece, and the Near East and in libraries in Europe and America. An adequate study of the problems would require years. In this report I offer some impressions which I hesitate to call conclusions, but which may serve at least to state some of the questions. No attempt is made to enumerate the kindly scholars who in all these countries welcomed me and helped me. I would be glad to receive further criticisms and suggestions from anyone who is interested—especially at any point where I may have followed the wrong expert. It should be noted that consideration is here almost entirely confined to philosophers prior to Socrates; the problems of possible Eastern influences on Plato and Aristotle are too involved for brief treatment, and in the Hellenistic period, after the blaze of Alexander, conditions were different from those of the early days.

I

It begins to appear that the older discussions of this question have been either hasty and superficial, based on inadequate knowledge of one or more of the cultures studied, or have been too exclusively philological, based too narrowly upon the available textual evidence. Occasionally a writer exhibits both faults.¹ As regards philology, no one can doubt that it has its indis-

¹Brief mention of earlier works in the field usually includes the very loose comparisons by Sir William Jones, *Works* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1799), Vol. I, pp. 360 ff., and by H. Gladisch, *Die Religion und die Philosophie in ihrer Weltgeschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Breslau: F. Hirt, 1852), and other works. More cautious affirmative opinions were expressed by R. Garbe, *Philosophy of Ancient India* (Chicago: Open Court, 1899), pp. 32 ff., 52 ff. These were countered by the strongly negative opinions of E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, 4th ed. (Leipzig: Fues, R. Riesland, 1870), Vol. I, pp. 28 ff. Zeller has been followed by J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 4th ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), pp. 15 ff. H. G. Rawlinson's *Intercourse between India and the Western World from the Earliest Times to the Fall of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916) is valuable for background, but some statements about Greek philosophies in his paper in the volume edited by G. T. Garratt, *The Legacy of India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), pp. 4 ff., need to be scrutinized. For an extensive bibliography, see E. Zeller, *La filosofia dei Greci*, translated by R. Mondolfo (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1932), Vol. I, Parte 1, pp. 63-99.

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pensable place and value, particularly in attempts to detect a common Aryan, Indo-European, "Indo-German," or Indo-Iranian heritage. For our immediate problem, however, the present state of the textual remains imposes marked limitations. The Indian texts are relatively ample, but it is impossible to date them with sufficient precision. The Greek texts prior to Plato can, with the usual allowances, be dated with some accuracy, but the materials are only fragments. The Iranian texts suffer from both defects—only a fraction is preserved, and some of the important dates are open to much question. The Egyptian texts are relatively ample and also well dated, but usually they are either too early or too late for our purposes.

There remain, too, the formidable linguistic difficulties. Unless someone unearths a whole Alexandrian library, duly equipped with Rosetta stones, the weary work of deciphering and translating a dozen or more languages must go on. With our present knowledge there are many unsolved questions, unsettled controversies, and shifts of opinion. For example, it was once thought that the Indian word for a Greek "*Yavana*"—*Ἰάπων*, "Ionian"—by echoing the digamma, pointed to a time before the use of that letter was discontinued, i.e., as early as the eighth century B.C.² This, however, is now questioned, and other explanations for the term are offered—for instance, that it is a false reconstruction and at all events that it does not always mean "Greek."³

When one thinks of the difficulties, he wonders if, even with Eduard Meyer and a galaxy of contemporary French scholars, the real expert in these things has yet been born. Certain it is that whatever light philology can throw on the problems before us can be considerably enhanced by other considerations.

II

The whole question needs to be considered in a larger setting, the natural setting of geography and history, the setting of human affairs.

Geographically one must recall that in this connection "India" means less and "Greece" means more than modern usage indicates. The former means at most the region of the Indus River or perhaps the western coast of the peninsula; the latter includes the Greek islands and the colonies in Asia Minor, Egypt, Italy, and Sicily. The expression "Oriental influence on Greece" often means only influence from what we now call the Near East.

Between India and the Greek world there were two principal avenues of

² See Rawlinson, *Intercourse between India and the Western World*, p. 20.

³ See A. F. Pauly, G. Wissowa, W. Kroll, *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Buchhandlung, 1916), Vol. IX, col. 1316; C. Lassen, *Indische Altertumskunde* (Leipzig: L. A. Kittler, 1867), Vol. I, p. 1034; P. Meile, in *Mélanges asiatiques de la Société Asiatique* (Paris, 1940–41), fasc. 2, p. 123.

possible communication. One was by water via the Arabian Sea, then by the Persian Gulf or the Red Sea, and eventually by land to the Mediterranean or Aegean. The other route ran overland, through the Iranian plateau and the Mesopotamian river valleys and then by various branchings to different sections of the Mediterranean coast. (Other possibilities via Arabia on the south and the Oxus River and Black Sea on the north are here left out of account.) Any of the routes in ancient times required a long hard journey in the face of forbidding natural conditions. Each was subject to occasional disruptions by war or piracy, but it appears that generally the routes, at least by one makeshift or another, were open. By sea the little ships could hug the coast or, with the use of homing birds, venture occasionally out of sight of the shores. Scylax of Caryandra, at the command of Darius I, about 516 B.C., sailed down the Indus and around to Egypt, a voyage of thirty months.⁴ By land the caravans could plod along, say twenty miles per day, from one halting place to another. When by any means the coast of the Mediterranean was reached, the rest was relatively easy. Greece, with its indented coast line, was naturally adapted for seafaring. The many islands on three sides were like stepping stones and almost like bridges for ancient travelers. One does not need to think of continuous journeys by adventurous individuals, covering thousands of miles and sustained for month after month. Along either route there were settlements where, under ordinary conditions, travelers, bringing with them their ideas, might tarry for considerable intervals before pressing onward.

With or without benefit of such halting places, the numerous traditions that ancient philosophers visited remote regions and either gave or received ideas need to be scrutinized with considerable care. The stories are usually late and are likely to reflect tendencies current in the days of chroniclers or interpreters who were not very careful or critical. At the same time it must be remembered that such journeys were in principle possible and that accounts of them did not seem utterly absurd to the original writers and readers. Even the most incisive criticism I have seen takes a few of the stories seriously.⁵

The most striking of the stories is the one which Eusebius, quoting Aristocles, ascribes to Aristoxenus. The story has it that a certain Indian at Athens, when he asked Socrates about his philosophy and was told that Socrates discussed human life, answered, "How is it possible to be sure about human affairs if one is ignorant of things divine?"⁶ The story is usually dismissed as improbable and apocryphal, motivated by some late criticism,

⁴ Herodotus, iv. 44.

⁵ T. Hopfner, "Orient und Griechische Philosophie," *Der Alte Orient*, Beihefte 4 (1925), 8-27.

⁶ Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica*, xi, 3, 8. The story is criticized by A. J. Festugière in *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, CXXX (1945), 34 ff.

perhaps Pythagorean, of the humanistic Socrates. It raises some complicated questions. In the *First Alcibiades*, Socrates is made to say that he who looks at the divine part of the soul and at things divine will be most likely to know himself.⁷ This passage has been used to support the argument that the *First Alcibiades* is not by Plato,⁸ but is an attempt by a Platonist to restate some Platonic theses and to defend Socrates against the "Indian" criticism by making knowledge of the divine crucial for the proper conduct of human affairs. Critics of the story overlook what might have been its provenance; Aristoxenus is said to have been a friend of one of the youngest followers of Socrates and to have been either a son or a contemporary of Spintharus, who is also said to have known Socrates personally.⁹ As to the authenticity of the story about the Indian, one may perhaps suspend further judgment while considering matters discussed below.

It is true that for a time the Greeks had their superiority complex as regards "barbarians," but the prejudice seems to have developed in the classical period, partly as a reaction to the Persian wars. In the earlier days the young and tentative civilization of Greece must have been powerfully impressed by the much older civilizations around it, by Egypt if not by Babylon. Our traditions have magnified the Greeks, somewhat as they have magnified the Israelites, making them appear culturally more independent than we need to suppose they were or could have been.

The history of Asia Minor throughout millenniums is a bewildering mixture of migrations, invasions, wars, destructions, and butcheries. Viewing it end-on, as we do from our more or less safe distance, one wonders how there was anything left for the archaeologists or historians. Destruction, however, buries as well as burns; the archaeologists have been able to recover far more than might have been expected, and the end is not yet. The more progressive men declare that archaeology is in its infancy. Ancient wars, violent as they were, were cultural catalysts; mercenary troops on one side and enslaved captives on the other helped in the diffusion of ideas. Out of the welter of war occasionally a great empire was formed and, at least for a time, encouragement was given to the arts of peace. Babylon was by no means the boorish monster which some of our literature suggests, and the Lydian Empire from the eighth to the sixth century, as a great intermediary between the Orient and the Occident,¹⁰ was apparently attractive to visitors.

Of prime importance was the Achaemenian Empire, beginning with

⁷ *Alcibiades I* 133c.

⁸ J. Bidez, *Eos* (Brussels: M. Hayez, 1945), pp. 123 ff.

⁹ K. von Fritz, *Pythagorean Politics in Southern Italy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 28.

¹⁰ G. Radet, *La Lydie et le monde grecque* (Paris: Thorin et fils, 1893), p. 270; A. Rey, *La science orientale avant les Grecques* (Paris: A. Michel, 1942), p. 21.

Cyrus I, who captured Sardis in 546 B.C. and Babylon in 539, and continuing until its overthrow by Alexander the Great in 333. In its great days the empire of Darius I and Xerxes stretched from the Indus to the Mediterranean. In the sculptures on the staircase at Persepolis, showing the procession of representatives of more than twenty nations bringing tribute to the Great King, some emissaries wear the tunic of Ionia, some lead the two-humped camel of Bactria, and some the humped bull of India. Except for Marathon and the later battles, the empire might have included Greece itself, as it included the Greek cities of Ionia. Heraclitus lived in the Persian Empire, Xenophanes was born there, and there were Indians in the army of Xerxes.¹¹ The general policy was one of tolerance of local institutions and beliefs, as long as there were no revolts and tribute was duly paid. From earlier times there was a road of sorts from Iran to Sardis; the Achaemenian kings made it the "Royal Road," a great highway for military and commercial purposes with the inevitable by-products and overtones of culture.

The study of commercial relations, particularly as revealed by archaeology, offers some results significant for our problem. There is now widespread agreement that from remote times the ancient nations traded with one another much more than has usually been supposed. We have rated too highly the political and linguistic barriers, which after all were semi-permeable membranes. Among the notable surprises of recent years have been the indications that the Indus Valley civilization of about 2500 B.C. imported some articles from Mesopotamia, and vice versa; objects characteristic of each area have been found in the ruins of the other. In the Aegean copper age, down to about 2400 B.C., there was lively trade in the Cyclades.¹² Crete seems to have been an emporium. In fact, no great city like Nineveh or Babylon or Miletus could have grown up without commerce borne indirectly or directly by land and sea.

A few items of detail are like straws showing various ways in which the trade winds blew. The Chaldeans in the ninth century are said to have had an active trade with India.¹³ In the eighth century, Greek competition forced even the roving Phoenicians from the Mediterranean.¹⁴ Assurbanipal in the seventh century is said to have sent to India for the "wool-bearing tree," which we know as cotton.¹⁵ At about the same time rice was known in Mesopotamia.¹⁶ In that same century Phrygia and Lydia had an extensive

¹¹ Herodotus, vii. 65.

¹² *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed. (1942), Vol. X, p. 754.

¹³ J. Kennedy, "Early Commerce of Babylon with India," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1898), pp. 246 ff.

¹⁴ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed., Vol. X, p. 762.

¹⁵ Rawlinson, *Intercourse between India and the Western World*, pp. 2 ff.

¹⁶ R. C. Thompson in *Iraq*, VI (1939), 182.

trade with the East.¹⁷ In the ruins of Babylon, dating from the sixth century, the excavators found teak wood, presumably from India.¹⁸ An inscription of Darius I, now in the Louvre, says that he brought wood from the Hindu Kush region and ivory from Abyssinia and India. Ships of Darius are said to have sailed from the Nile through the Red Sea to Iran.¹⁹ A marble torso, unmistakably Greek, was found at Persepolis and is now in the Teheran Museum.

By this time Egypt, which for centuries had been closed to foreigners, had so far modified its policy as to invite the Greeks to make a settlement in the Nile Delta. The important trading center Naucratis, significantly enough, was a colony of Miletus. It continued to flourish until about 520 B.C., with temples to the Greek gods showing that life there was not without its intangibles.²⁰ Herodotus says that from Naucratis the Greeks were transferred to Memphis.²¹ From the fourth century there was a temple of Isis in the Peiraeus.²² Faure says that from 620 to 525 the Greeks could go to India freely.²³

An indication of widespread Greek commerce appears in the work of Sir Leonard Wooley at Al Mina in northern Syria. Here was a commercial port with the remains of buildings so stocked with Greek pottery that the inference is that they were warehouses. The dates assigned to the pottery indicate, too, that the trade between Greece and the East continued right through the period of the Persian wars.²⁴ Rice was known in Greece in the time of Sophocles;²⁵ perhaps pepper and mustard, too, were on Greek tables in the fifth century.²⁶

Except for pottery and its fragments, the physical remains of such commerce are scanty. Doubtless much, and perhaps most, traffic was in perishable goods such as food products, wines, and textiles. In one notable respect the potsherds themselves give indications of cultural influences from the East; this, about 700 B.C., is the shift in Greece from the early geometrical type of decoration to the more mobile "orientalized" designs, with freer delineation

¹⁷ M. Rostovtzev, *History of the Ancient World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), Vol. I, p. 193.

¹⁸ De Lacy O'Leary, *How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1948), p. 97. Cf. J. Horrell, "Sea Trade in Early Times," *Antiquity*, XV (1941), 248.

¹⁹ W. W. Hyde, *Ancient Greek Mariners* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 176.

²⁰ H. G. Rawlinson, *History of Ancient Egypt* (Boston: Cassino, Estes and Lauriat, 1882), Vol. II, pp. 480 ff.

²¹ Herodotus, ii. 154; but cf. D. H. Gordon, "The Buddhist Origins of the 'Sumerian' Heads from Memphis," *Iraq*, VI (1939), 37.

²² P. Foucart, *Les mystères d'Eleusis* (Paris: A. Picard, 1914), p. 17.

²³ J. A. Faure, *L'Égypte et les présocratiques* (Paris: Stock, 1923), p. 21.

²⁴ C. L. Wooley, "Excavations at Al Mina," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, LVIII (1938), 13, 22.

²⁵ Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

²⁶ W. W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), pp. 365, 370.

of animal and human figures.²⁷ It has been suggested that the new designs were adapted from imported textiles which are now lost.

To trace commerce between ancient nations one need not depend altogether on material culture laid bare in archaeology; the numerous instances known in comparative philology in which foreign words for various articles crop out in language after language indicate that the articles thus named came with the words. No attempt can be made here to go into the details and the controversies, but sometime some superphilologist should bring together into one picture the words which in one or another of the various languages stand, for example, for almonds, aloes, apes, beryll, camphor, carpets, cassia, chicory, ginger, ivory, myrrh, pepper, rice, tin, and other things. A special case appears in the word for a kind of woolen mantle.²⁸

Beyond the data of archaeology and philology alike, one must admit that various articles of merchandise, with or without documents, are often not lacking in suggestion and may well come trailing ideas with them. We may always doubt if highly developed theories about the world are accurately transmitted by untrained men along the trade routes, but stories, legends, and myths pass current everywhere; Scythian nomads, Phoenician sailors (from the nation which invented the alphabet), camel drivers, and peasants of all lands and times have had a kind of gift of tongues. Garbled ideas and rudimentary suggestions easily slip through to find lodgment in minds capable of developing them.

III

It is understood that India, Iran, and Greece had a common heritage from Aryan days, although just what the heritage was and how it came to them are difficult questions. At all events we may infer that somewhere back in human prehistory there was a primeval stage in which the cosmos was regarded as vaguely alive and as more or less similar to man's body, or consciousness, or mind, or thought, or word, or right action. Instead of mere projections, the gods of polytheism may have been so many crystallizations, alternately formed and dissolved within such a matrix. The gods are regarded as being, or being like, natural objects and processes, and sooner or later as being, or being like, animals, fertility figures, food substances or symbols, ancestors, and heroes. Sometimes they embody or reflect ethical ideals or what later become logical principles. When the curtain begins to rise for us, the Aryan traditions seem to exhibit some of these characteristics. The

²⁷ J. D. Beazley and D. S. Robertson in *Cambridge Ancient History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), Vol. IV, pp. 582 ff.

²⁸ J. Przyluski, "L'Influence d'Iran en Grèce et dans l'Inde," *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles*, XXXVII (1932), 284.

heritage in East and West is plainest in the name of the sky god Dyaus Pitar = Zeus Patēr = Jupiter; there are a few other indications of common ancestral culture and institutions. For our problems these data may work either way—on the one hand, making later cultural transmissions easier, and, on the other hand, making them unnecessary. It is easier to discern common elements for the Indo-Iranian group than for the less closely related Indo-European family as a whole. It begins to be clear that the Indians and Iranians had in common, for example, the gods Mitra and Yama, the use of the sacred plant haoma, or soma, and some duality between right (*ṛta*, *arta*) and wrong (*druh*, *druj*).²⁹ Dumézil's detection of a common societal structure reflected in various mythologies applies to India and Iran, although it is more evident in Rome than in Greece before the time of Plato.³⁰

IV

In such a quest as this, one must follow various trails, not all of which yield appreciable return. For instance, the law codes of ancient peoples exhibit countless similarities, but it is a question whether much is to be gained here by comparisons. In any early society there are only about so many rules to observe and only about so many crimes which mark infractions of the rules. It is not strange if many or all primitive peoples arrive at pretty much the same standards. Only an occasional peculiarity need be noticed—for a well-known example, the fact that the Buddhists, Pythagoreans, and Empedocles³¹ all forbade the eating of beans.

Efforts to show that the styles of early architecture and sculpture of India, Iran, Assyria, Egypt, and Greece are variously intertwined may offer some suggestions for our study, but now seem to yield little indication of possible communication. Somebody had to learn to substitute stone columns for tree trunks in support of a roof, and perhaps some Greek first saw the device in Egypt or elsewhere. Egypt's techniques of stonework may have helped the Greeks,³² and elements of ornamentation may well have been adopted from other cultures. But the flutings of a column or the volutes of a capital, even if they could speak with Ionic clarity, might not convey any great ideas. The famous Gandhāra sculptures, with their Greek or Roman influence, are by several centuries too recent for our study.

It is plausible to suppose that the traditions of ancient Indian medicine,

²⁹ J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Zoroastre* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie, 1948), pp. 62 ff.

³⁰ See G. Dumézil, *L'héritage indo-européen à Rome* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).

³¹ H. Diels, ed. W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. (Berlin: Wiedmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1951), Vol. I, p. 368, Empedocles B 141. Diels's fragments are hereafter cited by authors' names, with letters and numbers.

³² See H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 308.

older than the extant texts, were of some influence on Greek medicine.³³ As to other branches of science, it appears that in ancient India, much more than in Greece, cosmology was an accessory of religious rituals. We shall see that a few ideas, like those of the elements and the microcosm, may have been detached and exported, but the lines are now either lost or crossed and cannot be clearly traced.

Whatever may have been the case as regards Greek philosophies, there is no doubt of foreign influences on the Greek religion or religions. It is an old tradition that the names for the Greek gods came from foreign sources,³⁴ and the mysteries of Eleusis appear at this distance to have been an amalgam of old cults from the north, east, and south.³⁵ The Aristotelian interpretation of the pre-Socratics did not do justice to their religious interests.³⁶ In all these countries the religions are so closely related to the philosophies that we leave them for consideration below.

Also closely related to the philosophies are the works of the poets. No Indian or Iranian secular poet is early enough or well enough known to be of help to us, and most of the early poets of Ionia and the Cyclades, although they may well have traveled as they sang, add little or nothing unusual to our ideas.

Above all Greek poets, however, and whether or not he was "synthetic," towers the figure we know as Homer. Some of him, at least, appears to have come either from Smyrna or from Chios, on or just off the Ionian coast. He seems to have known little of any region outside Ionia, but he knew tin and other merchandise by Sanskrit names.³⁷ His "Eastern Ethiopians" may have been Indians.³⁸ In his poems there are strands older than the brilliant Olympians; some of them seem to reach back to Indo-European days. His *φύσις*, according to Cornford, is a material continuum, alive and divine, identical with the primitive substance out of which the divinities of Greek religion took shape.³⁹ Hack finds that the Homeric divine powers are not necessarily anthropomorphic or personal. Fear, terror, war, strife, prayer, the Graces, rumor, and justice appear as divinities. The name "Zeus" is used in several senses, with different degrees and shades of meaning. The

³³ J. Filliozat, "Le sommeil et les rêves selon les médecins indiens et les physiologues grecs," *Journal de psychologie*, XL (1947), 338, 346. Cf. E. Benveniste, "La doctrine médicale des indoeuropéens," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, CXXX (1945), 5 ff.

³⁴ Herodotus, ii. 43, 49, 50; Foucart, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, Chap. IX.

³⁶ H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of the Pre-Socratic Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1935), p. 374; W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947). The latter work is hereafter cited as *Theology*.

³⁷ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed., Vol. XII, p. 185. See R. M. Cook, "Ionia and Greece in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, LXVI (1946), 86.

³⁸ *Odyssey* i. 23 ff.; Rawlinson, *Intercourse between India and the Western World*, pp. 18 ff.

³⁹ F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy* (London: E. Arnold, 1912), pp. x, 134.

reservoir of divine power may manifest itself as impersonal Moira or as personal deities.⁴⁰ All this serves to recall the incomplete personifications of the *Rg Veda*; there also, in the dawn the gods are forming. In Hinduism to this day the various deities are manifestations of the one *Brahman*, and the word "*Brahman*," like the Greek word *φύσις*, stems from a root meaning "to grow."⁴¹ Jaeger says that in Homer there is a deep sense of harmony between man and nature; one great rhythm penetrates the moving whole.⁴²

Hesiod's father was from Cyme in Asia Minor; he himself lived in Boeotia, never far from the sea which framed the islands and on its other side washed the Asian coast. His fragments mention the Nile, Nineveh, the Scythians, and the Ethiopians.⁴³ No one supposes that Hesiod's gloomy outlook reflects anything Oriental; oppression and poverty, particularly for peasants, are everywhere, and may even suggest contrasts between contemporary and past history. Enumerations and gradations of ages of history, however, are more significant; Hesiod has five, while India and Iran stop with four.⁴⁴

As in the *Rg Veda* and the Homeric poems, Hesiod's theogony is peopled in part with shadowy abstractions, many of them certainly pre-Hellenic.⁴⁵ His gods arose from the elements⁴⁶; he could see divine personalities in physical forces.⁴⁷ From the confused medley of myth he brought together into something like a system the old stories of gods and goddesses, with their numerous offspring and battles. It is not clear that his Cronus, the son who rebelled against Zeus, was Chronos, Time⁴⁸; it is somewhat more likely that Chronos as Time appears in the Greek world in the work of Pherecydes. Cornford detects in Hesiod the conviction of a magical sympathy between man and nature⁴⁹—something which at about this time was being ritualized and exaggerated in the Hindu Brāhmaṇas, but no one supposes that there was any connection.

Along with the poets, some of the "seven sages" should be examined. When we stop to look at it, Solon's "Know thyself" stands out rather strangely against the older Greek interest in myths, on the one hand, and

⁴⁰ R. K. Hack, *God in Greek Philosophy to the Time of Socrates* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931), pp. 6, 8, 10, 13, 35.

⁴¹ See S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 163, n. 1.

⁴² W. Jaeger, *Paideia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), Vol. I, p. 50.

⁴³ Cook, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁴ R. Reitzenstein and H. Schaefer, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland*, Studien der Bibliothek Warburg, Vol. VII (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1926), p. 65.

⁴⁵ *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 670.

⁴⁶ Cornford, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁴⁷ Jaeger, *Theology*, p. 12.

⁴⁸ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1910), Vol. XXIV, p. 231; Jaeger, *Theology*, pp. 68, 220, n. 62.

⁴⁹ Cornford, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

the newer interest in nature, on the other. Is the great maxim to be understood in the light of the age-long Indian emphasis on the inner life? Did Solon, even if he did not see Croesus at Sardis, make contact there or elsewhere with some vagrant tradition from India?

Pherecydes, from the island of Syros, was a contemporary of Thales and lived at Athens. Like Thales, he is credited with the view that the first principle of everything is water,⁵⁰ but to a greater degree than Thales he is still within the age of myth. In his theogony, Time (Chronos), along with Zas (Zeus) and Chthonie (Gē, Earth), existed always.⁵¹ Damascius in the sixth century A.D. reports that Pherecydes made Time the parent of fire, earth, and water; from such elements various gods originated and were distributed in a five-chambered world.⁵²

These and other passages may point in various directions. Egypt, at least at a later date, correlated the elements and the gods.⁵³ The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* has a detailed description of a five-fold world.⁵⁴ In Iran, five elements were thought of as united in Zarvan, or Time,⁵⁵ although, again, the Iranian doctrine may be later. In Pherecydes, too, the notions of Time are not consistent; a fragment which comes from Celsus via Origen makes Chronos the leader of an army in an old war between gods or titans.⁵⁶

At his wedding with Chthonie, says Pherecydes, Zeus presents her with a robe which he has woven. The robe is presumably the phenomenal appearance of things. In the same fragment there is also an obscure reference to an allegory of a winged oak on which the embroidered robe was hung.⁵⁷ Freeman thinks that Pherecydes' mention of titans and the robe shows the influence of Orphism,⁵⁸ which is traditionally more or less associated with his career.

Diels's third fragment comes from Proclus, perhaps a thousand years after Pherecydes; if it is authentic it contains the germs of several doctrines which made later philosophers famous. It says that Zeus, when about to create, changed into Eros, because by combining the cosmos out of opposites he brought it into harmony and love, and sowed likeness in all and unity extending through all things. This is hardly an Iranian dualism, although it is an instance of the widespread doctrines concerning opposites which appear in the Greek world, perhaps about the time of Zoroaster. On the other hand,

⁵⁰ Diels, Pherecydes B 1a.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, B 1.

⁵² *Ibid.*, A 8.

⁵³ Reitzenstein and Schaeder, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁵⁴ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* II. 2-7.

⁵⁵ Wilhelm Nestle, *Griechische Weltanschauung in ihrer Bedeutung für die Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Heinrich F. C. Hannsman, 1946), p. 81.

⁵⁶ Diels, B 4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, B 2.

⁵⁸ K. Freeman, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), pp. 39 ff.

if it is authentic, it shows that later pre-Socratics did not need to look outside the Greek heritage for suggestions of some of their cardinal teachings.

Hesiod and Pherecydes are on the threshold between mythology and philosophy. Shadowy figures float in their world, a world which is as yet hardly analyzed but is beginning to be anatomized. And there is a trace of empirical caution—if, as Diogenes tells us, Pherecydes in his "Letter to Thales" really wrote that he did not claim to have arrived at the truth.

It is often held that Oriental influences on Greece are to be seen in the doctrines and practices of the Orphics; the usual argument is that Orphism is so "non-Greek" that it must have come from outside, and that it has so many features in common with Oriental faiths and cults that it must have come from that direction.⁵⁹ Probably it came well before the sixth century B.C., bringing its theogonic myths and mystery cult into Greece and blending with myths and mysteries already there. It can be traced back with some confidence to the forests of Thrace and from there, allowing for modifications, eastward as far as Phrygia. In both places it was coarse and orgiastic. The Greeks apparently refined it, abandoning its more gruesome features, for a time retaining its primitive theogonies, and always keeping something of its enthusiasms for union with the deity and hope of life after death. It appears to have been developed by Onomacritus at Athens around the year 500 and in the broader Greek world to have influenced Pythagoras in South Italy. Orphism and Pythagoreanism shade into each other; some of the refinement of the former is what we know as the latter.

A major question involving all these cultures and a number of individual philosophers concerns the origin of the beliefs in reincarnation or metempsychosis. There are traditions, arguments, and often adherents for almost any theory⁶⁰—so many that there is not as much support as one might expect for the view that India influenced Greece.

Knowledge of India in the Greek world of the period appears to have been scanty and faulty. Hecateus of Miletus mentioned the Indus, the Indi, and the Gandarii.⁶¹ Herodotus was more concerned with the Egyptians and the Persians, whom he had visited, than with the Indians, whom he regarded as living away to the East at the extreme bounds of human habitation, next to the great desert. For some of his information about them he depended on what the Persians said; he may also have used the work of Scylax. He called India the most populous satrapy of the Persian Empire. He reported

⁵⁹ On the resemblances, see S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), pp. 135 ff.

⁶⁰ For various opinions, see, e.g., F. Cumont, *Lux perpetua* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1949), pp. 408 ff.; E. Rohde, *Psyche* (London: Kegan Paul, 1925), p. 346; Jaeger, *Theology*, p. 84; Cornford in *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. IV, p. 535.

⁶¹ Rawlinson, *Intercourse between India and the Western World*, p. 19.

that some of the Indians were nomads and some were vegetarians, that they had a hot climate and wore cotton garments. But he also told the tale about ant-gold and made the famous mistake of calling Mitra a goddess.⁶² Ctesias, the physician to Artaxerxes Memnon, accompanied him on his expedition against Cyrus the Younger in 401. In his *Persica* he presented some fantastic stories about India, evidently based on what the Persians told him. Xenophon noted that Cyrus ruled over India, whose king was very wealthy; the Persians once sent for the king to arbitrate a dispute. Xenophon's most notable statement is that the Chaldean mercenaries were frequently employed by India,⁶³ but his work is not renowned for accuracy.

V

In the histories, if not the history, of Western philosophy the three Milesians lead off. They come too early for the Achaemenian Empire, but belong in the great days of Miletus, after the Egyptian Pharaoh had allowed the city to found Naucratis in the delta as a commercial center for the Greeks. It is thus easy to credit the tradition that Thales learned geometry from the Egyptians, who had developed their land measurements as a result of experiences with the errant Nile,⁶⁴ although Thales, as a Greek, would naturally go on to more theoretical generalizations. If he predicted the eclipse of 585,⁶⁵ he almost certainly had access to records of Babylonian observations; as a Greek, too, he would be likely to generalize the Babylonian ideas about numbers. The traditional interpretation of his teaching about water calls it a "principle," forgetting that Thales is hardly out of the age of myth. In Egypt the god Rā comes from *Noun*,⁶⁶ the primordial abyss, and the symbol for this is accompanied by the broken or wavy lines indicating water.⁶⁷ In Mesopotamia water is regarded as primordial and the gods are descended from it.⁶⁸ Either or both of these myths could have been familiar to Thales, and served better than the lodestone to account for his dictum that all things are full of gods. Such myths, however, are not confined to these neighbors of Miletus. The awe-filling hymn *Rg Veda* X. 129 asks whether at the beginning of things, when the gods did not yet exist, all was deep unfathomable water. Several passages in the Upaniṣads continue the tradition.⁶⁹ The *Iliad* and the Book of Genesis carry traces of the

⁶² Herodotus, i. 131; iii. 94–106.

⁶³ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* i. 1. 4; ii. 4. 8; iii. 2. 25–27; viii. 6. 21.

⁶⁴ Herodotus, ii. 109.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, i. 74.

⁶⁶ Faure, *op. cit.*, pp. 62, 146.

⁶⁷ E. Amélineau, "La cosmogonie de Thales et les doctrines de l'Égypte," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, LXII (1910): 18, 23.

⁶⁸ See *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14th ed., Vol. II, pp. 860 ff.

⁶⁹ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* V. v. 1; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VII. x. 1; *Aitareya Upaniṣad* I. i. 3;

view,⁷⁰ and, as we said, it is ascribed to Thales' contemporary Pherecydes. All this makes any theory of specific derivation arbitrary; Thales' theory about primordial water could have come, not merely from the Meander, but from the Nile, the Euphrates, or even the Indus.

Anaximander lived in the sixth century, the century in which some authorities date Zoroaster. In the fragments a cosmic duality of opposites becomes more pronounced than in Pherecydes, but it is hardly Zoroastrian; according to Anaximander, both members are punished and give satisfaction, and the characteristics indicated (hot and cold, moist and dry) are not the Zoroastrian light and darkness. The punishment and satisfaction proceed according to the decree of Time, but we cannot be sure that the Iranian doctrine of Zarvan goes back to the days of Zoroaster. It would seem, however, that a suggestion of duality coming from somewhere was beginning to be developed with Greek variations on the theme. Influence does not mean mere imitation. The Greeks, to be Greeks, must have shown originality, but no one but an extremist needs to suppose that in their world, particularly at Miletus, they were entirely original.

Curiously enough, in Anaximander's fragments there seems to be closer resemblance to Indian than to Iranian thought. The "unlimited"—which is not to be thought of as an undifferentiated mass, or as mere emptiness, but as a matrix of everything — is eternal and ageless and encompasses (περιέχειν, A 11) all the worlds. In the *Rg Veda*, among many other views, we find that Aditi, the unbounded, unlimited, is the matrix from which all the gods and all the world originate.⁷¹ In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Jana regards *Ātman* as *ākāśa*, the boundless sky, but there are several alternative views, including those that *Ātman* is water, wind, and earth.⁷² If, as Jaeger maintains, Anaximander spoke of his first principle as "divine,"⁷³ the resemblance to Indian thought is still closer.

In other fragments there is the unmistakable Greek characteristic, almost or actually the beginning of that open-eyed observation of nature which gave the Milesians the name of naturalists.

In the case of Anaximenes, Fragment B 2 calls for special attention—"Just as our soul which is air holds us together (συγκρατεῖ), so breath and air encompass the whole world." Breath and wind (Vāyu), if not air, have

Kātha Upaniṣad IV. 6. R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), pp. 151, 256, 294, 354. The Upaniṣads from this volume are hereafter cited by names and textual references.

⁷⁰ *Iliad* XIV. 201, 246; Genesis 1: 2.

⁷¹ *Rg Veda* I. 89. 10. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 82, says that Aditi corresponds to Anaximander's infinite.

⁷² *Chāndogya* V. xiv. 1; xvi. 1; xvii. 1.

⁷³ Jaeger, *Theology*, p. 71. A close reading of Aristotle, *Physica*, 203b 13 ff., may not support this interpretation.

been associated in Indian thought ever since the *Puruṣa Sūkta*.⁷⁴ The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* has, among its other hypotheses, the view that *Ātman* is wind; another of its passages compares the macrocosmic wind to the microcosmic breath.⁷⁵ In the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* the cosmic powers are declared to be revertible into wind, and an individual's powers revertible into breath.⁷⁶ Anaximenes may also be set in striking parallel with the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*—"As all the spokes are held together in the hub and felly of a wheel, so in this soul all things . . . all breathing things are held together." If the Greek *συγκρατεῖ* is translated "constrains," another parallel appears: in the *Upaniṣad* the thread by which all things, including the limbs of a body, are tied together is said to be wind, which in Hindu fashion is identified with the "Inner Controller."⁷⁷ Ruben declares that before the time of Anaximenes seven men in India had expressed an idea similar to that of the fragment.⁷⁸

We must not expect too much clarity or consistency from these stray fragments; too many pieces of the picture puzzle are lost. On the other hand, we must not make of Miletus either a cultural island or a miracle. Some of the pieces begin to indicate broader horizons.

It is customary to consider Pythagoras after the Milesians and before Heraclitus, although uncertainties about the sources, dates, and content of the Pythagorean teachings—reminiscent of some of the uncertainties in Indian philosophy—make any placement open to some question. It is best not to attempt to distinguish the so-called teachings of Pythagoras from those of the Pythagoreans. We assume that there was a long development from early stages in South Italy under Orphic influence, through more rational and theoretical interests, especially with Philolaus and other Pythagoreans of Plato's time, to Plato and later writers.

Pythagoras of Samos apparently went to Crotona and, influenced by Orphism there, founded a community which, as might have been expected of Greeks, became more interested than were the myth-loving Orphics in problems of government, mathematics, and philosophy. The community influenced Empedocles of Agrigentum and perhaps Parmenides of Elea. After the colony was driven from Crotona because of too much interest in government, the successors in Greece developed other interests, concentrating on theoretical problems, developing their famous theories of numbers, and on the religious side more or less amalgamating with the local mysteries. Toward the end of the fifth century their teachings attracted Philolaus and Plato.

⁷⁴ *Rg Veda* X. 90. 13.

⁷⁵ *Chāndogya* IV. iii. 1–3.

⁷⁶ *Kauṣītaki* II. 12–13.

⁷⁷ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* II. v. 15; III. vii. 1–3.

⁷⁸ W. Ruben, *Die Philosophie der Upanishaden* (Bern: A Francke, 1947), p. 168.

Orphism and Pythagoreanism are intertwined; by and large, however, Orphism is a myth-loving religion, while Pythagoreanism is a religious metaphysics. There is good room for the thesis that whatever Orientalism is found among the Pythagoreans is second-hand and has come from the Orphic side. This may account for the doctrine of metempsychosis, said to have been taught by Pythagoras, without making him journey to India to get it. The theory of the five elements, attributed to Philolaus, could have been an adaptation from Pherecydes.

The Pythagoreans had a list of ten pairs of cosmological opposites, but "light and darkness," which might suggest Zoroastrian influence, is only one of the ten pairs, the eighth on the list.⁷⁹ This is a marked reduction in rank, but we must not overlook the fact that here, also, opposition has somehow become important. The Pythagoreans emphasized opposites in their fantastic speculations about odd and even numbers, the "limited" and the "unlimited," and the "indeterminate dyad."⁸⁰ Plato's doctrine of ideas, elaborated under Pythagorean influence, shows that in his time the process of abstraction was used without being understood. Apparently it was not understood by the Pythagoreans either, and they were still more at sea in dealing with numbers which, as classes of classes, involve abstractions of a second or higher order. Attempts to connect the Pythagorean theories about numbers with the Sāṃkhya enumeration of the constituents of the world reflect a confusion, one might say, between cardinal and ordinal numbers. Such attempts are farfetched—or, rather, their data could hardly have been fetched so far.

From Heraclitus many traditions have been recovered and judged worthy to be called fragments. His dates are roughly from 540 to 475; he lived at Ephesus, in the Persian Empire, and lived through the Ionian revolt, in which neighboring Miletus was ruthlessly destroyed. It has sometimes been held that his description of the primary reality as fire and his emphasis on opposition may have been due to Persian influences, but the differences are so great that any transmission could hardly have been more than a suggestion.

His oft-noted obscurity reminds one of the *sūtras* of the six Hindu systems; one could wish for Heraclitus a similar fullness and continuity among the commentators. Reminiscent of India, too, is his method; he sought in himself and found the soul very deep.⁸¹ Like a Greek, however, he honors most those things which he can learn by sight and hearing, although he is cautiously critical of both.⁸²

⁷⁹ See Freeman, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 222, 230; Plato, *Philebus* 25d, 26d; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1081a 15, 1085b 7.

⁸¹ Diels, Heraclitus B 45, 101.

⁸² *Ibid.*, B 46, 55, 101a, 107.

We can make the fragments consistent only by assuming that the imagery shifts, as it often does in Indian texts. First, there is the fact of change, universal flux; Heraclitus was a younger contemporary of Buddha, who taught that all the constituents of being are transitory.⁸³ Into the same rivers we step and do not step; in this respect, and in a way, then, we are, and are not.⁸⁴ So, any one tendency or property entails its opposite. Opposition is characteristic and essential. But for all the opposition there is a reciprocal change, a harmony, an encompassing unity; the universe always was, and is, and ever shall be, an ever-living fire, in which there are "fixed measures" kindling and dying out.⁸⁵

The chief expression of this encompassing unity is the *logos*. It is not the only expression, however, and the word is used in different senses. Sometimes it is the general characteristic or property of things, according to which everything happens—in the non-psychological sense, the "reason" things are as they are—although it is not recognized by men.⁸⁶ Again, it is the sense or reasonableness common to all men, by which all ought to live.⁸⁷ Once it seems to be a superficial feature or effect of current events—"a foolish man is wont to be in a flutter at every *logos*."⁸⁸ And once it marks the character of the developing or growing soul.⁸⁹ There is no suggestion, as in Babylonian and Egyptian traditions, that the "word" is the expression or command of a divinity, and no echo of the Vedic "voice" (*vac*).⁹⁰ Any connection of the *logos* of B 72 with human speech of B 73 is hardly significant.

In several fragments the general regulation of the world is indicated by words other than λόγος—we find νόμος, μέτρα, γνώμην, and the still more puzzling σοφόν or τὸ σοφόν.⁹¹

In B 41 the latter expression is often translated as "wisdom" and interpreted as implying human understanding, but in B 112 the word for human wisdom is σοφίη, and B 32 indicates that τὸ σοφόν is more than human, a cosmic principle "willing and unwilling to be called Zeus"—i.e., sometimes interpretable in personal and again in impersonal terms. B 108 indicates that although men do not understand σοφόν it is a thing apart. B 78 declares that the human "ethos" does not have γνώμας but that the divine does. Can τὸ σοφόν in B 41, then, refer not to human wisdom, but to a

⁸³ See H. C. Warren, *Buddhism in Translations* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1896), p. 109.

⁸⁴ B 49a.

⁸⁵ B 8, 30, 76, 111, 126.

⁸⁶ B 1, 72.

⁸⁷ B 2.

⁸⁸ B 87.

⁸⁹ B 115.

⁹⁰ Cf. W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), pp. 145 ff.; J. H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), p. 37; *Rg Veda* X. 125.

⁹¹ B 30, 41, 108, 114.

cosmic principle which is *one*? The more usual interpretation would accommodate the infinitive, "to know," but, if there is no other explanation, perhaps the quotation, quite likely misunderstood, was garbled by Diogenes.⁹² At all events, the One Wise cosmic principle could hardly have been an unfamiliar concept in the empire which venerated Ahura Mazda, the "*Wise Lord*," and τὸ σοφόν, regarded as cosmic and transcendent, now personal and now impersonal, is surprisingly similar to the Hindu *Brahman*, with its quasi-personal attributes.

The word αἰών in B 52 is sometimes held to reflect an Orphic influence, but it can be translated merely as an "age" and set in a Heraclitean contrast with a child—as if he had said that a thousand years are a day.

Xenophanes of Colophon, near Ephesus and Miletus, lived at the time of the Persian Empire, but is said to have left Asia because of hostility to it. His denial of anthropomorphic polytheism leads him not so much to a monotheism as to a monism. There is one God, but the one God is not like mortals in form (δέμας) or thought. God sees as a whole, thinks as a whole, hears as a whole.⁹³ One of the oldest Upaniṣads puts it the other way round: when breathing, *Brahman* becomes breath by name; when seeing, the eye; when hearing, the ear; when thinking, the mind.⁹⁴ Without toil, says Xenophanes, he sets everything in motion by the power of his mind; in the *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, the One *Ātman* bethought himself and created the worlds.⁹⁵ God always remains in the same place, says Xenophanes. The *Īśā Upaniṣad* is more paradoxical—*Brahman* "goes, standing"; it moves and does not move at the same time.⁹⁶

Xenophanes sees that men cannot have certain knowledge of these things.⁹⁷ In the *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, the difficulty is more precisely located: "Where knowledge is of a dual nature there one hears, sees . . . the soul knows everything. Where knowledge is not of a dual nature, what is that? It is impossible to say."⁹⁸ Monism, when it tries to be explicit or descriptive, always leads to problems and paradoxes; it is not strange that the Greek and the Indian, though coming at monism from different angles, encounter the same difficulties. It is plausible to say that Xenophanes, in his own Greek way, was trying to develop a suggestion or two which had come from the insights of India.

The name of Parmenides is associated with Elea, in southern Italy, but

⁹² Diogenes Laertius, ix. 1.

⁹³ Diels, Xenophanes B 23, 24.

⁹⁴ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* I. iv. 7.

⁹⁵ B 25; *Aitareya* I. 1.

⁹⁶ B 26; *Īśā Upaniṣad* IV. 5.

⁹⁷ B 34, 35.

⁹⁸ *Maitrī Upaniṣad* VI. 7 *fin.*

that fact by no means excludes him from the Greek world. The sea in those days, for men and for ideas, was as much a highway as a barrier. His poem, like the *Iliad*, opens with an invocation to a goddess who, as a Greek goddess should, tells him to submit what she says to the judgment of reason.⁹⁹ The major division of the poem into two parts puts into high relief the distinction between true knowledge obtained by reason, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, opinion based on the senses. Heraclitus and, in effect, Xenophanes had already questioned the latter. Did the great ideas of Parmenides have any precursors? We may, indeed, look to Xenophanes, but there are differences which lead us to look beyond him, to the East.

To formulate the problem (to say nothing of solving it) at least six textual and linguistic questions must be examined. All of them center around Fragment B 3, with the disputed translation which has sometimes made it say, "One and the same are thinking and being." If this translation is to stand, we have what looks like a metaphysical idealism. Let us call this, for short, the "metaphysical interpretation."

The first question is whether Fragment B 3 can be separated from B 2, especially line 2, where the goddess reveals the only ways of investigation which are to be thought of. The next line is difficult to render literally—"the how it is and that [conjunction] (what) is not (is) not to be"—but the purport is plain enough. Reason is to be concerned with what exists, with what is real, with being, not with what does not exist, with what is not real, or with "not-being." When B 3 is read in connection with this, one must make it mean, in effect, that our thinking corresponds to reality but does not go beyond it. This we will call, for short, the "epistemological interpretation"—an interpretation which hardly fits B 2 if B 2 is to stand alone. Do the two fragments belong together? Apparently they must, if Parmenides is to be made consistent. Simplicius in the sixth century A.D. combines them, but they occur separately in older sources—as Diels indicates, B 2 in Proclus and B 3 in Plotinus.

The next question concerns the precise meaning of the verb *voeîn*. A careful study by von Fritz indicates that *voeîn* means to become aware of an object and identify it as the thing that it is.¹⁰⁰ This is cited in favor of the epistemological interpretation, but if all that the verb implies is a realistic epistemology, a realistic epistemology can serve an objective idealism. And if reason is to be applied to a monistic idealism, the ultimate identity must involve a proximate identification of its object.

A further question is whether the infinitive *voeîn* in B 3 can be made the

⁹⁹ Diels, *Parmenides* B 7, line 5.

¹⁰⁰ See Jaeger, *Theology*, p. 103 and nn.

subject of the verb *ἐστίν*. Here the doctors disagree. Burnet says No: *νοεῖν* must be rendered as if it were a dative, "for thinking," and similarly *εἶναι* must be rendered "for being."¹⁰¹ This would make the fragment mean that what can be thought and what is are one and the same, thus agreeing with B 2 in supporting the epistemological interpretation. But Hack says that Gildersleeve in his *Syntax of Classical Greek* gives thirty-three examples, from Homer on, in which an infinitive without the article is used as subject.¹⁰² This in turn is questioned by Burnet on the ground that *νοεῖν* is not an articular infinitive.¹⁰³ Hack is concerned to show that Parmenides means, not that not-being cannot be thought of—we are thinking of it right here and now—but that it cannot be treated as reality. This is a variant of the epistemological interpretation. It is not what B 3, taken alone, says, but the view that not-being *can* be thought of appears to be supported by the plural *ὁδοὶ μούναί* in B 2, line 2, and by the *τε καὶ* of line 3.

A fourth question gets down to accents.¹⁰⁴ Should the *ἐστιν* in B 3 be read *ἐστίν* or *ἔστιν*? If, with Diels, we read the former, as Clement and Plotinus did, being is identical with thinking, and we have the metaphysical interpretation. If we read the latter, as Zeller and Burnet did, then we may say, "That which it is *possible* to think and that which is are one and the same," and we have the epistemological interpretation. The point is that when *ἐστιν* denotes existence or possibility the accent is on the first syllable,¹⁰⁵ but the rule, by the book, says *existence* or possibility, so the metaphysical interpretation is not quite eliminated. It is not necessary to translate the *ἔστι . . . ἔστιν* of B 6, lines 1 and 2, as "it is possible"; the passage is better read as referring to existence—"Being is and not-being (*μηδὲν*) is not." The *ἔστιν . . . ἔστι* of B 2, line 3, if the accents are to be placed on the first syllable, can, like the *ἐστι* of line 4, be read in this same way.

The fifth question is, again, one of collating fragments. What is the relation, if any, between B 3 and B 8, line 34? Simplicius has apparently taken them to be consistent. In B 8, line 34, we find again the troublesome words *τ(αὐτὸν)*, *ἐστὶ*, *ἔστι*, and *νοεῖν*; in the two forms of the verb *ἐστι* as given by Diels the accents vary.

The translation of the line raises a final question, the meaning of *οὔνεκεν*. If we say, "It is the same thing to think and that for the sake of which there is thinking," we support the metaphysical interpretation of B 3. But if *οὔνεκεν* is taken as a conjunction, the line would read, "It is the same

¹⁰¹ J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London and Edinburgh: A. and C. Black, 1892), p. 185 and n.; same, 4th ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 173, n. 2.

¹⁰² Hack, *op. cit.*, p. 81, n.

¹⁰³ Burnet, *op. cit.* (1948), p. 173, n. 2.

¹⁰⁴ See Freeman, *op. cit.*, p. 147, n. 1.

¹⁰⁵ W. W. Goodwin, *Greek Grammar* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1892), p. 32.

[thing] to think and the thought *that* it is," and we are back with the epistemological interpretation.

Here we may for the present leave the questions. The weight of evidence, such as it is, and of current opinion favors the epistemological side, but we cannot be too sure. Gigon says that it is only with difficulty that one can interpret the traditions of Parmenides in such a way as to do justice to all the accounts of them.¹⁰⁶ If the metaphysical interpretation is to stand, one must think at once of India and the Upaniṣads. Up to the time of Parmenides no such idealistic monism had appeared in the Greek world, but it had been developed in India more than a century, perhaps more than several centuries, before.

The weight of evidence and opinion, as we said, favors the epistemological interpretation, but even if this interpretation is correct we are in danger of not seeing the forest for the trees. The suspicion of Indian influence, thrust out through the window, comes right back in through the door. One may doubt that Parmenides derived a metaphysical idealism from India, but, whether he did or not, his epistemology attacks questions which the Indian mind had uncovered long before—the hard problems of being and not-being. Gigon says that the origin of the idea of being is a riddle.¹⁰⁷ The contrast between being and not-being (sometimes rendered non-being) appears in the awe-filling Vedic creation hymn¹⁰⁸ and, for example, in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.¹⁰⁹ It is often thought that the Upaniṣads preserve doctrines which were more or less secret, but such restrictions, if there were any, need not have applied to the Vedas, and some hint of their metaphysical problem may have been wafted all the way to the Greek world. Nor should we forget that India had also encountered some of the epistemological questions raised by the concept of being. Buddhism, as we said, declared that all the constituents of being are transitory, and maintained that our supposed knowledge of it reduces to utter ignorance. Parmenides by contrast is stoutly affirmative—being can be thought and we can get at the truth about it; not-being cannot be thought, or at least cannot be thought to be real. Parmenides' doctrine that being is held fast and limited by necessity¹¹⁰ represents a marked difference from the Upaniṣads. It is the kind of difference which an attempt to think out a monism would introduce.

Viewed in such a setting, the work of Parmenides reads like a protest, not only, as is often said, against the Heraclitean flux, but also against

¹⁰⁶ O. Gigon, *Der Ursprung der Griechischen Philosophie* (Basle: B. Schwabe, etc., 1945), p. 283.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

¹⁰⁸ *Rg Veda* X. 129. 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Chāndogya* VI. ii. 1–2.

¹¹⁰ B 8, lines 14 ff.

Buddhism, the Zoroastrian duality of light and darkness,¹¹¹ and the (later?) Sāṃkhya doctrine of *puruṣa's* stirring up¹¹² *prakṛti* to start the world process. It would seem that, whatever the sources of his own doctrine were, Parmenides was at least aware of various currents of thought in his time.

With Empedocles, the possibility of Oriental influences begins to diminish. He writes and, according to the traditions, goes about acting like an Orphic, but if his fragments are scrutinized for resemblances which may indicate sources one does not need to look outside the Greek world. His four "roots"—not yet "elements"—could have been suggested by Pherecydes or by observation, without benefit of Egypt, Iran, or India. His correlation of earth, etc., with various perceptions in B 109 is quite different from the teaching of the Sāṃkhya.¹¹³ His Eros may have been Hesiodic.¹¹⁴ The opposition of exhalation and condensation recalls that of Anaximenes, although their terminologies differ.¹¹⁵ A number of passages indicate that Empedocles of Agrigentum was influenced by Parmenides of Elea. In other words, Greek culture, like any good infant, once having learned something by imitation, begins to use its own accumulated resources and strike out for itself.

A similar fading of possibilities is discernible in Anaxagoras. He was from Clazomenae, but his work is more Athenian than Ionian, and he verges upon the classical period. With his reduction of things to "seeds" he is a step more analytical than Empedocles or anyone in the East. The doctrine that *nous* introduces motion into the world reminds one of the act of *puruṣa* in the Sāṃkhya, but the idea may well have come to Anaxagoras from Parmenides.

Democritus brings us to the classical period. It is quite likely that he traveled,¹¹⁶ but unlikely that he met any Persians from Xerxes' army at Abdera, unless they remained there for twenty years or more.¹¹⁷ Neither his atomism nor that of Leucippus bears any close resemblance to the so-called atomism of the Vaiśeṣika system; it is not strange that both had to deal with what amounts to the problem of empty space, but they dealt with it quite differently.¹¹⁸ Fragment 299 mentions the construction of geometrical figures out of lines by Egyptian "arpedonapts"; this is a Greek word for "cord-fastener." Burnet, who is quite negative on the question of Indian influence on Greece, says it is a striking coincidence that the oldest Indian

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, lines 57–59; B 9, lines 1–3.

¹¹² B 8, line 9. The word *ωρσεν* is perhaps significant.

¹¹³ See S. N. Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), Vol. I, pp. 252 ff.

¹¹⁴ Jaeger, *Theology*, p. 15.

¹¹⁵ See Freeman, *op. cit.*, p. 188, n. a 1.

¹¹⁷ A 1. Cf. Diogenes Laertius, ix. 34.

¹¹⁶ Diels (Vol. II), Democritus B 247.

¹¹⁸ See Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 304.

geometrical treatise is called *Sulva-sūtras* ("Rules of the Cord"),¹¹⁹ but, as regards Democritus, the pedigree of Fragment 299 is sometimes questioned, as by Diels.¹²⁰ David of Nerken, an Armenian philosopher of the fifth century A.D., asserts that Democritus called man a microcosm¹²¹; if that is the case, Democritus had something in common with a view found in many countries and periods, and may have been the first to make it explicit in the Greek world.

VI

Answers to many questions concerning relations between ancient India and Greece may be sought in Iran, which in those days included what is now Afghanistan and was in position to be a long, high bridge between East and West. The country has been devastated by repeated invasions, and much valuable material has been lost. It is to be expected that philological and archaeological work now in progress will be of considerable help in recovering data for studies of comparative culture, but one can scarcely hope that all the gaps will be filled.

Several questions center around the question of the life-dates of Zoroaster; here the controversies have been long and the conclusions still differ. Without citing a score of references, it can be said that no authority places him later than the sixth century B.C. He may well have been earlier. The consensus now appears to be that the identification of Hystaspes, the father of Darius I, with Vishtaspa, the ruler who was the patron of Zoroaster, was wrong, so that, as far as this point is involved, Zoroaster could have lived before 570–500.¹²² It is now thought that the great Achaemenian kings, while they were worshippers of Ahura Mazda, were not Zoroastrians. The first Greek to mention Zoroaster is Xanthus of Lydia, probably writing about 470 and ascribing to the prophet a date six hundred years earlier.¹²³ The linguistic resemblances of the Gāthas and the Vedas point in that direction.¹²⁴ Duchesne-Guillemin in a fresh treatment of the subject says that Zoroaster *may* have lived even before the twelfth century B.C.¹²⁵ At all events, he was early enough to have had some influence on Greek philosophies and may

¹¹⁹ Burnet, *op. cit.* (London: A. and C. Black, 1920), p. 20.

¹²⁰ B 299.

¹²¹ See G. P. Conger, *Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms in the History of [Western] Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), p. 6.

¹²² See A. V. W. Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), p. 17, n. 5.

¹²³ A. V. W. Jackson, *Zoroaster, The Prophet of Ancient Iran* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901), pp. 9, 232; F. von Spiegel, "Gushtāsp and Zoroaster," translated by D. D. P. Sanjana, in *Sanjana's Collected Works* (Bombay: British India Press, 1932), p. 391.

¹²⁴ K. Geldner, "Persian (Iranian) Languages," quoted by Sanjana, *op. cit.*, p. 384.

¹²⁵ Duchesne-Guillemin, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

have been early enough and conspicuous enough to suggest to the Greeks a cosmic duality which spurred them to develop their various theories of opposites. It is important to remember, too, that India must not be left out of this picture altogether; in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* the gods (*devas*) and the devils (*asuras*) are said to have contended with each other until the latter were finally vanquished.¹²⁶

Other questions crowd upon us but are difficult to decide on the basis of extant documents. In the documents there are a number of doctrines which show a kind of logical transition between philosophies in India and in Greece; it is tempting to suppose that the logical transition marks a chronological transmission, especially by slow progress along the trade routes during the Achaemenian period. But the documents, except the Gāthas, are so late that if they are of any use for the early problem we must assume that the doctrines were traditional and older than the written sources. Such an assumption can sometimes be made with confidence as regards India; if made in the case of Iran it involves some risk.

In doctrines which come to light at various periods in one and another of these countries there are some notable resemblances, accompanied by differences which can be construed as signs of logical transition. The incomplete personification of the Vedic deities, for example, may have survived in attenuated form in the Amnesha Spentas, the quasi-personified abstract principles which Zoroaster, to placate the old polytheism, makes attributes and/or attendants of Ahura Mazda.¹²⁷ The Greeks, at least after Homer, are more clean-cut; their break with polytheism is more pronounced.

The *Puruṣa Sūkta*, *Rg Veda* X.90, with its myth of the parts of the body of the world Person corresponding to parts of the universe, leads in the *Upaniṣads* to comparisons between the parts of the human microcosm and the universe or macrocosm. Iranian parallels for this appear, if not in the doctrine of the cosmic man Gayomard, at least in the relatively late *Bundahishn*.¹²⁸ The Orphics had a similar doctrine.¹²⁹ All this, however, belonged too much in the realm of myth; the Greeks, as always, tended to be more empirical and reasonable. Anaximenes seems to have implied the doctrine, and Democritus, if David of Nerken was correct, mentioned it. The doctrine of *Anthropos* in the Greek world is relatively late; it appears in the Hellenistic period, outside the range of the present study.

In Iran, Gayomard appears according to some views merely as an ancestral

¹²⁶ *Chāndogya* I. ii. 1–7.

¹²⁷ See G. Dumézil, *Naissance d'archanges* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945).

¹²⁸ F. Windischmann, *Zoroastrische Studien* (Berlin: Dümmler Verhandlung, 1863), pp. 56 ff.; O. Götze in *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik*, II (1923), 60 ff., 167 ff.

¹²⁹ C. A. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus* (Königsberg: Borntraeger, 1829), Vol. II, p. 912.

figure.¹³⁰ In India, *Brahman*, as the ancestor of humanity, is represented as androgynous¹³¹; so is Gayomard in Iran.¹³² In Plato we have the strange figure of Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium*, although apparently no Greek was expected to take the story seriously.

A long-standing puzzle is encountered in various ascriptions of divinity to Time. In the *Atharva Veda* XIX. 53 and 54, Kāla is called undecaying; in Kāla, mind, breath, and name are fixed and joined. Kāla embraces or includes *Brahman* and has created all things. At some period in Iranian development, *Zarvan akarana*, endless Time, came to be regarded as the unified ground of all things; we know from Eudemus of Rhodes, a pupil of Aristotle,¹³³ that this doctrine is at least as old as the fourth century. It may well be older. The Iranian term seems to be directly echoed in the Greek expression χρόνον ἀγήραον, ascribed by Damascius in the sixth century A.D. to the Orphics.¹³⁴ Damascius, the last head of the school at Athens, ought to have known his Greek traditions, but after the school was closed he went to the court of Chosroes I and may have read the Sassanian phrase back into his memories of the Greek teachings. One should recall that among the Greeks, Pherecydes made Time primal and that for Anaximander the satisfaction given by one member of his duality to the other was "according to the arrangement (τάξις) of Time."¹³⁵ On the whole there is some support for the view that hints or fragments of Indian and Iranian doctrines managed to find their way westward.

Taken along the centuries, the doctrines of a cosmic or divine Voice, Word, and Reason are intertwined. The Vedic Vac is at least not inconsistent with the Zoroastrian doctrine that Ahura Mazda creates by his word, *Ahuna Vairya*,¹³⁶ though the latter seems more nearly akin to the Babylonian *Enem* and the Egyptian *Ma-Kherou*.¹³⁷ We saw that Heraclitus, further away from myths than any of these and more concerned with the reasonableness of the cosmos, has the essentially impersonal *logos*. The *Logos* as God's Word reappears in the Fourth Gospel and in Philo. Apart from the hymns to Vac there seems to be no clear *logos* doctrine in India at the period which concerns us. Again and again it was left to the Greeks to detect and emphasize the reason or the reasonableness of the universe.

¹³⁰ M. Falk, *Il mito psicologico nell' India antica* (Rome: G. Bardi, 1939), p. 408.

¹³¹ *Brhadāranyaka* I. iv. 3.

¹³² R. Reitzenstein, *Altgriechische Theologie in ihre Quellen*, Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg, 1924–25 (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1927), p. 15.

¹³³ Duchesne-Guillemin, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹³⁴ Diels, *Orpheus* B 13. Cf. *Empedocles* B 16. ¹³⁵ Diels, *Pherecydes* B 1; *Anaximander* B 1.

¹³⁶ M. Falk, *Nama Rupa and Dharma Rupa* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1943), p. 21; Reitzenstein and Schaefer, *op. cit.*, p. 15. The interpretation of Vohu Manu as *Logos*, attributed to Darmstetter, is now generally rejected.

¹³⁷ Albright, *op. cit.*, p. 145; Faure, *op. cit.*, pp. 126 ff.

It will have been noted that some members of these sequences, like the androgynous ancestor, the Anthropos doctrine, and Philo's *Logos*, do not appear in the Mediterranean world until the time of Plato or the Hellenistic syncretism. There seems to be no Indian parallel for Plato's ideas, though the Zoroastrian guardian *fravashis* show some resemblance to them.¹³⁸ Some other alleged sequences of views are doubtful because there are so many variant traditions that one source or direction for them is hardly more likely than another. This is the case with beliefs in metempsychosis, with theories of the four or five elements, and with the divisions of human history into ages or periods.

In the present state of research, one may, indeed, regard all these doctrines as not demonstrably related, but on the other hand one may, with allowances for marked differences in dates of documents and with favorable assumptions regarding the periods proper to the traditions, at least watch for new indications of transitions which will strengthen the case for transmissions.

This brings us, for the present, to the conclusion of our study. What once may have been plain threads of transmission were broken long ago in the cataclysms which befell the ancient world. The fragments which remain are scanty and tenuous enough to encourage doubts that they ever were connected. There is no place for bold assertions, but when the fragments are viewed in their setting—geographical, commercial, and, we may add, logical—the argument for at least indirect Indian influence on Greece acquires some support.

VII

Sooner or later we must rise from all these details and survey the ancient cultures of Asia in a broader horizon. It has often seemed remarkable that so many religious geniuses in the ancient world should have been nearly or actually contemporaries. Dates ascribed to Zoroaster, the *ṛṣis* of the Upaniṣads, Mahāvīra (the founder of Jainism), Gautama the Buddha, Confucius, and Deutero-Isaiah show strange coincidences, stranger still when coupled with those of the Ionian philosophers. Taken together, even with allowance for uncertainties, they indicate that throughout several centuries, say from the eighth or seventh to the fifth, the peoples of Asia were outgrowing the old polytheisms of the *R̥g Veda*, the *Iliad*, and other traditions. In each culture the process takes a different form and swiftly or slowly tends to change men's adjustment to the world. The *ṛṣis* develop a quasi-spiritualistic monism, Lao-tzū, let us say, a quietistic cosmism, Zoroaster or

¹³⁸ See Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 23 ff., 83, 141.

his followers an ethical duality, Confucius a cosmic humanism, Gautama an ethical self-discipline, the Hebrew prophets an ethical monotheism, and the Ionian philosophers a kind of religious naturalism. With or without communication or interchange, it is as if a great cultural wave or groundswell swept across Asia, demanding that the childish polytheisms give place to something more advanced. This dwarfs, although it by no means eliminates, the problems of relations between India and Greece. Those relations, dimly discernible at our distance, are items and incidents in a broader panorama which should lead us to look for a more nearly unified history of philosophy.