CHAPTER 6

Knowing Nature as a God

In proposing a way toward a unified interpretation of Empedocles' thought, the last chapter explored the centrality in Empedocles' physical system of pivotal notions related to the concept of rebirth, such as claims about individual identity and personal survival upon death. With the same aim of making religion and physics converge, this chapter will focus on the interconnection between true knowledge of the physical world and release from rebirths, the main argument being that knowing the nature of things is a major pathway to change one's being, transcend mortal nature and become divine. In parallel, it will be shown that purification processes play a central role in the deep understanding of the nature of things and, thereby, in the attainment of genuine knowledge.

As has been established in Chapter 2, Empedocles programmatically presents the teachings he is going to impart as the way not merely to know the principles of the physical world and thus the true nature of things, but, after his philosophical training, his disciple Pausanias will be able to raise his intelligence higher than any ordinary human (B 2 [=EMP D 42 Laks-Most]) and control the forces of nature just like a god (B 111 [=EMP D 43 Laks-Most]). In exploring this topic further, this chapter will answer a series of questions that arise from Empedocles' programmatic presentation of his philosophy as a training method to achieve divine nature, superhuman wisdom and godlike power. It will therefore ask: what defines knowledge as divine? What epistemic effort is demanded of Pausanias for him to attain divine knowledge? Finally, how does knowledge of the physical world relate to a person's transcendence from human to divine nature, hence to their release from rebirth?

To characterize what Empedocles might have regarded as divine wisdom, I will begin by discussing some of the most relevant epistemic reflections developed in the sixth and fifth century BCE. As we will see, divine knowledge is traditionally regarded not merely as knowledge of 'divine' matters – that is, knowledge of things that are beyond ordinary

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human ken – but also as the ability to ascertain them (that is, to be sure that they are true). This particular aspect entails that on certain types of matters, especially those that are spatially and/or temporally distant, humans lack assurance that they describe things as they really are, whereas gods can relate to those things in a different way and truly know them.

After placing Empedocles in this ideological context, I will examine what degree of knowledge the most 'enlightened' people can aspire to achieve according to Empedocles and, secondly, what is required of them in order to access it. It will be shown that, on the one hand, Empedocles presents himself as the divine source of a revelation that claims to speak the authentic truth about the nature of things; on the other hand, he also attaches significant weight to a type of investigation that involves personal observation of natural phenomena. However, the phenomena that Empedocles proposes for Pausanias to observe prove ineffective in demonstrating with due clarity the soundness of the revealed physical principles. Moreover, textual evidence indicates that Empedocles' revelation is seen as superior and therefore indispensable to any type of human enquiry if we were to understand the true nature of things. This suggests that neither mere passive listening to revelation nor personal research is enough, but Pausanias is required to actively participate in his learning process and so undergo initiation into Empedocles' philosophy.

Turning to the question of how knowledge of the physical world relates to a person's transcendence of mortal nature and, consequently, to one's liberation from rebirth, in Section 6.3 it will be shown that Pausanias' change of being into divine nature is explained in physical terms, that is, at the level of the elements. More precisely, transcendence of mortal nature is tightly connected to Empedocles' theories on perception and knowledge acquisition. As I will reconstruct in Sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2, perceiving and knowing are conceptualized as physiological processes, in which elements from the outside and elements in the body interact to produce perception, thought and knowledge. As elements coming from outside the body can modify the blend of fire, air, water and earth in the body, it follows that putting oneself in a position to receive the 'right' epistemic inputs can modify the elemental composition of the human mind for the better. Thus, genuine knowledge of the physical world – that is, Empedocles' revelation – can transform our mind to the point that it will perceive, think and know like a divine mind. This claim is evidence that knowledge of the nature of things and transcendence of mortal to divine nature – that is, physics and doctrine of rebirth – are tightly intertwined and mutually implicated in Empedocles' thought: indeed, what we are looking at is a clear instance of doctrinal unity.

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In parallel, and third, the possibility to change one's own being by understanding the physical world goes hand in hand with the training the human mind must undergo in order to be properly predisposed towards it. In Section 6.4 I will show that Pausanias is encouraged to undergo a process of purification in order to direct his attention and scrutiny almost exclusively towards things that really matter and in this way acquire the 'wealth of a divine mind',[1] capable not only of understanding, but also of controlling the forces of nature just like a god. At the same time, Empedocles also provides us with a physiological explanation of the way in which purification processes enable the elemental structure of our mind to advance to a level attuned to divine knowledge. However, purifications are primarily a means to a more religious end, such as the liberation of the individual from the chain of rebirths. Their role in the processes of perception and knowledge acquisition thus shows once again the deep interconnection between Empedocles' physics and his doctrine of rebirth. Indeed, it is a life of purity and knowledge of the physical principles that will enable the disciple to free himself from rebirths and become a god.

6.1 Divine and Human Knowledge

If we are to understand what Empedocles may have regarded as divine knowledge, we must turn to traditional Greek ideas on the possible human and divine ways to gain knowledge. In this first section, I will therefore contextualize Empedocles within the most relevant epistemic reflections of both his predecessors and his own time. In Section 6.1.1, the focus will be on human epistemic potential with regard to topics of natural philosophy broadly conceived, by exploring ideas that were first developed in the sixth and fifth century BCE, more specifically those of Xenophanes, Alcmaeon and the Hippocratic author of *Ancient Medicine*. In Section 6.1.2, I will then turn to the epic tradition of Homer and Hesiod for a definition of true knowledge which provided a basis from which Empedocles could work. Section 6.1.3 will focus on Parmenides, demonstrating the weight of his methodological approach on Empedocles. More specifically, it will be argued that while Parmenides resorts to a goddess to provide his physical system with the mantle of truth, so too does Empedocles, who composes a divine revelation, of which he is the source, to establish that his physics describes things as they in fact come to pass.

[1] See DK 31 B 132 (= EMP D 8 Laks-Most): ὄλβιος, ὃς θείων πραπίδων ἐκτήσατο πλοῦτον, / δειλὸς δ', ὃι σκοτόεσσα θεῶν πέρι δόξα μέμηλεν. 'Happy is the person who has gained the wealth of a divine mind, / wretched the individual who cherishes an obfuscated opinion about the gods.'

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6.1.1 The Earliest Reflections on Divine and Human Epistemic Potential

To look at the earliest epistemic reflections in Greek language and literature, I will now examine two of Empedocles' precursors, Xenophanes and Alcmaeon, as well as his contemporary, the Hippocratic author of *Ancient Medicine*. As we shall see, they all expressed a clear and similar view on the kind of knowledge people can expect to gain about things that cannot be directly experienced, such as most of the topics concerning what we may define as natural philosophy in the sixth to fifth century BCE. Moreover, all three distinguished between divine and human potential to gain understanding; yet although acknowledging that only gods can know truly what is far beyond our experiential domain, they did not entirely deny people the possibility of having some kind of understanding of 'divine' matters, remaining open to the prospect of humans' valid knowledge.

Let us first look at Xenophanes of Colophon (sixth century BCE). In his most extended fragment on knowledge, Xenophanes is concerned with divine matters and further themes he very likely explored in one of his works, such as topics related to cosmology, anthropology, biology and all those themes pertaining, more generally, to natural philosophy. In some remarkable verses, Xenophanes affirms the following:

καὶ τὸ μὲν οὖν σαφὲς οὔτις ἀνὴρ ἴδεν[2] οὐδέ τις ἔσται
εἰδὼς ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω περὶ πάντων·
εἰ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τύχοι τετελεσμένον εἰπών,
αὐτὸς ὅμως οὐκ οἶδε· δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται.

(DK 21 B 34 [= XEN D 49 Laks-Most])

And indeed the clear and certain truth no man has seen[3]
nor would anyone who knows about the gods and what I say about all things.[4]
For even if, in the best case, one happened to speak in compliance with what has been brought to pass,
still he himself would not know. But an opinion is allotted to all.

[2] Plutarch has γένετ'. However, the reading ἴδεν, attested three times by Sextus and once by Diogenes Laertius, is *difficilior*: see Lesher (1992: 157–58). Plutarch's reading is defended by Hussey (1990: 18 n.21) and accepted in the 2016 edition of Xenophanes' fragments by Laks-Most (= XEN D 49).

[3] For a correct understating of this verb and the subsequent εἰδώς in l. 2 see Lesher (1992: 158): 'Already in Homer ἰδεῖν can mean something other than "seeing with one's eyes" . . . Thus, even if ἴδεν meant "saw" or "has seen" and εἰδώς meant "having seen", there is no reason to suppose that such "seeing" must have been a form of *sense* perception'; the emphasis is Lesher's.

[4] This line is unlikely to mean all of Xenophanes' statements in an unqualified way. More likely it indicates hypotheses concerning topics on natural philosophy. As Barnes (1982: 139) proposes, 'Xenophanes means to say that knowledge about things divine and knowledge about natural science lie beyond our human grasp.' See also Lesher (1992: 167–68), Mogyoródi (2006: 132–33) and Tor (2017: 130).

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Xenophanes claims that only gods are able to gain 'the clear and certain truth', τὸ σαφές (*to saphes*), whereas human beings can only have a δόκος (*dokos*), an 'opinion' or 'conjecture'.[5] Whereas we will return to the meaning of δόκος, J. Lesher has cogently pointed out that, in epic poetry, 'σάφα knowing (the form σαφές does not occur in Homer) is a matter of knowing the *precise facts* or the *exact truth*'.[6] Thus, according to Xenophanes, concerning things or phenomena that cannot be experienced first-hand,[7] divine and human cognitive potential is clearly distinguished: whereas gods know things as they truly are, human beings can only conjecture. Human opinions could still happen to coincide with things as they are and thus describe what has in fact been brought to pass; nonetheless, human knowledge would still be un-σαφές, as people have no assurance that their δόκος coincides with truth. It follows that σαφές knowledge must not only describe things as they truly are but also, at the same time, bring assurance of that. In other words, to attain genuine knowledge of the kind coinciding with τὸ σαφές, things must be known truly and be established as true.

Xenophanes' comment finds an echo in the work of Alcmaeon of Croton (early fifth century BCE):

> περὶ τῶν ἀφανέων περὶ τῶν θνητῶν[8] σαφήνειαν μὲν θεοὶ ἔχοντι, ὡς δὲ ἀνθρώποις τεκμαίρεσθαι. (DK 24 B 1 [= ALCM D 10 Laks-Most])
>
> About invisible things about mortal beings, only gods know the plain truth, whereas human beings can infer from signs.[9]

[5] δόκος means 'what is admitted = valid opinion'. See the analysis of the 'positive sense' of so-called δοκ-words in Mourelatos (2008: 194–205). See also Lesher (1992: 169): 'such *dokos* is neither inherently erroneous . . . nor fated to be only approximately correct . . . but it is the best anyone can do "about the gods and what I say about all things", since the direct observation necessary for a clear and certain knowledge of the truth about such matters is not possible'.

[6] Lesher (1992: 156) with his emphasis.

[7] Lesher (1991: 236; 2013: 85). See Tor (2017: 130): 'Xenophanes is concerned in particular with mortal statements about non-everyday, non-pedestrian, *non-experienced* matters' (Tor's emphasis).

[8] Modern editors, after Diels, put a comma after ἀφανέων and interpret the following sentence in parataxis, understanding Alcmaeon's claim as referring both to invisible things and to human things that are not specified further. In contrast, Gemelli Marciano (2007a: 19) points out that the asyndeton is difficult, as it renders the relation between invisible and mortal things ambiguous. Additionally, if it is clear why only gods can gain knowledge about invisible things, it is difficult to understand why human beings have no clear knowledge about undefined human things. For this reason, Gemelli Marciano interprets θνητῶν as a masculine plural with the meaning of 'on the invisible things about mortals', namely with reference to medical knowledge of the human body and of its inner (and therefore invisible) physiological processes.

[9] Note that the related word τεκμήριον means 'sure sign', 'proof'.

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The distinction Alcmaeon establishes between divine and human knowledge rests upon two key words: σαφήνεια (*saphêneia*), defining gods' wisdom, and τεκμαίρεσθαι (*tekmairesthai*), which delimits the human sphere of cognitive action. Like Xenophanes' τὸ σαφές, Alcmaeon's σαφήνεια indicates knowledge that corresponds to plain and certain truth. Concerning unseen things (ἀφανῆ) like bodily processes, plain truth remains a prerogative of the gods, whilst human beings can observe and evaluate (visible, knowable) signs, and infer from them more general theories about processes in the body they cannot see. The opposition between human inferences and god's σαφήνεια suggests that the former cannot reach the same level of certainty belonging to divine knowledge; even though human theories may happen to be exact, they cannot ever be known to be true.

Similarly to Xenophanes' and Alcmaeon's ideas on human cognitive potential, the Hippocratic author of *Ancient Medicine* (fifth century BCE) voices the opinion that those disciplines exploring things 'that there are on the sky or under the earth' handle topics that ultimately are about 'obscure and dubious matters'. In fact, they require *a-priori* assumptions (ὑποθέσεις) that cannot be definitively assessed as right or wrong, 'for there is nothing to which one can refer to obtain clear and certain knowledge (εἰδέναι τὸ σαφές)'. In contrast, medicine is a *techne* with a long history that has accomplished many valid discoveries due to clear principles and a method that has been refined over the course of time. The Hippocratic author seems thereby to suggest that, whereas medicine can follow a clear methodology, which has been proven valid through extensive experience, natural philosophy only rests upon random assumptions which cannot be proven and thus cannot be known to be valid.[10]

Thus, Xenophanes, Alcmaeon and the Hippocratic author share the traditional belief that things that escape ordinary human perceptions are known with certainty only by the gods. What kind of knowledge can humans hope to attain then with regard to these things? As we will now see, the three authors ascribe people the ability to formulate valid opinions and conjectures about them or, according to Xenophanes, δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται.[11] As Lesher has pointed out, Xenophanes' allocation of human awareness to the category of 'opinion' or 'conjecture' (δόκος) is not an intrinsically dismissive characterization. Rather, Lesher explains that 'δόκος

[10] It is worth noting that in Chapter 20 of the same treatise, the Hippocratic author contrasts the medical arts with the most uncertain method of those thinkers who have written on natural philosophy, among whom Empedocles is explicitly mentioned. See Lloyd (1963) and Vegetti (1998).

[11] DK 21 B 34.4 (= XEN D 49 Laks-Most).

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is neither inherently erroneous … nor fated to be only approximately correct'; on the contrary, 'it is the best anyone can do "about the gods and what I say about all things", since the direct observation necessary for a clear and certain knowledge of the truth about such matters is not possible'.[12]

Thus, although truth cannot be attained, Xenophanes believes nonetheless that people could come to obtain valid knowledge if they embark on a personal enquiry:

> οὔτοι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πάντα θεοὶ θνητοῖσ' ὑπέδειξαν,
> ἀλλὰ χρόνωι ζητοῦντες ἐφευρίσκουσιν ἄμεινον.
> (DK 21 B 18 [= XEN D 53 Laks-Most])

> From the beginning gods did not intimate[13] all things to mortals,
> but as they search in time they discover in a better way.[14]

Despite the 'large number of alternative possible readings' of these two lines,[15] it seems safe to argue that the fragment establishes a dichotomy between knowledge acquired through things gods may intimate (ὑπέδειξαν) to mortals,[16] and knowledge discovered (ἐφευρίσκουσιν) through human personal enquiry (ζητοῦντες). The word ἄμεινον in the final position in the verse suggests Xenophanes' preference for personal enquiry,[17] with his own research method probably intended to provide the

[12] See Lesher (1992: 169; 2008: 469). See also B 35 (= XEN D 50 Laks-Most) with Lesher (1992: 170–76) and Bryan (2012: 16–57). The fragment displays a use of the verb δοκάζω, etymologically associated with δόκος, in a context connected with ἔτυμα, things that are true. Here Xenophanes seems to encourage us 'to believe his teachings to be potentially true', while warning 'that we can do no more than believe them to be so' (Bryan 2012: 56).

[13] According to the reading of Lesher (1992: 149). On the meaning of ὑπέδειξαν, see Tor (2017: 117–19).

[14] 'Since the neuter accusative singular of the comparative form of an adjective also serves as the comparative of the adverb, ἄμεινον is ambiguous between "find a better (thing)" and "find out better"' (Lesher 1992: 150).

[15] Lesher (1992: esp. 151–52). Briefly, we can say that the opinions of scholars follow two major directions. Most take it that Xenophanes rejects all kinds of divine disclosure: see Gomperz (1906: 162), Lesher (1983; 1991; 1992), Curd (2002: 129), Bryan (2012: 52–55) and Granger (2013: 262). There is a minority of scholars, however, who argue that Xenophanes allows that sometimes gods did reveal some good things: see Verdenius (1955), Barnes (1982: 140) and Robinson (2008: 489). Recently, Tor (2017: 118–19) submitted the view that Xenophanes rejects only a particular notion of divine disclosure, namely the one which is seen as 'an indirect, secretive and cryptic affair'. Furthermore, in this manner the gods disclosed everything (πάντα) from the beginning (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς), since the markers 'from the beginning' and 'all things' qualify 'the particular notion of indirect, cryptic disclosure, which Xenophanes rejects'.

[16] See Lesher (1991; 1992: 149ff.). It is a traditional idea, for example, that human individuals advance thanks to the gods, who sometimes decide to reveal precious secrets to humanity. See, e.g., Hes. *Erga* 42–44.

[17] Lesher (1999: 231). See also Lesher (1992: 155): the fragment may have been 'the rejection of an older, inadequate approach to the understanding of natural marvels through myth, legend or simple superstition – and a call, in so many words, to natural science'. According to Tor (2017: 127), the verb ζητοῦντες does not explicitly contrast with divine revelation. The term ζήτησις can indicate a mortal

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best exemplification of his claim. Indeed, Xenophanes' knowledge is based on collecting all kinds of information from far off places, as is illustrated by his knowledge of different conceptions of divinity in Thrace and Ethiopia (B 16 [= XEN D 13 Laks-Most], A 13 [= XEN P 17]) and of natural phenomena typical of areas relatively distant from the place he lived (e.g., B 37 [= XEN D 44 Laks-Most], A 41 [= XEN D 34 Laks-Most], A 41a [= XEN D 35 Laks-Most], A 48 [= XEN D 45 Laks-Most]). Moreover, it is attested that he used personal observation of fossils of shells and fish in Syracuse, Paros and Malta to formulate a theory of cyclical cosmic destruction and regeneration.[18]

Like Xenophanes, Alcmaeon seems also to have practised personal observation concerning human anatomy, as his discovery of the optic nerve through dissection could indicate.[19] With regard to the Hippocratic author of *Ancient Medicine*, moreover, the criterion according to which he distinguishes medical topics from other 'obscure and dubious matters' seems to rest upon the level of conviction one can reach through empirical enquiry over time, hence upon the fact that the hypotheses one formulates can or cannot be observed and verified.[20] Furthermore, since, as we have seen above, the medical arts are a *techne* with a long history, observation and personal verification have long been conducted on similar case studies. This has contributed to forming a consolidated practice and body of knowledge that has finally developed into a tradition.

By wrapping up the investigation developed thus far, Xenophanes, Alcmaeon and the Hippocratic author of *Ancient Medicine* maintain that concerning non-experienced things, such as divine things or natural phenomena that cannot be directly observed, only gods know truly how things have come to pass. People in contrast can embark on serious enquiry of the physical world and even formulate valid conjectures about it. However, they remain unable to know if those conjectures are correct, as people have no σῆμα, evidence or proof, that they are accounting for things as they truly are. Thus, whereas divine knowledge is certainly and genuinely true, human knowledge, though valid, will always lack the assurance of truth.

enquiry which is facilitated through divine disclosure, for instance by divination. Indeed, as Tor highlights, the verb δίζημαι is a standard technical term in the oracular responses in Delphi, expressing the act of consulting Apollo.

[18] Hipp. *Ref.* 1.14.5 with the interpretation by Lesher (1992: 155).

[19] The source is Calcidius in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* (p. 279 Wrobel).

[20] According to Hussey (1990: 16), knowledge gained 'from a mass of mutually overlapping and confiming experiences of human beings' does not admits room for scepticism.

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6.1.2 *The Epic Tradition on True Knowledge*

Having looked at Xenophanes', Alcmaeon's and the Hippocratic author's views on cognitive potential when approaching topics that are beyond the reach of human perceptions, we can now better evaluate the difference between human and divine knowledge that provided a basis from which Empedocles could work. However, within this context, it remains to clarify what makes knowledge *saphes*; or, in other words, what makes an opinion a clear, certain and persuading truth? Thus, to uncover the early Greek notion of true knowledge, we now need to turn to the epic tradition.

In the Homeric poems, people know *sapha* when they know a certain thing by direct experience.[21] For instance, Menelaus says to Antilochus that, since the latter has observed it for himself (αὐτὸν . . . εἰσορόωντα), he knows *sapha* that a god decided upon destruction for the Danaans and victory to the Trojans.[22] Additionally, a person knows *sapha* a general truth – for instance, that cowards shrink from battle.[23] Moreover, knowledge handed down by reliable witnesses and/or developed into a tradition is generally regarded as valid. In the *Iliad* 20.203–5, Aeneas says to Achilles that, despite neither having directly seen (*opsei*, 'by sight') or met each other's parents, they nonetheless know about them, 'having heard words of mortal beings handed down by tradition'.[24]

It is worth noting that Homer seems to connect even gods' *sapha* knowledge to ultimate, direct experience. Notably, in the famous appeal to the Muses to help the poet remember the immense Achaean naval forces involved in the Trojan battle in the second book of the *Iliad*, the Muses are said to know all because they *saw* all, as they were present when things happened: 'you are goddesses, you are present and know everything' (*Il.*

[21] See Lesher (1994: 23 n.43; 2008: 460). On the importance in the Homeric poems of observation for attaining knowledge and, especially, of 'much-seeing', i.e., observing a wide range of different things, as Odysseus was able to do, for instance, during his twenty-year journey through many different places and peoples, see Lesher (1981: 12–13).

[22] *Il.* 17.687–88. [23] E.g., *Il.* 11.408–9. See Lesher (2008: 460).

[24] Notably, analogous ideas are also shared by Herodotus in his historical enquiries (fifth century BCE). To provide just two examples, Herodotus claims that true and persuading knowledge can be obtained through personal enquiry and direct experience, as in the case described in 2.44 and concerning the ancient cult of Heracles: 'wishing to *know it clearly* (σαφές τι εἰδέναι) . . . I took a ship to Tyre in Phoenicia where I heard there was a very holy temple of Heracles. There *I saw it* . . . Therefore, the things I have discovered *through enquiry* clearly show (τὰ ἱστορημένα δηλοῖ σαφέως) that Heracles is an ancient god' (my emphasis). In a second passage, moreover, Herodotus argues that clear and certain knowledge can be achieved from a reliable source. In 9.7, for instance, the Spartans can be sure that the Athenians will never betray Greece, but will fight the Persians, because the Athenian ambassadors (that is, a very reliable source in this case) declared their intention to do so. See also 3.122 and 7.228 with Lesher (1992: 156–57).

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2.485: ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαί ἐστε πάρεστέ τε ἴστέ τε πάντα). Similarly, in the first book of the *Odyssey*, Homer tells us that the gods took advantage of Poseidon's temporary absence from Mount Olympus (he was in Ethiopia to attend a hecatomb) to decide about Odysseus' return to Ithaca. Clearly, Poseidon's absence emphasizes his unawareness: he has no knowledge of things he does not directly see and listen to, although he is a god.[25]

Moreover, whereas *sapha* knowledge – even when attributed to gods – is connected to direct experience,[26] in the same famous passage of the *Iliad*'s second book mentioned above, ordinary human beings are contrasted to the Muses in that the former only know by hearing a report and, for this reason, they cannot be said to know anything: 'we hear but a rumour and know nothing', ἡμεῖς δὲ κλέος οἷον ἀκούομεν οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν (*Il.* 2.486).The phrase οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν indicates, on the one hand, that knowledge of the past is limited to what people hear from the gods. On the other hand, it also emphasizes that the knowledge humans obtain ultimately lacks certainty: since what they know is exclusively what they hear and without any assurance that the divine report speaks the truth, they do not really know anything truly. Moreover, since human knowledge depends on reports, the reliability and hence the truth of what they know rests solely upon the trustworthiness of the report's source. As a consequence, knowledge derived from those who claim a share in divine wisdom, such as poets – but also seers and prophets, since they speak on behalf of the gods – is generally taken as particularly reliable.[27]

However, as we have seen in Chapter 2.4.1, in his *Hymn to the Muse* at the beginning of the *Theogony* Hesiod points out that a divine source is no

[25] *Od.* 1.22–27. It is worth noting that even the god who is said to know all, Apollo, can be unaware of hidden deeds, which need then to be disclosed by someone (or something) else: see Hesiod fr. 60.2–3 Merkelbach-West (where the hidden deeds are revealed to Apollo by a raven).

[26] This point was already made by Hussey (1990: 12 n.5), who listed several passages where gods are deceived by other gods, know by direct experience, or do not know because they lack it.

[27] Homer provided seers and prophets with clear and certain knowledge: Chalcas, the seer of Apollo, knows 'the things that are, that will be and were before' at *Il.* 1.69–70. Achilles calls him the mantis εὖ εἰδώς at *Il.* 1.384–85. Sophocles' chorus in *OT* 298–99 speaks of Tiresias as 'the mantis in whom alone of mortals truth is implanted'. As for Homeric poets, see the example of Demodocus, 'the divine poet; for to him above all others has the god granted skill in song, to give delight in whatever way his spirit prompts him to sing' (*Od.* 8. 44–45). In another passage Homer adds: 'For among all men that are upon the earth minstrels win honour and reverence, for that the Muse has taught them the paths of song, and loves the tribe of minstrels' (*Od.* 8.478–81). Moreover, after having heard Demodocus accurately recounting events of the Trojan war, Odysseus praises him with these words: 'Demodocus, verily above all mortal men do I praise thee, whether it was the Muse, the daughter of Zeus, that taught thee, or Apollo; for well and truly dost thou sing of the fate of the Achaeans, all that they wrought and suffered, and all the toils they endured, *as though thou hadst been present, or hadst heard the tale from another.* [scil. who was present]' (*Od.* 8.486–91).

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guarantee of truth *per se*, since gods can deliberately deceive. Indeed, the Muses tell Hesiod that they can utter not only true things but also false stories that resemble the truth. This indicates that knowledge and communication of the truth is an exclusively divine prerogative, whereas seers, prophets and poets – to say nothing of ordinary people – are unaware of the trustworthy or deceptive nature of their source and are therefore unable to distinguish true from false things.[28]

This suggests that the ability to verify information is a powerful instrument of knowledge. Homer attests that clear and convincing knowledge pertains to things that have been proven true through a test or trial. The most famous example is the episode in which Penelope, to be sure that the stranger she has before her eyes is in fact her beloved husband, subjects him to a trial (*Od*. 23.181–204). When the stranger is found to know that which only Odysseus could know, namely that the marital bed is fixed and cannot be moved as has been suggested, Penelope has ultimate and unequivocal evidence (*sêma*) that the stranger is her husband and can finally know clearly.

Wrapping up, according to the epic tradition, true knowledge generally pertains to things that are known through direct experience. For this reason, when it refers to that which people cannot directly know, such as divine matters, events of the distant past or things that are spatially remote, true knowledge generally belongs to gods who are able to experience things that are beyond ordinary human perception. However, according to the Homeric epic, people can gain valid knowledge on these things by trusting a reliable witness, such as a divine source. Yet Hesiod clarifies that the recipient of a report, even of a divine revelation, always lacks ultimate certainty that their source is telling the truth – unless the source can be put to a trial and the report proven true. In short, a consolidated tradition, whose legacy can already be found in Homer, sharply distinguishes between divine and human epistemic abilities on matters that, because they are either temporally or spatially remote, escape human direct experience. Whereas gods know these things truly, human beings lack any assurance that what they are observing or listening to corresponds to what has come to pass. For this reason, human beings do not know anything clearly.

[28] Not only the Muses' declaration of uttering plausible lies in Hesiod's proem to his *Theogony*, as we have just seen, but also Sophocles' chorus in *OT* 501ff. can say of wise Tiresias that, while Zeus and Apollo have (true) knowledge, no sure criterion (κρίσις . . . ἀληθής) can determine whether the words spoken by a mantis carries more weight than those uttered by any other mortal. Moreover, in Homer, gods frequently and successfully deceive human beings: see Hussey (1990: 11 with n.2).

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As we have seen, the epic tradition and Empedocles' precursors and fellow thinkers provide a glimpse of what can be considered as truth or truthful, genuine knowledge. For knowledge to be true, it must not only describe things as they have come to pass; it must also bring with it the conviction or assurance that things are in fact the way they are described. In this respect, the ability to verify the valid nature of a given assertion represents a powerful means to assess the truth of that assertion. In conclusion, true knowledge always regards *things that are known to be true*. Nevertheless, about things that cannot directly be experienced or for which no proof or evidence assuring their validity can be provided – that is, when we have no possibility to know that something is true[29] – central questions remain open, such as, what can persuade us of their truth? More precisely, what can convince us of the valid and genuine character of a certain explanation of the nature of things? In what follows I will consider Parmenides' strategy to deal with these issues.

6.1.3 The Route of Parmenides

Having seen the way in which Xenophanes, Alcmaeon and the Hippocratic author of *Ancient Medicine* extended the epic notion of *sapha* knowledge to find a pathway to gain valid understanding of things beyond human ordinary experience, I will now look at how Parmenides found a workaround to the concept of clear and certain knowledge established at that time. Whereas the three authors analyzed in Section 6.1.1 acknowledged the limited human potential to know things that are temporally and spatially remote, but at the same time allowed people the faculty to achieve some most valuable, yet unproven conjectures, Parmenides proposed a twofold strategy to overcome the difficulty of an 'un-certain' knowledge of topics concerning natural philosophy. On the one hand, he offered apodictic criteria to judge the content of his philosophical exposition; on the other hand, he entrusts this exposition to the revelation of a goddess, thereby providing his philosophy with the mantle of truth.

In Chapter 2.4.2 we have already seen that the exposition of Parmenides' philosophy is offered to us through the mouth of a goddess he met at the end of an extraordinary initiatory *katabasis* to the House of Night.[30] As has been established, the narration of this superhuman experience is in service of Parmenides' authorial and philosophical investiture. His journey to the

[29] See already Bryan (2012: e.g., 44).
[30] See DK 28 B 1 (= PARM D 4 Laks-Most) with my discussion in Chapter 2.4.2.

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source of wisdom ensures that his philosophy, received at the end of that journey and presented as a divine disclosure, is a genuine and truthful account of the nature of things.

However, the goddess, in two notorious passages introducing the main topics of her revelation, seems to characterize some of her propositions in a conceivably pejorative way. The first passage (B 1.28–32 [= PARM D 4.28–32]) reads as follows:

χρεὼ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι
ἠμὲν ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεκὲς[31] ἦτορ
ἠδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής.
ἀλλ᾽ ἔμπης καὶ ταῦτα μαθήσεαι, ὡς τὰ δοκοῦντα
χρῆν δοκίμως εἶναι διὰ παντὸς πάντα περ ὄντα.[32]

You must learn everything,
both the exact heart of well-rounded reality
and the beliefs of mortals, in which there is no assurance of truth;[33]
and yet you shall learn these also: how things that appear and are accepted
were [or would have been] right to be genuinely considered,
all and altogether, as things that are.[34]

Closing the proemial lines, these verses programmatically summarize the main topics of Parmenides' philosophy: the goddess will first reveal 'the heart of truth', ἀληθείης . . . ἦτορ (l. 29), including the account of the two pathways of enquiry (B 2 [= PARM D 6 Laks-Most] and B6 [= PARM D 7 Laks-Most]), the criteria for *what really is* and the complete rejection of *what-is-not* (B 8 [= PARM D 8 Laks-Most]). The characterization of this major

[31] The word ἀτρεκές is the variant reading of some of Sextus' manuscripts and of Plut. *Col.* 1114d, whereas Simplicius has the variant reading ἀτρεμές, generally accepted by scholars, but see Ferrari (2010: 50 and n.19).

[32] The wording περ ὄντα is the variant reading of the manuscripts DEF of Simplicius, while A reports περῶντα, which is generally accepted by scholars. But see Mourelatos (2008: 214). See moreover Reale-Ruggiu (2003: 201–9), Cerri (1999: 185–86) and Ferrari (2010: 43).

[33] Parmenides' πίστις is often translated as 'conviction': see Coxon (2009: 204), according to whom πίστις is 'the certainty resulting from the persuasion which reality exercises on the mind by causing it to reason deductively'. Palmer (2009: 92) emphasizes that πίστις in subjective uses conveys the sense of 'trustworthiness'; in its objective sense it means 'trust', 'faith', 'confidence' or 'assurance'. Then he argues: 'Confidence, trust and assurance are "true" when they are the kind that will not be disappointed, are reliable and are worthy of the name – in short, when they are real or genuine.' What this idea amounts to in Parmenides' philosophy will be clearer in due course. According to Heidel (1912–1913: 718), however, the term has a juridical connotation and means 'such evidence or proof as may be adduced in court, a meaning which the word quite regularly bore in legal argumentation'. For the forensic terminology in Parmenides' fragments see Bryan (2012: 80–93, for πίστις, see esp. 90–93).

[34] On the tentative and uncertain nature of this text and translation, see Tor (2017: 209): 'What is the referent of "these things too" (καὶ ταῦτα)? How exactly should we interpret and translate the cognate words τὰ δοκοῦντα and δοκίμως [. . .]? Should we construe χρῆν as a past obligation ("how it was right") or a past counterfactual ("how it would have been right")?'

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thematic area is conveyed by the adjective ἀτρεκές at line 28 which qualifies it as 'true' or 'exact', namely as an account that is in compliance with things as they truly are.[35] On the contrary, the second major thematic area the goddess is going to reveal, e.g., the opinions of mortals (l. 30), which basically concern topics about natural philosophy broadly intended, are qualified as something that has no assurance of truth, although these too have the goddess's authority.

Analogously, the second passage restating the main themes Parmenides must learn (B 8.50–61 [= PARM D 8.65–66]) runs as follows:

ἐν τῶι σοι παύω πιστὸν λόγον ἠδὲ νόημα
ἀμφὶς ἀληθείης· δόξας δ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε βροτείας
μάνθανε κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων.
[. . .]
τόν σοι ἐγὼ διάκοσμον ἐοικότα πάντα φατίζω,
ὡς οὐ μή ποτέ τίς σε βροτῶν γνώμῃ παρελάσσηι.

At this point I cease for you the trustworthy account and understanding
about the truth. Henceforward learn mortal opinions
hearing the deceitful order of my words.
[. . .]
To you I reveal this arrangement, accurate in its entirety,
so that no mortals may ever overcome you[36] with their opinion.

The language employed in these lines constructs a similar dichotomy as that presented at the end of B 1 (= PARM D 4 Laks-Most). The discourse about the truth is defined as a trustworthy account and understanding, πιστὸν λόγον ἠδὲ νόημα, whereas the mortal opinions are introduced as a deceitful account, κόσμον . . . ἐπέων ἀπατηλόν.[37] However, at lines

[35] Occurrences of the term ἀτρεκές in Greek literature suggests that it means 'true', 'exact': see *Il.* 5. 208 ἀτρεκὲς αἷμα, 'true blood'; Pind. *N.* 5. 17, ἀλαθεῖ' ἀτρεκής, 'exact truth'; Herodot. 5.9.1. and 7.60.1, φράσαι or εἰπεῖν τὸ ἀτρεκές, 'to tell the exact truth' or 'to tell with exactness'; Herodot. 7.187.1, ἀτρεκέα ἀριθμόν, 'the exact number'.

[36] On the meaning of παρελάσσηι see Tor (2017: 202), who writes that the term 'derives from the Homeric vocabulary for chariot races. It signifies, not merely the notion of passing by, but of driving past one in a race. The goddess promises the *kouros* that no mortal judgment will "outstrip" him after he learns the cosmology which follows'.

[37] As Thanassas (2006) has pointed out, the word 'deceitful' is hardly reconcilable with the status of the goddess of truth, who promises Parmenides comprehensive knowledge: see B 1.27 (= PARM D 4.27 Laks-Most), πάντα πυθέσθαι; B 10.1 (= PARM D 12.1 Laks-Most), εἴσηι δ' αἰθερίαν φύσιν; B 10.4 (= PARM D 12.4 Laks-Most), ἔργα . . . πεύσηι . . . σελήνης; and B 10.5 (= PARM D 12.5 Laks-Most), εἰδήσεις οὐρανόν. I would argue that the qualification of mortal opinions as deceitful can be understood within the epistemological frame encompassing mortal opinions; the fact, in other words, that, as I will show, these are a genuine description of the way things have come to pass, but nonetheless lack conviction or assurance that they are as such.

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60–61 (= PARM D 8.65–66 Laks-Most) the goddess claims a revelation that is a διάκοσμος ... πάντα ἐοικώς, an entirely appropriate and accurate arrangement as well as an explanation that accords with what has come to pass. In virtue of this, it will not be surpassed by any other mortal cosmology.[38]

To understand the meaning of this last claim, we need to ask why Parmenides characterizes the goddess's revelation concerning mortal opinions – that is, concerning topics of natural philosophy – in such a peculiar way and why they are so sharply contrasted with the first part of her account.[39] In what follows I am going to argue that Parmenides, through his distinction between truth and mortal opinions, wanted to convey his own conception of human cognitive potential and thus offer people a pathway through which they could be persuaded about topics regarding the nature of the physical world.

If we zoom in on the vocabulary Parmenides employed to depict the two major thematic areas of his philosophy, then we see that the goddess never characterizes topics of natural philosophy in a pejorative way or undermines them as imperfect, incorrect, incomplete or even false themes.[40] Rather, Parmenides' language reflects 'the assumption that accounts pertaining to such things can describe them correctly or incorrectly and, furthermore, that the accounts advanced in the *Doxa* do so correctly'.[41] On the one hand, the notion that no πίστις ἀληθής pertains to the βροτῶν δόξας (B 1.30 [= PARM D 4.30 Laks-Most]) and that these therefore cannot have a trustworthy account and understanding (πιστὸν λόγον ἠδὲ νόημα at B 8.50 [= PARM D 8.55 Laks-Most]) does not mean, as Palmer clarifies, that they are incorrect or even false in contrast to the first part of the goddess's revelation.[42] Rather, expressions of this sort indicate that 'there is no *genuine trustworthiness* or *conviction* in the portion of her [i.e., of the goddess] account that will follow after her account of true

[38] See line 61, ὡς οὐ μή ποτέ τίς σε βροτῶν γνώμη παρελάσσηι, with its discussion in Palmer (2009: 162): '[t]hese words mark the goddess's cosmology as superior to any Parmenides might encounter'.

[39] In Parmenides studies of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, mortal opinions have generally been taken as a false account, indeed as an account of a false, apparent world rejected by the true arguments of the first part of the divine revelation about the *aletheia*. See Owen (1960: 84–102), Guthrie (1965: esp. 50–52), Reinhardt (1974: 296), Mourelatos (2008: 259–60) and Coxon (2009: 183 and 221). More recently scholars have displayed a more positive approach in evaluating Parmenides' mortal opinions – that is, Parmenides' natural philosophy – which is now generally regarded as a plausible, though imperfect, explanation of the physical world and is considered able to include both positive and negative elements. See Tor (2017: 163–69) with extensive references to recent opinions on the topic.

[40] This point is clearly made by Tor (2017: e.g., 200–1). [41] Ibid. 201. [42] Palmer (2009: 92).

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reality'.[43] In other words, the goddess does not say that her account in the *Doxa* lacks truth, but only that it lacks the *certainty* of truth.

On the other hand, at B 1.31–32 (= PARM D 4.31–32 Laks-Most) the goddess clarifies that Parmenides is going to learn how things that mortals resolved and accepted as valid (δοκοῦντα)[44] were (or would have been) rightly considered as *a genuine account of things that are* (ὄντα).[45] Palmer has pointed out that, like the adjective δόκιμος,[46] 'the corresponding adverb δοκίμως, although rare, preserves the positive connotation and has the sense of "really", "genuinely", or "actually"'.[47] With this given, we can therefore assume that the goddess's account of mortal opinions, which will follow after her discourse about the two pathways of enquiry and *what-is*, will be entirely trustworthy because, as the goddess herself says, it is a genuine account of things as they truly are.

An analogous conclusion could be reached from B 8.60–61 (= PARM D 8.65–66 Laks-Most), where we are told that the goddess's διάκοσμος, or 'arrangement'[48] is πάντα ἐοικώς, meaning entirely appropriate and accurate; that is, it complies with what has come to pass and, in virtue of this, it will not be surpassed by any other mortal cosmology.[49] However, how can

[43] Ibid.

[44] For the meaning of the so-called δοκ-words see n.4 above. For the meaning of δοκοῦντα and the *figura etymologica* δοκοῦντα . . . δοκίμως in Parmenides see Palmer (2009: 177):

> Not a few interpreters have taken the designation of the things to be described in the cosmology as τὰ δοκεῦντα to be evidence of the illusory character of the things so designated, understanding τὰ δοκεῦντα as 'things that are (merely) believed to be'. Elsewhere, however, the phrase τὰ δοκοῦντα often has the sense of what someone thinks, believes, supposes, or resolves with nothing like the implication of irreality some have wrongly detected in Parmenides' use of the phrase . . . It should thus be clear that Parmenides employs neither τὰ δοκεῦντα (fr. 1.31) nor δόξας (fr. 1.30a, fr. 8.51) in the sense of 'fancies' or '*mere* opinions': τὰ δοκεῦντα or 'what they resolved' will be seen in retrospect to refer to the principles of the cosmology, light and night. (Palmer's emphasis).

See also Lesher (1984: 19; 1999: 240), Curd (1998: 21–22), Mourelatos (2008: 200 and 204) and, more recently, Tor (2017: 211–14).

[45] See already Reale-Ruggiu (2003: 199):

> The Goddess promises to complete the revelation of the truth by adding a 'yet' (eppure) in the sense of 'further' (inoltre), as a completion not of the denied error, but of the truth of which at first the solid heart was revealed. Therefore, the expression introduces a distinct moment with respect to the heart of the Truth, but certainly other than the error.

[46] The word δόκιμος (<δέχομαι, 'accept') always has a positive connotation, with the sense of 'acceptable', 'trustworthy', 'approved', 'esteemed' or even 'excellent'.

[47] Palmer (2009: 176 n.55).

[48] The word διάκοσμος in B 8.60 (= PARM D 8.65 Laks-Most) can refer to the arrangement of the cosmos, the arrangement of the goddess' words or, likely but more ambiguously, to both with the meaning of 'arrangement of my words about the cosmos'.

[49] See l. 61, ὡς οὐ μή ποτέ τίς σε βροτῶν γνώμη παρελάσσηι, with n.38 above.

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this conclusion be reconciled with the claim the goddess makes at B 8.52 (= PARM D 8.57 Laks-Most), to offer an account of mortal opinions that is deceitful (κόσμον . . . ἐπέων ἀπατηλόν)? *Prima facie*, the word 'deceitful' is hardly reconcilable with the status of the goddess of truth, who promises Parmenides that he will gain a comprehensive and unsurpassable knowledge of topics of natural philosophy.[50] However, the issue is one of the most debated questions of Parmenides' philosophy and, given the nature of the evidence at our disposal, any attempt to answer it can only be speculative. Below I will venture a proposal to address this issue, arguing that the goddess's deceitful discourse refers to a problem of language rather than content.

To this end, let us begin with B 8.53 (= PARM D 8.58 Laks-Most), where the particle γάρ connects the goddess's κόσμον . . . ἐπέων ἀπατηλόν to her account of the two forms, light and night, that mortals established to name their opinions. The ensuing verses explain that mortals ἐκρίναντο, distinguished, these two forms and make them ἀντία, and χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, opposite and separate from one another. On the one hand, light has been made ethereal, mild and lightweight, whereas night is dark, dense and heavy. Yet the distinction between the two principles, indeed the two principles themselves, result from a mortal error: ἐν ὧι πεπλανημένοι εἰσίν (l. 54 [= PARM D 8.59 Laks-Most]).[51]

In DK 28 B 9 (= PARM D 13 Laks-Most),[52] moreover, the goddess argues that all visible things (in the world)[53] have been named according to

[50] This point was first made by Thanassas (2006). See n.37 above.

[51] DK 28 B 8.53–59 (= PARM D 8.58–64 Laks-Most): μορφὰς γὰρ κατέθεντο δύο γνώμαις ὀνομάζειν / τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεών ἐστιν – ἐν ὧι πεπλανημένοι εἰσίν – / τἀντία δ' ἐκρίναντο δέμας καὶ σήματ' ἔθεντο / χωρὶς ἀπ' ἀλλήλων, τῆι μὲν φλογὸς αἰθέριον πῦρ, / ἤπιον ὄν, μέγ' ἐλαφρόν, ἑωυτῶι πάντοσε τωὐτόν, / τῶι δ' ἑτέρωι μὴ τωὐτόν· ἀτὰρ κἀκεῖνο κατ' αὐτό / τἀντία νύκτ' ἀδαῆ, πυκινὸν δέμας ἐμβριθές τε. 'For two forms they established to name their opinions / neither of which it is right to name: wherein they have gone astray; / they distinguished them as things opposite in kind and assigned them markers / distinct from one another, for the one the ethereal fire of flame, / gentle, highly light, everyway the same as itself, / yet not the same as the other. But that one too is in itself / the opposite, dark night, dense in kind and heavy.' For the translation of l. 54 (= PARM D 8.59 Laks-Most), note that *loci similes* (such as Aristoph. *Thesm*. 549; Plat. *Rsp*. 423a and in Xenoph. *An* 5.6.12) suggest μίαν γὰρ οὐ . . . τῶν means οὐδεμίαν.

[52] αὐτὰρ ἐπειδὴ πάντα φάος καὶ νὺξ ὄνομ' ἐστί / καὶ τὰ κατὰ σφετέρας δυνάμεις ἐπὶ τοῖσί τε καὶ τοῖς, / πᾶν πλέον ἐστὶν ὁμοῦ φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντου / ἴσων ἀμφοτέρων, ἐπεὶ οὐδετέρωι μέτα μηδέν. 'But since all things have been named light and night, / and according to their powers names have been given to these and those things / all is full of light and invisible night together, / of both alike, since nothing is with neither.' It is worth noting that Simpl. *Phys*. 180.9–12 indicates that these verses followed shortly after B 8.59 (= PARM D 8.64 Laks-Most). For the form ὄνομ' ἐστί (l. 1) instead of ὀνόμασται transmitted by Simplicius' manuscripts, see Ferrari (2010: 37 n.31).

[53] The word πάντα at l. 1 and, above all, the expression ἐπὶ τοῖσί τε καὶ τοῖς indicates here the totality of the things in the cosmos.

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light and night and, specifically, according to their powers.[54] This seems to entail that names are given to things according to their visible features in connection to the distinct characteristics of the two principles. The goddess, however, has just warned of the erroneous nature of the two forms of light and night and of their associated powers. A possible deduction is that the names of things are erroneous as well, because, being given upon incorrect conceptualizations of perceptions and experiences of the world around, they evoke faulty semantic frames.[55]

Against this background, therefore, if one is to provide an entirely accurate account of the nature of things, one is faced with two options: either rejecting human language *tout court* and inventing new names; or retaining human language and its names while correcting, to the best of one's own abilities, the misleading semantic frames they evoke. By saying at DK 28 B 9.3 (= PARM D 13.3 Laks-Most) that 'all (πᾶν) is full of light and night together and of both alike, since nothing is with neither', the goddess seems to have a preference for the latter option. Indeed, she uses incorrect names ('all is full of *light* and *night*', my emphasis) but tries to elicit the unitary, full and continuous aspect of all in contrast to the basic opposition evoked by the principles of light and night.

In this respect, it is worth noting that DK 28 B 9.3 (= PARM D 13.3 Laks-Most) is highly reminiscent of a line belonging to the *aletheia*-part of the goddess' revelation, namely B 8.24 (= PARM D 8.29 Laks-Most): πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεόν ἐστιν ἐόντος, 'all is full of *what-is*'. This expression, which describes *what-is* as a totality replete of being, is within the depiction of *what-is* as an undivided, full and continuous entity. The parallel between B 8.24 (= PARM D 8.29 Laks-Most) and B 9.3 (= PARM D 13.3 Laks-Most) invites the reading that the goddess wants to ascribe essential *semata* of *what-is* to her account of the natural world.[56]

A possible conclusion, then, would be the following: since the goddess's cosmology rests and builds (by correction) on people's incorrect notions, therefore using incorrect names, her κόσμον ἐπέων is to be considered deceptive not because of the nature of the themes and arguments it provides,

[54] According to Ferrari (2010: 37 n.32), τὰ κατὰ σφετέρας δυνάμεις means '"ciò che attiene ai loro poteri" = "i loro poteri"'.

[55] A semantic frame is a conceptual complex of meaning elicited in the mind by a given (verbal) construction when uttered. For semantic frames, see Fillmore (1982). For a useful overview, see Cienki (2010). With reference to Parmenides' verses under investigation, the semantic frames evoked by the names light and night – briefly, the opposition bright/dark and light/heavy elicited by these two notions – imply the idea of opposites, which is mistaken in light of the truly unitary character of *what-is*.

[56] Ferrari (2010: 68–76) examines further lexical parallels and analogies between *Aletheia* and *Doxa*.

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but because of the language used to convey them. In other words, my proposal is to understand the divine account as ἀπατηλόν because, despite its attempt to correct mortal errors and provide a divine account of things, it exploits nonetheless human misleading concepts and names. Yet since it corrects mortal errors, the goddess's διάκοσμος can fairly be taken as πάντα ἐοικώς (at B.60 [= PARM D 8.65 Laks-Most]), entirely appropriate and accurate, and will not be surpassed by any other mortal cosmology.[57]

The last claim can be explained with reference to the fact that Parmenides' cosmology ultimately is not a mortal but a divine account of the physical world. Since traditionally only gods know things as they truly are, no mortal hypothesis on the nature of things will ever be a better description of the cosmos than a divine explanation. Parmenides' divine philosophy, therefore, is not merely the best account, but the *sole* account of the true nature of things. It is most convincing and unsurpassable not because it is plausible, but because it is correct. And it is correct because it is divinely revealed.

We may well conclude, therefore, that not only 'the well-rounded heart of reality' but also the goddess's account of mortal beliefs is entirely trustworthy, genuine and therefore true. However, the two parts of the goddess's revelation are true in a different way. On the one hand, the discourse about *what-is* is true and also entirely convincing, since it is made through a dense illustration of its *sêmata*; namely, rationally verifiable signs of the truth the goddess is revealing.[58] On the other hand, as we have just seen, the goddess's explanation about mortal opinions claims to perfectly agree with things as they occur and for this reason, it coincides with true, unsurpassable knowledge of the physical world. However, it lacks 'the objective persuasive force exerted by the arguments' of the first part of the goddess's revelation[59] and thus falls short of genuine conviction or

[57] See B 8.61 (= PARM D 8.66 Laks-Most) with n.38 above.

[58] In other words, since the propositions the goddess explains throughout the first part of her revelation are part of a rational and deductive reasoning, Parmenides, and consequently his audience, can verify the correctness of the goddess's argumentation and judge the validity of the divine revelation, as the goddess prompts us to do at B 7.5–6 (= EMP D 8.5–6 Laks-Most): 'judge by reason the much-contested test (ἔλεγχος) which has been said (or will have been said) by me'. On ἔλεγχος as a test for validating something as true, see Furley (1989b), Lesher (1984), Curd (1998: 62 n.107) and Ferrari (2010: 50 n.20). On Parmenides' recourse to deduction as a criterion to judge the content of divine revelation, see now Benzi (2016: 8) who, by contrasting Parmenides' method to Hesiod's poetry, argued that 'Parmenides' poetry has . . . the same claim to universality as Hesiod's, but with the fundamental difference that its content is unequivocal and thus humans can place confidence in it', whereas Hesiod's poetry is condemned 'to unsolvable ambiguity'.

[59] The definition is by Bryan (2012: 92).

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assurance that it is true, since even a divine source, such as Parmenides' goddess, cannot provide any proofs or evidence through which one can judge and assess the correct or incorrect nature of her arguments.

If we now think back to the context I outlined in Sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2, then we can better evaluate the contribution made by Parmenides, who was following in the wake of a well-established tradition that reflected on divine and human epistemic possibilities. According to Parmenides, the traditional notion according to which temporally and spatially remote things and phenomena cannot be known clearly by humans holds true even in those cases where someone receives a divine revelation, unless this is accompanied by evidence of the truth it discloses. For this reason, the goddess's characterization of her own cosmological discourse possessing no *pistis alêthes* coincides with Parmenides' conscious and most sincere assertion that some of the arguments contained in his poem, while genuinely valid, cannot ever be proven true.

However, Parmenides' strategy to entrust his natural philosophy to divine revelation serves the purpose of making his divine source the ultimate criterion of the truth of his philosophical account. In other words, the divine source may be taken as a workaround to the idea that the nature of things can only be a matter of conjecture and therefore always falls short of true and profound persuasion. The divine source thus becomes the criterion for conferring certainty on the physical revelation and thus persuading the audience that things are as they are now described. Parmenides' programme is thus evident: when there are no other rational or objective standards by which to verify the arguments of an account on natural philosophy, the poet can claim to have the authority that comes from the gods and thus make the divine source of that philosophy the criterion of its reliability.

6.2 Empedocles on How to Know the Nature of Things

Having outlined the standard view that considered it impossible for humans to know σαφές about the physical world and having shown how Parmenides overcame this limitation by entrusting his natural philosophy to divine revelation, I will now consider Empedocles' own proposal on how people can know the nature of things. In this section (Section 6.2.1) the weight of Empedocles' revelation to attain genuine understanding of the physical world will be investigated, by showing that Empedocles follows very closely the path opened by Parmenides and indeed gives himself the same role and authority that Parmenides assigns to his goddess. Then, in Section 6.2.2, it will be argued that, despite

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Empedocles' appeal to personal enquiry as a way for people to know clearly, observed phenomena *per se* cannot prove Empedocles' philosophy and, for this reason, cannot assure its reliability. This conclusion suggests, on the one hand, that Empedocles' divine revelation is prerequisite to personal enquiry, while observable phenomena serve to corroborate what has been revealed. On the other hand, since Empedocles promises his disciple that he will clearly know the nature of things, something more seems to be required of Pausanias than simply listening. Indeed, it seems necessary for him to relate to things in a non-human way. As I will argue in conclusion, the disciple is required to initiate himself into Empedocles' philosophy and this initiation will finally enable him to relate to the physical world in a divine manner.

6.2.1 The Role of Divine Revelation

As we have seen in Section 6.1.3, Parmenides has been shown to work within the understanding of knowledge developed by the epic tradition but to also modify it for his own purposes, making philosophy a divine and therefore truthful revelation. Here it will be argued that Empedocles too aimed to depict himself as a divine source of truth to give his explanation of the physical world the mantle of true knowledge. In what follows, I will build on that which we have already seen in Chapter 2.4; that is, by following *inter alia* Parmenides' example, Empedocles opens his philosophical poem by claiming for himself an extraordinary nature and wisdom as well as authority on matters beyond ordinary human ken. In fact, as I will now show, there are several echoes of Parmenides' didactic passages scattered throughout Empedocles' verses that show that he did not aim to present himself as the new Parmenides, but rather as Parmenides' goddess. Indeed, Empedocles, as a god reborn as a human being, claims to be the source, not the addressee, of a divine revelation.

To begin, the most remarkable Parmenidean echo in the Empedoclean fragments is at B 17.26 (= EMP D 73.257 Laks-Most): σὺ δ' ἄκουε λόγου στόλον οὐκ ἀπατηλόν. This is an almost verbatim reminiscence of the words of Parmenides' goddess who, as we have seen above, defined her own cosmology as a deceitful discourse: δόξας δ' ἀπὸ τοῦδε βροτείας / μάνθανε κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων (DK 28 B 8.51–52 [= PARM D 8.56–57 Laks-Most]). It is generally maintained that Empedocles, by explicitly recalling the goddess's characterization of the opinions of mortals, intended to set his own cosmology in opposition. However, Palmer has convincingly

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shown that this interpretation is misleading,[60] since the account to which Empedocles refers through his Parmenidean reminiscence (B 17.26 [= EMP D 73.257 Laks-Most]) is the claim that Love has a major role in the shape and functioning of the cosmos. Such a role is generally neglected by people, but Pausanias, by paying due attention to Empedocles' non-deceitful account, will not fail to recognize it.

Be that as it may, Empedocles' reminiscence of Parmenides' line can be taken to be in service of his portrayal as a superhuman individual with divine wisdom. It is therefore a further element of authorial legitimation. By his re-use of the divine speech of Parmenides' goddess, Empedocles aims to evoke in his audience's mind divine advice about the correct epistemic role the disciple should have when listening to a philosophical revelation. Thereby, Empedocles indirectly aims to ascribe to himself the same authority and role as that of Parmenides' goddess.

This conclusion is supported by several analogous echoes of Parmenides' verses scattered throughout Empedocles' fragments, almost all of which are made in contexts when the disciple Pausanias is directly addressed. For instance, Parmenides' B 2.1 (= PARM D 6.1 Laks-Most), εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐγὼν ἐρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας, finds four different echoes in Empedocles. The first hemistich is evoked three times: in B 8.1 (= EMP D 53.1 Laks-Most) with ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω, in B 23.11 (= EMP D 60.11 Laks-Most) with ἀλλὰ τορῶς ταῦτ' ἴσθι, θεοῦ πάρα μῦθον ἀκούσας, and in B 114.3 (= EMP D 6.3 Laks-Most) with οὓς ἐγὼ ἐξερέω. Additionally, PStrasb. a(ii) 29 (= EMP D 73.299 Laks-Most) displays the same philosophical use of the verb κομίζω: ἐκ τῶν ἀψευδῆ κόμισαι φρενὶ δείγματα μ[ύθων]. Furthermore, the goddess's address to Parmenides in B 4 (= PARM D 10 Laks-Most), λεῦσσε δ' ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόωι παρεόντα βεβαίως, is plainly recalled by Empedocles in B 17.21 (= EMP D 73.252 Laks-Most), τὴν σὺ νόωι δέρκευ, μηδ' ὄμμασιν ἧσο τεθηπώς. In particular, the adjective τεθηπότες is reminiscent of the goddess's description about the disparagement of mortal understanding (DK 28 B 6.7 [= PARM D 7.7 Laks-Most]), whereas she directs Parmenides not to rely upon his perception, but rather his reason, to comprehend the content of her revelation. Similarly, Empedocles' instruction to Pausanias is to observe Love with his mind (νόωι), rather than with his eyes, as sensations would lead the disciple astray. In a similar vein, B 17.21 (= EMP D 73.252 Laks-Most) also parallels the goddess's instruction to Parmenides 'to behold things that, while absent, are steadfastly present to mind' (νόωι; DK 28 B 4.1 [= PARM D 10.1 Laks-Most]).[61]

[60] See Palmer (2009: 273–74). [61] On this point, see also Palmer (2009: 275).

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The intentional re-use of the goddess's phrases is noteworthy: it suggests that Empedocles, in his didactic role towards Pausanias, aims to imitate the goddess's role towards Parmenides, ascribing to himself the same divine authority. Indeed, as we have seen in Chapter 3.5, Empedocles pictures himself as an incarnated god, who is a divine, benevolent guide for human beings in this world and beyond. Thus, just as the goddess is beneficial to Parmenides and reveals to him the true nature of things, Empedocles is the source of his own philosophy, which discloses to Pausanias how things truly are. In this narrative, consequently, Pausanias has the role that Parmenides ascribes to himself. Just like Parmenides, who alone among living beings visits the House of Night and is there called by the goddess her beloved *kouros*, Pausanias 'turned aside (scil. from the common path)', parting from ordinary mortals to become Empedocles' beloved disciple (see B 2.8–9 [= EMP D 42.8–9 Laks-Most]). Moreover, just like Parmenides, who is going to learn everything from the goddess and thus become a 'man who knows' (εἰδὼς φώς at DK 28 B 1.3 [= PARM D 4.3 Laks-Most]),[62] Pausanias is promised extraordinary powers over the forces of nature (see B 111 [= EMP D 43 Laks-Most]) and a super-human wisdom at the end of his philosophical training (e.g., B 2.9 [= EMP D 42.9 Laks-Most]).

It is worth noting that the exceptional nature of Parmenides' cognitive abilities is highlighted in contrast to ordinary human beings, as is shown in DK 28 B 6.3–9 (= EMP D 7.3–9 Laks-Most):

> πρώτης γάρ σ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ ταύτης διζήσιος <ἄρξω>,[63]
> αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ τῆς, ἣν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδέν
> πλάττονται, δίκρανοι· ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν
> στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλαγκτὸν νόον· οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται
> κωφοὶ ὁμῶς τυφλοί τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φῦλα,
> οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταὐτὸν νενόμισται
> κοὐ ταὐτόν, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπός ἐστι κέλευθος.
>
> For <I shall begin> for you from this first way of enquiry,
> then yet again from that which mortals who know nothing
> wander two-headed: for haplessness in their
> breasts directs their wandering mind. They are borne along

[62] Ferrari (2007: 98–113) interprets Parmenides' account of his journey in the prologue as a flash-back story. According to this interpretation, the first lines of the prologue recount the return journey of Parmenides after his encounter with the goddess in the House of Night. It follows that Parmenides' claim to be a 'man who knows' follows his journey and encounter with the goddess, who makes him, with her revelation, an εἰδώς φῶς.

[63] The verb ἄρξω was proposed by Nehamas. In contrast, the text in Diels-Kranz has εἴργω (in analogy with DK 28 B 7.2 [= PARM D 8.2 Laks-Most]: ἀφ' ὁδοῦ διζήσιος εἶργε νόημα). For a defence of Nehamas's proposal, see Palmer (2009: 65–69).

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deaf and blind at once, bedazzled, undiscriminating hordes,
who have supposed that it is and is not the same
and not the same; but the path of all these turns back on itself.
(transl. Palmer, slightly modified)

Here, ordinary people are described as completely deprived of understanding and their ignorance is contrasted with Parmenides' knowledge. In fact, the depiction of ordinary mortals plays on the contrast with Parmenides' self-representation in the prologue. Whereas we are told that mortals know nothing (βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδέν in B 6.4 [= PARM D 7.4 Laks-Most]), Parmenides is a man who knows (εἰδότα φῶτα B 1.3 [= PARM D 4.3 Laks-Most]). Moreover, mortals 'wander along' (πλάττονται at B 6.5 [= PARM D 7.5 Laks-Most]) and have a wandering understanding (πλαγκτὸν νόον at B 6.6 [= PARM D 7.6 Laks-Most]), which is directed by helplessness in their breasts (ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν / στήθεσιν ἰθύνει at B 6.5–6 [= PARM D 7.5–6 Laks-Most]). For this reason, people 'are borne along, deaf and blind at once, bedazzled and undiscriminating hordes' (at B 6.6–7 [= PARM D 7.6–7 Laks-Most]). In contrast, divine mares led by the Daughters of the Sun carry (φέρουσιν in B 1.1 [= PARM D 4.1 Laks-Most]) Parmenides along the path of the god. This leads (φέρει B 1.3 [= PARM D 4.1 Laks-Most]) to a precise destination, the House of Night, while the path of mortals 'turns back on itself' (παλίντροπός ἐστι κέλευθος at B 6.9 [= PARM D 6.9 Laks-Most]).

Like Parmenides, Empedocles too remarks on human cognitive poorness, for instance through the lines of fragment B 2 (= EMP D 42 Laks-Most):[64]

στεινωποὶ μὲν γὰρ παλάμαι κατὰ γυῖα κέχυνται·
πολλὰ δὲ δείλ' ἔμπαια, τά τ' ἀμβλύνουσι μέριμνας·
παῦρον δὲ ζωῆισι βίου μέρος ἀθρήσαντες
ὠκύμοροι καπνοῖο δίκην ἀρθέντες ἀπέπταν,
αὐτὸ μόνον πεισθέντες, ὅτωι προσέκυρσεν ἕκαστος
πάντοσ' ἐλαυνόμενοι· τὸ δ' ὅλον <τίς ἄρ'> εὔχεται εὑρεῖν;
οὕτως οὔτ' ἐπιδερκτὰ τὰδ' ἀνδράσιν οὔτ' ἐπακουστά
οὔτε νόωι περιληπτά. σὺ δ' οὖν, ἐπεὶ ὧδ' ἐλιάσθης,
πεύσεαι· οὐ πλεῖόν γε βροτείη μῆτις ὄρωρεν.

For narrow devices are spread through their limbs,
and many wretched things strike in and dull their solicitudes.
And having seen a small portion of life in their lifetime,
swiftly dying, carried up like smoke they fly away

[64] For a close analysis of this fragment, see Chapter 2.5.

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convinced only of that which each has chanced to experience 5
being driven in all directions. Who then boasts that they have found the whole?
These things are not so to be seen or heard by humans
or grasped with mind. But you then, since you turned aside,
shall learn: mortal intelligence has certainly never risen higher.

Ordinary people are essentially described as having insufficient means to understand; their knowing devices are narrow (στεινωποί at l. 1) and their lifetime too short to collect a satisfying amount of data enabling clear knowledge, plus they are continuously distracted by illness and unimportant concerns that dull their thoughts. For these reasons, in their attempts to know, they are driven away and fooled by their impressions.[65] Thus, no human being can boast to have found the whole.[66] Nor can people understand what Empedocles says in his philosophy merely by relying on their ordinary senses and minds, as these are not apt to comprehend the true nature of things.[67]

Yet Empedocles' pessimistic view on human cognitive abilities in B 2 (= EMP D 42 Laks-Most) is almost overturned in his final claim directed to Pausanias (ll. 8–9). As we have seen in Chapter 2.5, Empedocles utters here the promise that, at the end of his philosophical training, Pausanias will go beyond his human nature and reach the highest, divine form of understanding by enlarging his tools of knowledge, increasing his attention span and, above all, prolonging the duration of his existence. To this end, Pausanias needs to part from the ordinary, human perspective and focus, instead, on Empedocles' revelation.

In his epistemic role, which I will examine again in Section 6.4, it is demanded that Pausanias listens attentively to Empedocles' words and observes things all around. In fact, didactic directions of this kind are scattered throughout the physical poem: Pausanias is frequently encouraged to learn by listening to the doctrine and, at the same time, by examining the environment in search of signs confirming Empedocles' words. These directions show the importance Empedocles attributes to both his revelation and consideration of sensible data to gain valid knowledge.

[65] For an analysis of Parmenides' and Empedocles' use of the metaphor domain of journey in their discourses on and theories of knowledge, see Ferella (2017; 2018b). Tor (2017: 324) suggests that the idea of mortals scattered in every direction plays on contrast with the ability to persist across lives.

[66] I read line 6 as a rhetorical question.

[67] In B 113 (= EMP D 5 Laks-Most), which presumably belongs to the *Purifications*, Empedocles analogously warns human beings that the truth he is spreading may hardly persuade their ordinary minds.

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Empedocles' appeal to sensible data also parallels the kind of enquiry, practised by Xenophanes, Alcmaeon and the Hippocratic author of *Ancient Medicine*, as we have seen in Section 6.1.1. However, the reason Pausanias is encouraged to pursue this kind of enquiry is slightly different from these thinkers. While the collection of a wide range of sensible data constituted the basis upon which the abovementioned authors formed conjectures and constructed physical theories, Pausanias is encouraged to observe sensible data and thereby expand his range of experiences to *corroborate what Empedocles is revealing* and consequently be firmly convinced by this revelation. Let us consider the following lines:

[Σπεῦ]δε δ᾽ ὅπως μὴ μοῦνον ἀν᾽ οὔατα [μῦθος ἵκηται]
[ἠδέ] μευ ἀμφὶς ἐόντα κλύων [ν]ημερτ[έα φράζευ·]
[δεί]ξω σοι καὶ ἀν᾽ ὅσσ᾽ ἴνα μείζονι σώμ[ατι κύρει,]
[π]ρῶτον μὲν ξύνοδόν τε διάπτυξίν τ᾽ ⊥ε γενέθλης⊥
ὅσ[σ]α τε νῦν ἔτι λοιπὰ πέλει τούτοιο τ[όκοιο,] 295
τοῦτο μὲν [ἂν] θηρῶν ὀριπλάγκτων ἀγ[ρότερ᾽ εἴδη,]
τοῦτο δ᾽ ἀν᾽ ἀ[νθρώ]πων δίδυμον φύμ̣ά, [τοῦτο δ᾽ ἀν᾽ ἀνθέων]
ῥιζοφόρων γέ̣ννημα καὶ ἀμπελοβάμ[ονα βότρυν·]
ἐκ τῶν ἀψευδῆ κόμισαι φρενὶ δείγματα μ[ύθων.]
ὄψει γὰρ ξύνοδόν τε διάπτυξίν τε γενέθλη ⊥ς⊥ ...
(PStrasb. a(ii) 21–30 [= EMP D 73. 291–300 Laks-Most])

Make sure that my account does not reach only as far as your ears
and as you hear me consider the truth all around.
I shall show you, to your eyes, where they find a larger body:
the coming-together and the unfolding of birth
and all that still now remains of this generation
This among the savage kinds of mountain-wandering wild beasts,
this, among the double race of human beings, and this, among the species
of root-bearing flowers and the vine-climbing grape.
From them derive by your mind unerring proofs of my words.
For you will see the coming-together and the unfolding of birth ...

These lines clearly indicate that Pausanias is constantly prompted not just passively to hear what Empedocles tells him, but actively to look around for things that he can compare to the words he is listening to: 'Make sure that my account does not reach only as far as your ears / and as you hear me consider the truth all around'. Thereby Pausanias will be convinced that Empedocles' discourse corresponds to truth: 'From them preserve in your mind unerring proofs of my words'.

The notion that surrounding things provide evidence for Empedocles' revelation shows that, unlike Ionian ἱστορίη, Pausanias' attention to

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sensible data is clearly ancillary to divine revelation, which is instead essential to gain knowledge, as ordinary people are said to have minds that cannot grasp the truth or discover 'the whole' by themselves (see B 2 [= EMP D 42 Laks-Most]). Thus, Empedocles' revelation of truth is the primary, crucial element in the pursuit of the understanding of the nature of things. This conclusion is reiterated with surprising clarity at the end of another fragment, B 23.9–11 (= EMP D 60.9–11 Laks-Most):

> οὕτω μή σ' ἀπάτη φρένα καινύτω ἄλλοθεν εἶναι
> θνητῶν, ὅσσα γε δῆλα γεγάκασιν ἄσπετα, πηγήν,
> ἀλλὰ τορῶς ταῦτ' ἴσθι, θεοῦ πάρα μῦθον ἀκούσας.
>
> Nor let the error overcome your mind that otherwise would be
> the source of mortal things, as many as have become evident,
> but know these things clearly having heard the word of the god.

Through these lines, Empedocles states that only by hearing his divine revelation[68] will Pausanias know beyond any reasonable doubt the true origin of mortal things.

The notion that the true nature of the physical world can only be revealed came to Empedocles by his philosophical model Parmenides who, as we have seen, entrusted his physical doctrine to the revelation of a goddess encountered at the end of a journey of initiation. However, whereas on such matters Parmenides' goddess could promise a true account, which nonetheless lacks the assurance of truth, Empedocles assures Pausanias that he will know clearly, τορῶς (B 23.11 [= EMP D 60.11 Laks-Most]). Elsewhere, Empedocles similarly affirms that he will show Pausanias evidence in the surrounding world, which unquestionably demonstrates the truth of his own revelation. Items of evidence the disciple can discover all around are defined as ἐπιμάρτυρα, literally 'witnesses', of the doctrine Empedocles is revealing (B 21.1 [= EMP D 77a.1 Laks-Most]). Elsewhere they are called 'unerring proofs' of Empedocles' words (ἀψευδῆ δείγματα μύθων at PStrasb. a(ii) 29–30 [= EMP D 73. 299–300 Laks-Most]) and 'infallible truth' (ἐόντα . . . [ν]ημερτ[έα at PStrasb. a(ii) 22 [= EMP D 73.292 Laks-Most]). Expressions of this sort not only depict Empedocles' revelation as true but also represent the level of persuasion it brings – the kind of persuasion that only a divine disclosure of truth can display. Thus, Empedocles claims that persuasion can come to Pausanias from his personal observation and experience of things all around. The inference is that things and phenomena people may experience in their life, if they are thoroughly comprehended, can corroborate beyond any doubt the true nature of Empedocles' revelation.

[68] The masculine θεοῦ is a reference to Empedocles himself, as I established in Chapter 1.4.

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Whereas in the next section we will delve into the question of *who can thoroughly comprehend* things that escape ordinary human knowledge, by evaluating the weight of personal observation in the process of knowing truly, let us wrap up my arguments thus far. Having now contextualized Empedocles' concept of divine and human knowledge, locating it within a consolidated tradition stemming from Homer, I was able to show that Empedocles' more immediate source and model Parmenides makes his philosophy a divine revelation to overcome the impasse of a knowledge of the physical world that cannot be known to be true. In contrast to Parmenides, however, Empedocles crucially switches the role of the 'teller' of truth from a goddess to himself. In doing so Empedocles makes himself the divine source of his own philosophy, while reserving to Pausanias the same role Parmenides claimed for himself, that of an initiate to truth.

Moreover, in contrast to Parmenides, who is told a truthful philosophy that nonetheless brings no assurance of truth, at the end of his philosophical training Pausanias will know about the physical world clearly. As we will see in the next section, this claim implies that Pausanias is promised to overcome human cognitive limitations, that is, to change his being from mortal to god. This will finally enable him to relate to the physical world in a divine way and thus know it clearly. Such a change is only made possible through Empedocles' philosophy, whose proper reception will impact the very nature of Pausanias' mind. Before we can draw this conclusion in Section 6.3, however, I shall first consider the weight of personal observation (αὐτοψία) of things around us within the context of Empedocles' scientific method of enquiry.

6.2.2 Observation and Empirical Enquiry

As we have just seen, in contrast to his model Parmenides, Empedocles claims that his revelation of the nature of things can be corroborated by proofs Pausanias can see in the environment, thanks to which the disciple can know the physical world clearly. Yet in light of a consolidated tradition that ascribes such a knowledge only to gods, a twofold question arises: how could Empedocles conceive that humans, with their cognitive limitations and too-short a life, could come to understand truth by observing the world around them? With a focus on the objects of observation, additionally, in which way could the observable phenomena that Empedocles presents to Pausanias confirm the principles of his natural philosophy? In what follows, I will show that personal observation may play a role in the understanding of the physical world in terms of both a (fallacious) confirmatory item and part

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of a method of enquiry resting upon inductive reasoning. By doing so, however, I will argue that, despite the more or less confirmatory character Empedocles may have attributed to personal enquiry, phenomena observed through the structure of a human mind cannot be said to prove his physical theories and thereby confirm the truth of his revelation. Thus, in order to know things truly through observation, one must relate to the observed things with a new mental structure; that is, with a divine mind.

Having already established in Section 6.2.1 that Empedocles' divine revelation is superior to any other form of personal enquiry into the physical world, which leads to no results if it is conducted without his words, it is now worth noting that, from a methodological perspective, the foundational entities of Empedocles' physical world, the four elements, are primarily entrusted to his revelation, for instance when he announces them for the first time through the lines of B 6 (= EMP D 57 Laks-Most): 'Hear first the four roots of all things', τέσσαρα γὰρ πάντων ῥιζώματα πρῶτον ἄκουε. Thus, Pausanias is first and foremost urged to *hear* (ἄκουε) Empedocles' words.[69]

However, in another set of verses, by reiterating his discourse about the four elements, Empedocles adds that they can be known empirically. Indeed, he indicates where they can chiefly be observed.

> ἀλλ' ἄγε, τόνδ' ὀάρων προτέρων ἐπιμάρτυρα δέρκευ,
> εἴ τι καὶ ἐν προτέροισι λιπόξυλον ἔπλετο μορφῆι,
> ἠέλιον μὲν λευκὸν ὁρᾶν καὶ θερμὸν ἁπάντηι,
> ἄμβροτα δ' ὅσσ' εἴδει τε καὶ ἀργέτι δεύεται αὐγῆι,
> ὄμβρον δ' ἐν πᾶσι δνοφόεντά τε ῥιγαλέον τε·
> ἐκ δ' αἴης προρέουσι θελεμνά τε καὶ στερεωπά.
>
> (B 21.1–6 [= EMP D 77a.1–6 Laks-Most])

> But come! Gaze on this witness to my previous words,
> if anything was in my previous [remark] left wanting in form:
> The sun, bright to look and hot in every respect,
> and the immortal bodies which are drenched in heat and shining light,
> and rain, in all things dark and cold;
> and there flow from the earth things dense and solid.[70]
>
> (transl. Laks-Most)

Having prompted his disciple first to hear his words on the physical principles, through the above-quoted lines Empedocles now encourages Pausanias to *observe* (δέρκευ) evidence of his previous discourse on the four

[69] For a discussion of this fragment, see Chapter 2.7.
[70] See also B 17.18–20 (= EMP D 73.249–51 Laks-Most).

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elements. By means of legal language, Empedocles calls 'witnesses' (ἐπιμάρτυρα) of the truthful nature of his words the phenomenal appearances of the sun, celestial bodies, rain and earth with their most traditional characteristics. Put differently, the sun is taken to show the basic element of fire, the celestial bodies the element of air,[71] rain the element of water and the terrestrial crust the element of earth.

Analogously, in B 22.1–3 (= EMP D 101.1–3 Laks-Most), by introducing a different yet related doctrine, Empedocles argues that smaller portions of the elements involved in the structure of microcosmic compounds were separated from their greatest cosmic masses constituting the sun, earth (that is, the terrestrial crust), sky and sea. Elsewhere, Empedocles affirms that the theory according to which microcosmic compounds are made out of the same elements that constitute the universe, mixed and separated by Love and Strife, can empirically be proven. In this regard, consider B 21.7–12 (= EMP D 77a.7–12 Laks-Most):

> ἐν δὲ Κότωι διάμορφα καὶ ἄνδιχα πάντα πέλονται,
> σὺν δ' ἔβη ἐν Φιλότητι καὶ ἀλλήλοισι ποθεῖται.
> ἐκ τούτων γὰρ πάνθ' ὅσα τ' ἦν ὅσα τ' ἔστι καὶ ἔσται,
> δένδρεά τ' ἐβλάστησε καὶ ἀνέρες ἠδὲ γυναῖκες, 10
> θῆρές τ' οἰωνοί τε καὶ ὑδατοθρέμμονες ἰχθῦς,
> καί τε θεοὶ δολιχαίωνες τιμῆισι φέριστοι.
>
> Under Rancour they all are distinct in form and separate,
> and they come together in Love and are desired by each other.
> For out of these all things that were, that are, and will be in the future
> have sprung: trees and men and women 10
> and beasts and birds and water-nourished fish,
> and long-lived gods, the greatest in honours.

Both with regard to the four roots examined above and the microcosmic compounds made out of them, Empedocles' teaching strategy is clear: that is, he first discloses his argument and then indicates the field of observation that could substantiate it. As we can see, the statement that the elements come together by Love and are separated by Strife to be formed into all things we can see in the physical world is followed by the clarification at lines 10–12 of what those things are: trees, human beings, beasts, birds, fish and long-lived gods. Although Empedocles does not explicitly introduce

[71] According to most scholars, 'the immortal bodies which are drenched in heat and shining light' of B 21.4 (= EMP D 77a.4 Laks-Most) are the celestial bodies. In contrast, Laks-Most (2016: 430) interpret the line as referring to clouds, following an interpretation by Picot (2014: 358–72). Either way the reference is to the element of air.

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them as a field of observation of the main theory, we can therefore appreciate that he chooses a very familiar domain. Indeed, Empedocles seems to suggest that, by considering familiar things in our daily experience, we could measure the merit of his utterances about the physical principles that govern them.

Elsewhere Empedocles is even more explicit about trees, animals, men and women being the field of observation of elemental compounds. In B 20 (= EMP D 73.302–8 Laks-Most), for instance, Empedocles affirms that Pausanias can observe 'in the glorious bulk of mortal limbs' that Love and Strife produce mixtures and separations of elements that bring about living beings. In this respect, the lines of the papyrus I quoted in Section 6.2.1 (PStrasb. a(ii) 21–30 [= EMP D 73.291–300 Laks-Most]) sound remarkable. There, Empedocles says he is able to demonstrate to his disciple ('I shall *show* you *to your eyes*') that 'the savage kinds of mountain-wandering wild beasts . . . the double race of human beings . . ., the species of root-bearing flowers and the vine-climbing grape' represent the 'larger body' of observation of the coming-together and the unfolding of birth. As we will see in the next chapter, the coming-together (ξύνοδον) and the unfolding (διάπτυξιν) of birth indicate the generative action of Love and Strife upon the elements, which give rise to all forms of living beings. We are told, in other words, that by observing living beings, Pausanias will be able to derive by his mind 'unerring proofs of my words', δείγματα μύθων, about 'the coming-together and the unfolding of birth'. The neuter plural δείγματα recalls ἐπιμάρτυρα used in the above-quoted lines of B 21 (= EMP D 77a Laks-Most) with reference to the cosmic masses of the sun, sea, sky and terrestrial crust as empirical items of evidence of the four elements. The expression δείγματα μύθων analogously indicates that living beings are regarded as the field of observation of natural phenomena that are otherwise impenetrable. Indeed, Pausanias is assured that he can observe with his own eyes the process of generation of living beings. More specifically, what he will see will provide evidence that Empedocles' revelation about Love and Strife mixing and separating the four elements to form living beings corresponds to what in fact comes to pass.

However, the extant fragments do not unequivocally clarify the way in which we are supposed to take Empedocles' assertion that things all around exhibit evidence of his theory of elemental mixtures and separations. Where exactly, in other words, are we supposed to see in living beings that they are made out of measured proportions of some or all of the four elements? Does this idea come from the fact that some organic structures seem to resemble the nature of one or more elements? In fact, we have some

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verses in which Empedocles claims that the most solid parts of animals' bodies are evidence that they consist of earth: 'in sea-grazing, heavy-backed seashells ... there you will see the earth living on the highest level of skin; ... indeed, of stone-skinned trumpet-shells and turtles <the carapaces, and> the ashen spears [i.e., antlers] of horned stags'.[72] Alternatively, as water and air enable us to breathe and live, are we supposed to infer from this that water and air must be in some way within the structure of our body? To these and similar questions Empedocles seems to have offered no answer.

Additionally, it is worth emphasizing that Empedocles' assumption of four basic principles may have been due much more to mythological tradition than to attentive observation. And even if a simple glance at the surroundings might have suggested the relevance of some elements over others, this kind of observation displays its indisputable limits. In fact, what the observation of the sun, sky, ocean and terrestrial crust may unveil about the four elements is that they exist in some notable form in the universe – indeed, they are cosmic masses. Yet this surely does not tell us that fire, air, water and earth are fundamental principles of our universe out of which every existing thing is made.

Nevertheless, it is relevant to note that, in ancient 'scientific' methods of enquiry, observation is not as much a proof of the given theory as it is itself part of the design of that theory. As I. Lonie explained with regard to some Hippocratic treatises,[73]

> the observation is caught up in the fabric of the design, becomes a further element in the complexity of that design, and in this way confirms the truth of the account. Thus, in some cases the relevance of the observation itself depends on the truth of the causal account which it apparently intended to confirm. From our point of view, this is formally vicious, a logical blunder ... Here the 'awkward fact' ... and the confirmatory observation have the same status: both are ingredients in the account ... The various devices by which the author tells his story – usually references to, or comparisons with, observable phenomena – can be regarded sometimes as confirmatory evidence, sometimes as the heuristic devices which suggested the form to be taken by the story, sometimes as mere illustrations, and often enough as all three.[74]

[72] PStrasb. b (= EMP D 74 Laks-Most). See also B 76 (= EMP D 74 Laks-Most). In B 21 (= EMP D 77a Laks-Most) earth is associated with solid things.

[73] Specifically, *On Generation*, *On the Nature of the Child*, *Diseases IV*. The remarkable similarity of style, method and language among them led scholars to suggest they are the work of one and the same author. See the discussion in Lonie (1981: 43–51).

[74] Ibid. 7.

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It is therefore the accumulation of observable phenomena and 'awkward facts', put together in the same account, rather than their value as proofs of concepts, that is taken as confirmation of the truth of a certain notion or theory.

To sum up, Empedocles argues that perceptual, empirical knowledge is involved in the enquiry into the principles of the physical world. As we have seen, Empedocles maintains that the existence of four basic elements can be observed in the greatest masses of the cosmos and in the fact that some portions of them are in microcosmic things and living beings. Moreover, this point is believed to entail the fact that the elements are the very ingredients of all existing things in the world – a conclusion that is said to find a field of observation as well. However, as we have just seen, this kind of reasoning by observation is fallacious as it depends on the truth of the causal account which it is apparently intended to confirm. Indeed, it is part of the design of the same account.

Nevertheless, as we will now see, there is at least one passage in Empedocles' extant fragments in which observation and, more generally, experience of familiar things is accounted for as part of a method of enquiry that draws general inferences and abstract universal principles by induction from comparable cases. This is the way in which Love can be known. It starts by the observation of familiar experiences and things, includes a consideration about similarities among them, reflects on the common cause behind those similarities and finally infers via abstraction universal principles that govern all comparable cases in the world.[75] This kind of observation that leads to abstract thought and knowledge of principles is referred to by Empedocles as 'seeing with the mind'.

Consider B 17.20–28 (= EMP D 73.249–57 Laks-Most):

πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα καὶ ἠέρος ἄπλετον ὕψος,
Νεῖκός τ᾽ οὐλόμενον δίχα τῶν, ἀτάλαντον ἁπάντῃ,
καὶ Φιλότης ἐν τοῖσιν, ἴση μῆκός τε πλάτος τε·
τὴν σὺ νόωι δέρκευ, μηδ᾽ ὄμμασιν ἧσο τεθηπώς·
ἥτις καὶ θνητοῖσι νομίζεται ἔμφυτος ἄρθροις,
τῆι τε φίλα φρονέουσι καὶ ἄρθμια ἔργα τελοῦσι,
Γηθοσύνην καλέοντες ἐπώνυμον ἠδ᾽ Ἀφροδίτην·
τὴν οὔ τις μετὰ τοῖσιν ἐλισσομένην δεδάηκε
θνητὸς ἀνήρ·

Fire and water and earth and the immense height of air,
and baleful Strife is separate from them, equivalent everywhere,
and Love among them, equal in length and breadth.

[75] This point was already made by Kamtekar (2009).

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> And you, gaze on her with your mind and do not sit with stunned eyes.
> She is also deemed to be innate in mortal bodies,
> and by her they think loving thoughts and accomplish works of unity,
> calling her by the names Joy and Aphrodite; 26
> her no mortal has perceived as she whirls
> among them.[76]

Empedocles affirms that Love is a principle that cannot be observed or known directly. In contrast to the four elements, which can be observed in the cosmic masses, this indicates that there is nothing in the world that can show the concrete, material (substantial) presence of Love in things. Indeed, no mortal beings have seen her whirling among them. Accordingly, seeing her with the eyes would result in astonishment (μηδ' ὄμμασιν ἧσο τεθηπώς), whereas Empedocles encourages Pausanias to observe Love with his mind (νόωι δέρκευ). In fact, even though Love is beyond the range of observation, she can nonetheless be experienced in everyday life, as she is considered familiar to people: she is innate in mortal limbs and it is because of her that people have friendly thoughts, feel fondness and love, accomplish deeds of friendship and feel joy and sexual desire.[77]

Yet what does it mean to observe Love with one's own mind? Seeing with the mind likely indicates a process of reflection that draws general inferences and universal principles (such as Love) by induction from comparable cases one can access empirically (such as, in this case, experiences of joy, friendship, sexual desire and the like). As R. Kamtekar argues,

> Pausanias can begin by recognizing love in one of its operations, as the inborn power of sexual desire and pleasure in the body . . . When Pausanias comes to see that friendly thoughts (φίλα φρονέουσι) and peaceful relations (ἄρθμια ἔργα) are caused by the same power of love, he will be going beyond his narrow experience. As these familiar effects are traced back to the workings of one cause, love, Empedocles identifies this power with the cosmic principle of Love which unites the elements by harmonizing them . . . *Noticing similarities* between the cases of sexual desire, friendly thoughts, and peaceful relations; *reasoning from similar effects to a single cause* – these activities constitute *seeing with the mind* rather than with the eyes . . . to observe love with the mind rather than with the eyes is an injunction to study love's causal role in its various instances in our experience.[78]

[76] I.e., 'among mortals' (mentioned just before), *contra* e.g., Wright (1995: 170) and Laks-Most (2016: 415 = EMP D73.256) who refer μετὰ τοῖσιν to the four elements.

[77] The name Aphrodite (DK 31 B 17.25 [= EMP D 73.255 Laks-Most]) might indicate that Empedocles' force of Love is the principle responsible for sexual desire. See also Inwood (2001: 63 n.154).

[78] Kamtekar (2009: 229–31); the emphasis is mine.

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Thus, whereas observation applied in the analysis of the four roots as cosmic elements is used for its tendency to confirm, the process used to understand Love is an example of how to extend the power of sensation and empirical investigation for inductive, causal reasoning and abstract thinking.

An analogous reasoning seems to be applied also to infer the working of the four elements. In a series of fragments, in which Empedocles focuses on the construction of body tissues and organs, Empedocles implies that, by observing the interaction between water or watery things, earth or earthy things and fire in some local phenomena, for instance in bakery or pottery, we may learn something about invisible, more basic phenomena affecting life on earth. By a close reading of these fragments we may gain a further idea of what Empedocles meant, first, by the process of 'seeing with the mind'. Second, what he meant by the field of observation of the workings of the four elements that, by mixing and interacting with each other, give rise to living beings.

More precisely, to illustrate Love's construction of bones, at B 96 (= EMP D 192 Laks-Most) Empedocles employs terms that elicit, by way of a metaphor, the domain of craftmanship – in particular, of goldsmithing. Earth is said to receive water and fire in her *choanoi* to form bones fitted together by Love's *kollêmata*. While the term *choanoi* properly indicates hollows in which metals were placed for melting, the word *kollêmata* can indicate metals and stones that are fixed together, as in a piece of jewellery. Thus, it might be inferred that the idea of elements mixing together and interacting with each other to form new things came to Empedocles from a familiar activity: as goldsmiths melt diverse metals together through fire, harden them through water and then join metals and stones to create new and diverse pieces of jewellery, so too does Love with the four elements to form all kinds of mortal compounds.

Similarly, in B 73 (= EMP D 199 Laks-Most) other departments of the domain of craftmanship are evoked in order metaphorically to depict the creative activity of Love with reference to living compounds. Love is said to soak earth with water and form shapes that she then 'gives to swift fire'. The elicited domain is both that of pottery, where water is mixed with earth to produce clay, which is then moulded in different shapes and finally cooked by fire, or, alternatively, we may find an allusion to the activity of a baker who adds water to flour to produce a dough that becomes bread when heated.

Clearly, Empedocles' appeal to the observation of familiar processes to deduce more general principles is guided by inferences based on analogy,

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which prima facie seems similar to those formulated to reason about the principle of Love. As Palmer puts it:

> where C operates as the causal principle of a set of phenomena {P}, and where some set of phenomena {Q} is relevantly similar to {P}, then C can be understood to be operating as the causal principle of {Q} as well.[79]

Moreover, analogical inference is plausible and pervasive to the human mind, and so it may seem, at first sight, that Empedocles' method of enquiry with regard to the processes of elemental mixtures in things proceeds in ways we find intelligible. On a more attentive reading, however, the kind of observation and reasoning Empedocles requires ultimately turns out to fail its purpose. The failure rests specifically on the fact that the similarities we are prompted to recognize between {P} (tissues and organs) and {Q} (goldsmithing, pottery or bakery) are just assumed *a priori*. Indeed, the conceptual mappings underlying these alleged resemblances rest upon the general, *a-priori* assumption that the physical universe is ultimately made out of four basic elements.

On the other hand, the observation of comparable cases can lead us to infer more general principles via analytic thinking and causal reasoning. In the case of Love, in fact, Pausanias can experience different kinds of situations that seem to involve the same emotional predisposition. Because of this, they can be said to share similarities that can effectively be traced back to the same cause, love. Thus, by abstracting similarities from comparable cases and reflecting on their causal relations, we can reconstruct 'more universal' principles regulating many, if not all, compared instances.

To sum up, we see that observation is, for Empedocles, not only a way to confirm a given theory, but also part of a method of enquiry resting upon inductive reasoning, which enables us to gain knowledge of fundamental principles working in all areas of nature. However, since that knowledge lacks, as if it were, proofs of concepts that could conclusively and beyond any doubt confirm its validity, it remains true that, despite personal empirical research, it still takes Empedocles' revelation to disclose the fundamental principles of the physical world as well as to explain their working. In other words, despite the more or less confirmatory character Empedocles may have attributed to personal enquiry, observable phenomena of the kind he chose as evidence for his theories are not transparent and unequivocal to us and, therefore, are not going to convince us of the truth of those theories. Rather, they leave us puzzled.

[79] Palmer (2016: 36).

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However, Pausanias is promised an authentic knowledge of the physical world, such that the observation of the surrounding things will carry the certainty and persuasion of the truth. How is it possible that the empirical evidence that Empedocles presents to us will puzzle us, whereas for Pausanias there will be a way through which he will know authentically? I would argue that the difference between us and Pausanias lies in the fact that Empedocles' philosophy promises true knowledge to those who are initiated. By devoting himself to Empedocles' philosophy, Pausanias is promised divine knowledge, which means that he will be able to observe the surrounding world with divine eyes. As we shall see below, by embracing Empedocles' revelation, Pausanias will expand his cognitive potential and overcome human epistemic limitations and so attain 'the wealth of a divine mind', which is able genuinely to understand (indeed, clearly experience) the nature of things. It is this initiation to Empedocles' philosophy that will enable Pausanias to finally bridge the gap between human and divine knowledge.

6.3 Knowing Nature to Become a God

In contextualizing Empedocles' concept of divine and human knowledge, we could appreciate the prominent role attributed to his revelation and, therefore, to initiation and philosophical training in order for the disciple to gain true knowledge. Moreover, having rejected in Section 6.2 the possibility that such knowledge could be reached within the range of human cognitive abilities, I have then concluded that Pausanias, who is promised a genuine knowledge of the nature of things, must overcome human epistemic limitations and relate to things as a god. Empedocles' physical teachings, as we will now see, are the pathway for a change of being into a divine nature.

In the present section I will argue that the ability to change one's being to attune it to divine nature is explained by Empedocles through his theories of perception, thought and knowledge acquisition. Thus, in Sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 I will reconstruct those theories through a fresh reading of the sources, especially Aristotle and Theophrastus' *De Sensibus*, together with a fresh reading of Empedocles' verses. We will see that perceiving, thinking and knowing are conceptualized as physiological processes of reception and exchange of external elements by and within the body. Moreover, in such processes the elemental constitutions of body organs – that is, the *krasis* of earth, water, air and fire in them – play a prominent role, since the quantity and quality of produced

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sensation, thought and understanding depends on how harmonious and symmetrical those body organs are. Then, in Section 6.3.3, by considering more closely the elemental blend of blood, the controlling organ in the mind, we will see that it can be improved to the level that it will be apt to think and know like a divine mind. Finally, this conclusion will show that an authentic understanding of the physical world is viewed by Empedocles as the way to transcend mortal nature and become a god. This is clear evidence of the doctrinal unity of Empedocles' philosophy.

6.3.1 Empedocles' Theory of Perception

In the following two sections I will reconstruct Empedocles' theory of perception and knowledge acquisition by looking at our most important sources, above all at Theophrastus' *De Sensibus*, and at several hints scattered throughout Empedocles' own verses. This analysis will clarify the role that external inputs and bodily organs play in perceiving, thinking and knowing. In doing so, it will lay the groundwork for my main argument in Section 6.3.3, namely, that the understanding of crucial epistemic inputs – that is, those relating to the true nature of the physical world – enables the transcendence of human cognitive limitations and the change of being into a divine nature.

In his systematic treatment of the most important theories concerning perception and knowledge acquisition before Aristotle, Theophrastus[80] reports that according to Empedocles we perceive through an adaptation (*enarmottein*[81]) of the perceived things to the pores (πόροι in Greek) of our sense organs. The word πόρος (*poros*), which originally indicates a passage over a river or a narrow part of a sea (a strait), metaphorically depicts a passage through a permeable substance such as the skin.[82] In Empedocles'

[80] In his *De Sensu et Sensibilibus*, Theophrastus classifies the processes and the objects of perceiving, thinking and knowing with reference to nine thinkers, specifically, Parmenides (sections 3–4), Empedocles (7–24), Alcmaeon (25–26), Anaxagoras (27–37), Cleidemus (38), Diogenes of Apollonia (39–48), Democritus (49–82) and Plato (5–6 and 83–91). While relatively little space is given to the theories of Parmenides, Alcmaeon and Cleidemus, Theophrastus draws more attention to Anaxagoras, Diogenes and Plato and dedicates to each of them approximately ten sections. However, as we can see, Theophrastus' investigation focuses above all on Empedocles and Democritus, and this is a sign of the importance that these theories have in their philosophical system.

[81] At Chapter 15, Theophrastus reveals that the word αρμόττειν is explicitly used by Empedocles to refer to processes of recognition of things.

[82] In Empedocles there is attested a further metaphorical meaning for the term πόρος indicating a textual passage in a given work (B 35.1 [= EMP D 75 Laks-Most]).

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theory of sensation, πόροι are passages that connect the sense organs at the periphery of the body to a central, controlling body organ.[83]

The adaptation between sense organs and objects of perception is mediated through ἀπορροαί (*aporroai*), literally 'streams', which are continuously emanated from compounds. As Plutarch reports:[84]

σκόπει δὴ, κατ᾽ Ἐμπεδοκλέα
γνούς ὅτι πάντων εἰσὶν ἀπορροαί, ὅσσ᾽ ἐγένοντο . . .
οὐ γὰρ ζώων μόνον οὐδὲ φυτῶν οὐδὲ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης, ἀλλὰ καὶ λίθων ἄπεισιν
ἐνδελεχῶς πολλὰ ῥεύματα καὶ χαλκοῦ καὶ σιδήρου.

Consider that, according to Empedocles
Knowing that there are effluences of all the things that have come about . . .
For not only from animals, plants or earth and sea, but also from stones and bronze many streams depart continuously.

Empedocles does not provide precise information about the nature of the ἀπορροαί, yet a general inference could be that they are *sômata* of some sort and hence they are made of (at least one of) the four elements. This is deduced from Empedocles' ontology, which does not seem to envisage incorporeal entities and therefore requires that, like everything else, effluences too must be made of elements. The conception of ἀπορροαί as σώματα also agrees with the traditional conception of words (hence, sounds and even thoughts) as things. As Wright points out, in the Homeric poems

> words are winged (*Il.* 1.201, 2.7, 4.69 etc.), go past the barrier of the teeth (*Il.* 4.350, 14.83, etc.) and are put by the listener into his or her *thymos* . . . Such a physical representation of words and thoughts, found in Homer, continues through the work of other Presocratics (Heraclitus is an obvious

[83] Note that, according to Empedocles, not only living beings but all compounds seem to have pores. Empedocles did not give a thorough explanation of what these πόροι are made of and, above all, what they contain: see Theophr. *Sens.* 13. The metaphorical use of the term πόρος with reference to sense organs is not an Empedoclean innovation. Theophr. 25f. (= DK 24 A 5) reports a doctrine of pores for Alcmaeon who evidently believed that, with the possible exception of touch, where Theophrastus says that he had no definite theory, all the sense organs are connected by pores to the brain, which Alcmaeon considered the central organ for cognition. Calcidius, in his comment on Plato's *Timaeus* (p. 279 Wrobel = DK 24 A 10 [= ALCM D 17 Laks-Most]), reports that Alcmaeon used the term pores to refer to sensory nerves, particularly the optic nerve, which Alcmaeon presumably discovered by practising anatomical dissection. Yet the reliability of Calcidius' report is debated. First, clear attestation of a practice of anatomical dissection does not predate the Hellenistic age. Moreover, while Calcidius is a late source, Aristoteles and, above all, Theophrastus never mention it. For these reasons, scholars generally assume that Alcmaeon could have discovered the ocular nerve by practising animal dissection or just the section of an eye (Lloyd 1975) or anatomical surgery (Longrigg 1993: 59ff.).

[84] See Plutarch *Quaest. nat.* 916d (= DK 31 B 89 [= EMP D 208 Laks-Most]).

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example) to Plato . . . Aristotle . . . and the Stoics' assumption of *phonai* as *sômata*.[85]

Furthermore, according to Plutarch's *Natural Phenomena*, Empedocles considers smells and similar olfactory effluences (ἀπορροάς in Plutarch's text), which dogs can perceive and follow, as 'fragments of limbs' (κέρματα . . . μελέων) that living beings constantly leave on the ground.[86] By extension, we can make the general inference that any kind of sensory ἀπορροή is a σῶμα of some sort; that is, a compound of elements.

These elemental streams that things in the world emanate get in touch with sense organs and, if they fit them, they may enter the body. More precisely, adaptation between perceptual effluences and the pores of a certain sense organ and, consequently, perception only occur if two basic conditions are fulfilled: συμμετρία (*symmetria*) and τῷ ὁμοίῳ (*tôi homoiôi*).[87] The principle of συμμετρία, ('symmetry' or 'commensurateness') entails that, in order for the pores to be entered by, and to perceive, an effluence, the latter must be commensurate to the former. This means that, as Theophrastus specifies, when a particular effluence is too large for the pores of a certain sense organ, it cannot enter. Analogously, when an effluence is too small, it enters the pores but produces no contact. In both cases perception cannot happen. It is worth noting that particular effluences are only commensurate to specific structures of pores in particular organs. This explains why eyes cannot see sounds and ears cannot hear colours.

Regarding the second criterion of τῷ ὁμοίῳ or likeness, this is more elusive than συμμετρία and its functioning in Empedocles' theory of perception and knowledge acquisition is not at all clear. Theophrastus (*Sens*. 1–2) seems to specify it in terms of the akin nature between the subject and object of perception, which is said to be Empedocles' general condition that enables perception in the first place. On this standard, this

[85] Wright (1995: 259). [86] 23 p. 917e (= DK 31 B 101 [= EMP D 232 Laks-Most]).

[87] Note that Theophr. *Sens*. 1–2 connects the criterion of perceiving τῷ ὁμοίῳ to a general principle, employed by some thinkers when talking about the general character of perception. This principle entails that it is a native endowment of all creatures to know their kin. In other words, we only know that which is similar to our own nature. In contrast, other thinkers, since they maintain that 'the like is unaffected by the like, whereas opposites are affected by each other', explain perception through the opposite principle: τῷ ἐναντίῳ. According to this principle, we experience a sensation because our organs are passively affected by its opposite (for instance, it may be said that we perceive light when this breaks through the darkness). Theophrastus affirms that these two criteria are used only with reference to sense perception in very general terms, whereas they are neglected when a given author treated the working of each of the senses – with the exception of Empedocles, 'who tries to refer also the particular senses to similarity'.

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principle works in sensation processes in such a way that each element in the architecture of a certain sense organ is able to perceive the same element in the object of sensation. The idea seems to be, in other words, that we can perceive only things that are analogous to our own nature. In this sense, Theophrastus connects the principle of likeness to the innate faculty of the elements[88] to be attracted by their homologous substances and indirectly relates it to the cosmologically significant power of attraction of like to(wards) like.[89]

Empedocles' use of the principle of like by like in processes of sensation and knowledge acquisition is attested by his own words in B 109 (= EMP D 207 Laks-Most):

> γαίηι μὲν γὰρ γαῖαν ὀπώπαμεν, ὕδατι δ' ὕδωρ,
> αἰθέρι δ' αἰθέρα δῖον, ἀτὰρ πυρὶ πῦρ ἀίδηλον,
> στοργὴν δὲ στοργῆι, νεῖκος δέ τε νείκεϊ λυγρῶι
>
> For by earth we see earth, by water water,
> by ether shining ether, by fire destructive fire
> Love by Love and Strife by dread Strife.

Aristotle quotes this fragment twice. In *De Anima* (404b 11–20), he mentions Empedocles among those of his predecessors who maintain that the soul is the principle that knows and perceives. These philosophers represent the soul as identical with those principles (*archai*) forming the physical world. Thus, by the same standard, Empedocles considers the soul to be made out of the four elements, and makes each of the elements a soul, as each perceives and knows its homologous substance: 'by earth we see earth etc.'. Empedocles' lines are then followed by Aristotle's remark that Plato analogously argues in the *Timaeus* that the soul is made out of the principles of the universe, for the reason that like is perceived and known by like. The inference is that the principle of like by like governs processes

[88] According to Aristotle, *Metaph.* 985a 23–29 and *De gen. et corr.* 333b 19–22 the movement of like to like is due to Strife, whereas the opposite motion to unite different, heterogeneous elements into compounds, is in parallel due to Love. Additionally, Aristotle seems to contend that whereas the movement of like to like is according to nature, κατὰ φύσιν, the opposite movement is against nature, παρὰ φύσιν. Primavesi (2013: 699–700; 2016: 6–7) has shown that the attraction of like to like is a congenital property of the elements that Strife 'activates' by restraining Love's uniting force.

[89] In the cosmic cycle, the movement of like to like is especially responsible for the construction of the skeleton of our cosmos after the destruction of the Sphairos, as our sources suggest that just after Strife's first intervention into the Sphairos, each element gradually converged towards its homologous and reached a specific place of the universe. In so doing, the elements arranged themselves in big cosmic masses, which move in a whirl. On the cosmogonical role of this kind of movement, see Chapter 7.1.4.

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of sensation and knowledge acquisition in Plato as well as in Empedocles. B 109 (= EMP D 207 Laks-Most) is taken as evidence for this.

Furthermore, in the *Metaphysics* (1000b 5), Aristotle explicitly attributes to Empedocles the view that knowing occurs by like (ἡ δὲ γνῶσις τοῦ ὁμοίου τῷ ὁμοίῳ), and corroborates his statement by quoting B 109 (= EMP D 207 Laks-Most). Moreover, Aristotle infers from this that Empedocles holds perceiving and knowing as two identical processes, as both occur according to the same principle of like by like. Theophrastus closely follows Aristotle in applying to his predecessors, hence to Empedocles, the principle of likeness in theories of perception and knowledge acquisition and sides with Aristotle in arguing that Empedocles assimilated thinking and perceiving.[90] However, Theophrastus seems more sceptical than Aristotle in using the principle of likeness throughout consistently and systematically with reference to individual thinkers and particular sensations. Even in the case of Empedocles, for whom the principle is said to make more sense than for any other earlier philosophers, Theophrastus observes that Empedocles ultimately seems to neglect it in favour of the sole principle of συμμετρία. In fact,

> in his view as a whole, likeness too is taken away, but commensurateness alone is sufficient. On account of this he says that things do not perceive one another because they have incommensurate pores, but whether the effluences are like or unlike <the sensory organ> he leaves quite undetermined. (*Sens*. 15)

As Sedley points out, here Theophrastus admits that Empedocles is silent about the compositional likeness between the objects of sensation (better, the effluences emanated by them) and the sense organs that receive them. Indeed, although Theophrastus introduces Empedocles as a likeness theorist, he recounts Empedocles' views about perception solely in terms of effluences fitting into pores.[91]

Granted thus that συμμετρία is what chiefly enables perception, does the criterion of likeness play any role at all in it? To answer this question, let us see, for instance, how the eye works. Empedocles depicts the internal

[90] See *Sens*. 10:

> τὸ μὲν γὰρ φρονεῖν εἶναι τοῖς ὁμοίοις, τὸ δ' ἀγνοεῖν τοῖς ἀνομοίοις, ὡς ἢ ταὐτὸν ἢ παραπλήσιον ὂν τῇι αἰσθήσει τὴν φρόνησιν. διαριθμησάμενος γάρ, ὡς ἕκαστον ἑκάστωι γνωρίζομεν, ἐπὶ τέλει προσέθηκεν ὡς 'ἐκ τούτων <γὰρ> πάντα πεπήγασιν ἁρμοσθέντα/καὶ τούτοις φρονέουσι καὶ ἥδονt' ἠδ' ἀνιῶνται' [= DK 31 B 107 = EMP D 241 Laks-Most]. διὸ καὶ τῶι αἵματι μάλιστα φρονεῖν· ἐν τούτωι γὰρ μάλιστα κεκρᾶσθαι [ἐστὶ] τὰ στοιχεῖα τῶν μερῶν.

[91] Sedley (1992: 27–31). See also Kamtekar (2009: 217).

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structure of the eye as a compound made of fire and water.[92] As Theophrastus reports (*Sens.* 7), fire and water in the eye can perceive respectively white and black objects. Later in his treatise (at Chapter 59), Theophrastus reports that Empedocles holds the view that white is composed of fire and black of water. We could infer, therefore, that fire and water in the eye perceive respectively white and black things by likeness; namely, precisely because the white and black colours are homologous to the elements forming the structure of the eye.

However, in Chapters 7–8, Theophrastus explains that perception of white and black things by the eye occurs because their effluences can fit into the passages of the eye: that is, by symmetry. Moreover, they may fit differently according to the different constructions of the eyes. In fact, the disposition of the elements in the eye (fire can be more or less internal) and the amount of each element in its blend play a major role in vision. For instance, according to the position of fire in the eye, certain animals see better by day, others by night. Furthermore, by day those eyes that contain less fire have an advantage, because the light within can better adapt by compensation to the light outside; however, under reverse conditions the opposite occurs. However, 'that eye is of happiest blend and is best which is composed of <both these constituents> (that is, of both water and fire) in equal measure'. An equal measure of the components, in fact, enables the eye to be commensurate in the best possible way to most of the effluences it may encounter. In short, Theophrastus, by emphasizing the central role of the elemental mixture in the sense organs – i.e., the *krasis* of earth, water, air and fire in them – indicates that vision, and by extension perception more generally, occurs mainly in accordance with the principle of συμμετρία.

To sum up, perception occurs through contact via an adaptation between the effluences emanated by the object of perception and the elemental structure of the sense organ. This adaptation mainly occurs by symmetry; that is, when a given sense organ is commensurate to a certain effluence or, put differently, when effluences from the surrounding environment adapt to the pores of a sense organ. The possibility that συμμετρία is fulfilled closely depends on the elemental composition of sense organs, which, in turn, rests upon several factors. In the case of the eye, the number, size and position of its components play essential roles in vision. The analogous nature of the

[92] DK 31 B 84 (= EMP D 215 Laks-Most). For a discussion of the fragment, see Lloyd (1966: 325–27), O'Brien (1970: esp. 140–46, also 157–59, for an earlier bibliography on Empedocles' theory of vision, and 160–66, for doxographical evidence for Empedocles' theory of vision and for the composition and function of membranes), Sedley (1992) and Wright (1995: 240–43).

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elemental composition of effluences and pores may well be a further factor of some importance in perceiving. However, Theophrastus' conclusion about the best eye being composed of an equal measure of fire and water draws our attention once again to the role played by the principle of συμμετρία. According to this principle, to achieve a certain perception, the *krasis* of elements forming sense organs which adapts to the perceptual effluences in the best possible way, is prominent over the nature of the single element attracting its homologous substance in objects of perception. As we shall see hereafter, the *krasis* of elements also plays a predominant role in the acquisition of knowledge.

6.3.2 Empedocles on Knowledge Acquisition

Having seen that Empedocles' theory on perception is argued for in terms of reception and adaptation of external elements by and within the body, we will now see that processes of thought production and knowledge acquisition are conceptualized in similar terms. As I will show, Empedocles argues for acquisition of knowledge in terms of a physiological process that exploits sensory data which, by entering the body through sensory channels, reach the mind and here are processed to form new thinking and knowledge. However, although perception is taken as the first and remarkable step in approaching and processing the things around us, as we have seen in Section 6.3.1, it is worth noting that ordinary human senses are taken as not suitable for knowing *to holon*. Indeed, sense organs are narrow (B 2.1 [= EMP D 42.1 Laks-Most]) and, for this reason, understanding of Empedocles' revelation cannot be attained simply by relying on them. However, personal enquiry and experience of things all around can nonetheless gain valid elements for thinking and knowing and Pausanias is encouraged to use every sense organ in his investigation of the physical world. In fact, Empedocles does not have a wholly pejorative view concerning human senses and the epistemological power of perception. In this respect, let us consider B 3.9–13 (= EMP D 44.9–13 Laks-Most):

> ἀλλ᾽ ἄγ᾽ ἄθρει πάσηι παλάμηι, πῆι δῆλον ἕκαστον,
> μήτε τιν᾽ ὄψιν ἔχων πίστει πλέον ἢ κατ᾽ ἀκουήν
> ἢ ἀκοὴν ἐρίδουπον ὑπὲρ τρανώματα γλώσσης,
> μήτε τι τῶν ἄλλων, ὁπόσηι πόρος ἐστὶ νοῆσαι,
> γυίων πίστιν ἔρυκε, νόει δ᾽ ἦι δῆλον ἕκαστον.

> But now consider with every power how each thing is clear

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without holding any seeing as more reliable than what you hear, 10
nor echoing ear above piercings of the tongue
and do not in any way curb the reliability
of the other limbs by which there is a passage for understanding
but understand each thing in the way in which it is clear.

These verses are Empedocles' advice to Pausanias to sharpen every sense organ and make correct use of each when exploring the physical world, with Empedocles prompting Pausanias to consider (literally, 'to see', ἄθρει) everything 'in the way in which it is clear'; that is, in the way in which it shows itself (ᾗι δῆλον ἕκαστον).

These lines also tell us that correct use of the sense organs requires that Pausanias should not prefer a particular sensation over another, but should consider everything with every sense organ (πάσηι παλάμηι) he has at his disposal.[93] Even though sight was traditionally considered the sensation that 'reveals many distinctions and most enables us to know',[94] Pausanias should use all sense organs, as each of them is 'a passage for understanding', πόρος ἐστὶ νοῆσαι (B 3.12 [= EMP D 44.12 Laks-Most]). Then, in the last line, in a sort of ring composition, Empedocles reiterates his advice to Pausanias to consider every existing thing in the way it is clear. However, here Empedocles uses the verb νοέω. This, in variance with the previous ἀθρέω, indicates the process of reflection and understanding that makes use of data coming from the sense organs, as the following statement that everything must be known in the way it shows itself seems to indicate.

Analogously, in the verses of the Strasbourg papyrus I already quoted in Section 6.2.1,[95] Empedocles focuses on the notion that sensations can provide useful data for knowledge acquisition. Having remarked on the importance to observe things all around to verify and be convinced by the truth he is revealing, Empedocles first promises Pausanias that he 'will see (ὄψει) the coming together and the unfolding of birth', then encourages him to 'carry away in [his] mind' the truthful proofs of Empedocles' words (ἀψευδῆ . . . δείγματα). As the proofs of Empedocles' words coincide with the data Pausanias collects through observation, we can conclude that the passage points to the role of the mind in attaining understanding from sensory inputs.

[93] On the term παλάμη as a metaphor for sense organs, see Chapter 2.5, n.158.
[94] Arist. *Metaph*. 980a. The same opinion is held by Heraclitus B 55 (= HER D 31 Laks-Most) and 101a (= HER D 32 Laks-Most). Heraclitus mentions in both fragments sight together with hearing. See also the Hippocratic author of *De Arte* 13.1.
[95] PStrasb. a(ii) 21–30 (= EMP D 73.291–300 Laks-Most).

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This is an indication, consequently, that in both B 3 (= EMP D 44 Laks-Most) and the papyrus verses, Empedocles makes a claim about the physiological process of thinking; that is, that bodily process enabling our mind to receive, process, assess and use perceptual inputs. Additionally, by saying that any sensation is a passage, *poros*, for understanding, in B 3 (= EMP D 44 Laks-Most) Empedocles constructs his discourse about the use of perception in understanding upon the metaphorical meaning of *poros*.[96] Clearly, as highlighted before, the idea is that sensations contribute to knowledge. However, we have seen above that in Empedocles' theory of sensation, the term *poroi* is in specific use to denote internal channels that connect sense organs at the periphery of the body to a central organ of control. Thus, B 3.12 (= EMP D 44.12 Laks-Most) may well allude to the Empedoclean theory of pores and effluences in processes of sensation and, above all, knowledge acquisition. In other words, Empedocles may well have wanted to outline the concept that the process of acquiring knowledge makes use of both sensory inputs and body channels – that is, it exploits sensations – to produce new thoughts and understanding.

An analogous conclusion can be drawn from a further instance in B 133 (= EMP D 9 Laks-Most), which again builds upon the metaphorical value of the word *poros*. Here, according to Clement of Alexandria,[97] Empedocles presents the divine (*to theion*) as an entity that cannot be known by the senses:

> οὐκ ἔστιν πελάσασθαι, ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἐφικτόν
> ἡμετέροις, ἢ χερσὶ λαβεῖν, ᾗπερ τε μεγίστη
> πειθοῦς ἀνθρώποισιν ἁμαξιτὸς εἰς φρένα πίπτει
>
> It is not possible to reach it with our eyes
> or grasp it by our hands, by which the greatest
> road of persuasion leads to the mind of people.

For the present study, the phrase ᾗπερ τε μεγίστη / πειθοῦς ἀνθρώποισιν ἁμαξιτὸς εἰς φρένα πίπτει is highly relevant. Here journey metaphors present eyes and hands, metonymies indicating the respective perceptions of vision and touch as entrances to a road in the body that brings

[96] On this metaphor use, see my detailed analysis in Ferella (2018b: 64–65).

[97] *Strom.* 5.81.2. Clement quotes the lines together with a fragment of Solon (F 16) and one of Antisthenes (F 24), within a treatment on how to obtain πίστις about topics that are beyond the realm of sense organs and therefore escape ordinary human perception.

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persuasion to the mind.[98] Thereby, Empedocles expresses the idea that knowledge gained from sense organs is the most persuasive form of knowledge.

Yet the metaphors employed say more than this. B 133 (= EMP D 9 Laks-Most) illustrates sense organs as 'gates' to a road that leads to the mind, εἰς φρένα.[99] Again, Empedocles might be alluding to his theory of pores and effluences in sensation and knowledge acquisition. Specifically, given Empedocles speaks of bodily streams, namely effluences continuously emanating from perceptual objects – we can read B 133 (= EMP D 9 Laks-Most) as suggesting the idea that streams of perceived matter, made of elements, enter the 'gates' of sense organs and, through bodily channels, reach the mind. In other words, the 'journey' of the elements coming from external objects ends in the mind and here it produces understanding. Thus, by listening to Empedocles' doctrine, observing things in the world, smelling, tasting or touching them and hence by experiencing as many things in the world as possible, a person receives, through their own sense organs, streams of elements which, through bodily channels or pores, reach the mind. This might well indicate, finally, that Empedocles conceived, not only of perception, but also of thinking and knowledge acquisition as physiological processes of reception and processing of external elements by and within the body.

Accordingly, Empedocles conceptualizes the mind as a container. In some lines of the Strasbourg papyrus (a[ii] 29 [= EMP D 73.299 Laks-Most]), elements coming from sensation are said to be stored in one's own mind: 'store up in your mind the unerring proofs of my words', ἐκ τῶν ἀψευδῆ κόμισαι φρενὶ δείγματα μ[ύθων]. Analogously, elsewhere (B 110.1–2 [= EMP D 257.1–2 Laks-Most]) the disciple is invited to 'press hard' or 'thrust' epistemic elements in his precordia and to 'gaze on them'[100] with his 'mind's eye', according to another metaphor. These passages likely indicate a process of reflection through meditation on acquired data. On

[98] See Ferella (2018b).

[99] Empedocles variously refers to the part of the body where he collocates the mind by the terms φρήν (B 134.4 [= EMP D 93.4 Laks-Most], B 23.9 [= EMP D 60.9 Laks-Most], B 114.3 [= EMP D 6.3 Laks-Most], B 133.3 [= EMP D 9.3 Laks-Most]), φρένες (B 5 [= EMP D 258 Laks-Most], B 17.14 [= EMP D 73.245 Laks-Most]), πραπίδες (B 110.1 [= EMP D 257.1 Laks-Most], B 129.2 [= EMP D 38.2 Laks-Most]; B 132.1 [= EMP D 8.1 Laks-Most]) and σπλάγχα (B 4.3 [= EMP D 47.3 Laks-Most]). It seems fair to assume that they all point to the thorax as the Empedoclean body zone for thinking: see Bollack (1969: vol. 3, 578) who argues that the term πραπίδες 'designates an organ: the rib cage of which the heart occupies the center'. See also Wright (1995: 164).

[100] B 110.1–2 (= EMP D 257.1–2 Laks-Most): εἰ γάρ κέν σφ' ἀδινῆισιν ὑπὸ πραπίδεσσιν ἐρείσας / εὐμενέως καθαρῆισιν ἐποπτεύσηις μελέτηισιν.

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a physiological level, this may well indicate that reflection and meditation concretely involve the assembly and storage in the mind of sensory and epistemic inputs; that is, elements coming from external effluences. Furthermore, B 4.3 (= EMP D 47.3 Laks-Most) claims that Empedocles' discourse can be stored in one's own mind (here defined as σπλάγχνα, namely 'inward parts', probably indicating the whole region under the breast) and should here be 'cut through' (διατμηθέντος).[101] The metaphor invites the reading that processes of reflection and critical analysis are conceived in terms of matter that is divided into its essential constituents or basic elements. The image illustrates how each elemental bit of information gained by sensations is thoroughly processed by the controlling organ in the mind.[102]

The controlling organ coincides, according to Empedocles, with pericardial blood. In *De Sensibus*, in the conclusion to Chapter 10, Theophrastus reports that, according to Empedocles, we think and consequently know 'chiefly with the blood; for here the elements are more fully mingled than in any other of our limbs'. We also have some Empedoclean lines attesting to the role of blood in thought production:

> αἵματος ἐν πελάγεσσι τετραμμένα[103] ἀντιθορόντος,
> τῆι τε νόημα μάλιστα κικλήσκεται ἀνθρώποισιν·
> αἷμα γὰρ ἀνθρώποις περικάρδιόν ἐστι νόημα
> (B 105 [= EMP D 240 Laks-Most])

> Turned around in seas of blood which leaps back and forth,
> there above all people call them thought.
> For thought for humans is blood around the heart.

[101] See B 4.4 [= EMP D 47.4 Laks-Most]: γνῶθι διατμηθέντος ἐνὶ σπλάγχνοισι λόγοιο.

[102] This suggests that, according to Empedocles, critical and analytic thinking plays a role in knowledge acquisition, and this makes knowing fundamentally different from perceiving, in contrast to the idea advocated by Aristotle and Theophrastus, who seem to maintain that perception and knowledge acquisition are the same process in Empedocles. On the distinction between knowing and perceiving, see Kamtekar (2009: 226–231).

[103] τετραμμένα is the reading transmitted by Porphyry's manuscripts. Gropius' correction τεθραμμένη is preferred by Diels-Kranz and most editors who suggest, accordingly, a subject such as καρδίη or κραδίη, 'heart' (see Laks-Most [2016] and Mansfeld-Primavesi [2021]), or σύνεσις (alternatively φρόνησις, μῆτις and the like; see Bignone [1916: 475]) on the basis of Porphyry's introduction (Ἐμπεδοκλῆς τε οὕτω φαίνεται ὡς ὀργάνου πρὸς σύνεσιν τοῦ αἵματος ὄντος λέγειν). Wright (1995: 130) prints the words τετραμμένα ἀντιθορόντος within *cruces*; however, at 251 she seems to be inclined to a subject such as κραδίη. An interesting proposal was promoted by Gallavotti (1975: 12), who read B 105 (= EMP D 240 Laks-Most) as immediately following B 89 (= EMP D 208 Laks-Most). He consequently corrected τετραμμένα to τετραμμένα<ι> and referred the verb to the ἀπορροαί mentioned in B 89 (= EMP D 208 Laks-Most). The text I printed above maintains, in contrast, the reading transmitted by the manuscripts (see also Bollack [1969: vol. 2, 189 and vol. 3, 444–46]), yet I interpret it in a way that is reminiscent of Gallavotti.

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The subject of the neuter participle τετραμμένα is neither explicit in the text nor can be deduced by its source. Yet in other Empedoclean passages dealing with the processes of sensation and knowledge acquisition (for instance, B 110 [= EMP D 257 Laks-Most]), terms in neuter plural refer, as we shall see below, to elemental inputs coming as effluences into the body. Returning to our fragment, the idea seems to be that, when these inputs enter the mind through the pores and are stored here, the blood 'leaping back and forth' makes out of them what people call thoughts. Thus, in physiological terms, thoughts are the products of blood that, by leaping back and forth around the heart, encounters and, presumably, incorporates, cuts up (διατμηθέντος in B 4.4 [= EMP D 47 Laks-Most]) and modifies, in a word, processes those elements that come from external effluences and flow into the mind.

To sum up, like perception, thought production and knowledge acquisition are described as physiological processes that involve reception and elaboration of elements within the body. These processes occur when epistemic inputs coming from the outside and entering the body reach the mind and are here stored, pressed hard, thrust, cut up and gazed upon in order to produce thinking and understanding. Moreover, the organ responsible for the processing of sensory data, production of thought and acquisition of knowledge is blood, by virtue of its fully mingled elemental blend (its *krasis*). Thus, the balanced *krasis* of elements in our bodily organs, and especially in blood, is essential to the quality of our perceptions and thinking and, as we shall now see, can be improved to the point of being able to process the highest epistemic inputs.

6.3.3 Blood and Its krasis

Having looked at Empedocles' theories of sensation and knowledge acquisition, we can appreciate the central function played by the interrelation between external inputs and the elemental composition of the body. My primary aim throughout this section is to show that this interrelation, which characterizes the physiology of perceiving, thinking and knowing, is behind the process through which we can climb the ranking of living beings, transcend our mortal nature and become divine. In this respect, I will first demonstrate that the environment and consequently the external inputs we incorporate through sense organs affect our corporeal constitution. Second, that exposure to the right environment, hence the confrontation and incorporation of the most important external inputs can improve our mind's potential, enabling it to perceive, think and know

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like a divine mind. More specifically, these two lines of argument will be conducted by looking more closely at Empedocles' controlling organ, blood, and at the function its elemental blend plays with reference to a person's cognitive abilities.

Blood is made of a blend of elements that is more harmonious than that of any other limbs and, as Theophrastus tells us, this is why it can produce thought and knowledge. In general terms, the blend of elements in human blood is balanced because the four elements are mixed in equal proportion:[104]

> ἡ δὲ χθὼν τούτοισιν ἴση συνέκυρσε μάλιστα,
> Ἡφαίστωι τ' ὄμβρωι τε καὶ αἰθέρι παμφανόωντι,
> Κύπριδος ὁρμισθεῖσα τελείοις ἐν λιμένεσσιν·
> εἴτ' ὀλίγον μείζων εἴτε πλεόνεσσιν (?) ἐλάσσων·
> ἐκ τῶν αἵμά τε γέντο καὶ ἄλλης εἴδεα σαρκός . . .
>
> (B 98 [= EMP D 190 Laks-Most])

> And earth happened to meet with these in about equal quantity,
> with Hephaestus and rain and all-shining ether
> anchored in the perfect harbours of Cypris;
> either a little more or a little less in comparison to the majority (?).
> From these, blood came to be and the forms of other kind of flesh.

The term ἴση (B 98.1 [= EMP D 190.1 Laks-Most]) indicates that Love forms blood by mixing the same quantity of earth, fire (Hephaestus), water (rain) and ether. The mixture of blood is such that the ratio of its elements is always 1:1:1:1, which makes it particularly harmonious and consequently extremely suitable for thinking.

However, in Chapter 11, Theophrastus adds that even though the ratio of elements in the *krasis* of blood stays constant, the composition of blood can nonetheless vary from person to person and Empedocles classified rational beings along a scale based on the *kraseis* of elements in their blood.

> Those in whom these mingled elements are of the same or nearly the same <amount>, being neither widely separated nor too small nor of excessive size – such persons are the most intelligent and keen of sense; and others are intelligent and keen of sense according as they approach to such a mixture. But those whose condition is the very reverse are the least intelligent. Again, persons in whom the elements lie loose and rare are slow and laborious; while those who have them compact and divided finely are impulsively carried away; they throw themselves into many a project, and yet accomplish little, because of the impetuous coursing of their blood. But when the

[104] Simpl. *Phys.* 32.6–10, and 331.5 (= DK 31 B 98 [= EMP D 190 Laks-Most]).

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> composition in some single members lies in the mean, the person is accomplished in that part. For this reason, some are clever orators, others artisans; for in the one case the happy mixture is in the tongue, in the other it is in the hands. And the like holds true for all the other forms of ability.[105]

According to Theophrastus' report, Empedocles attributes discrepancies in the elemental mixture of blood to three factors: the amount of each element in the mixture, their arrangement and their size. The best blend of blood belongs to those whose *kraseis* are made of elemental particles in identical or very similar amounts, of a median size and of the right distance from one another. People with this blood mixture are those who perceive and know best. Other people are intelligent and keen of sense according to the degree to which they approach this ideal mixture. In contrast, a mixture of the opposite conditions produces people who are the least intelligent.

As we can also infer from Theophrastus' account, the composition of the elements in blood affects the way it runs within the body. Differences in speed result in different personalities and we can therefore have slow or very impulsive people. By a similar standard, the more or less harmonious blend of elements also serves as a criterion for explaining why certain people have a particular inclination or a specific talent. For instance, good orators owe their talent to a particularly well-balanced *krasis* in their tongue, while artisans are artistically inclined because of an extremely harmonious blend of elements in their hands.[106] In sum, Theophrastus' report is a strong indication of the close relationship between intelligence (or talent) and the harmonious *krasis* of elements in a given (part of the) body.

Although each person receives their own *krasis* of blood at birth, this is not fixed. Indeed, as Aristotle and Theophrastus report, Empedocles argues that the quality of one's own *krasis* is influenced by, and continuously changes according to, the environment. Specifically, Aristotle (*Metaph.* 1009b 16[107]) reports that Empedocles shares with his predecessors and especially with Parmenides the view that, just like sensation, knowledge acquisition changes in respect to what is present. In fact, one's own thinking is influenced by environmental modifications:

[105] *Sens.* 11. Transl. by Inwood (2001).
[106] See Theophr. *Sens.* 11: οἷς δὲ καθ' ἕν τι μόριον ἡ μέση κρᾶσίς ἐστι, ταύτηι σοφοὺς ἑκάστους εἶναι· διὸ τοὺς μὲν ῥήτορας ἀγαθούς, τοὺς δὲ τεχνίτας, ὡς τοῖς μὲν ἐν ταῖς χερσί, τοῖς δὲ ἐν τῆι γλώττηι τὴν κρᾶσιν οὖσαν· ὁμοίως δ' ἔχειν καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἄλλας δυνάμεις.
[107] See also *An.* 427a 21.

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καὶ γὰρ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς μεταβάλλοντας τὴν ἕξιν μεταβάλλειν φησὶ τὴν φρόνησιν·
πρὸς παρεὸν γὰρ μῆτις ἀέξεται ἀνθρώποισιν.
(B 106 [= EMP D 243 Laks-Most])

καὶ ἐν ἑτέροις δὲ λέγει ὅτι
ὅσσον <γ'> ἀλλοῖοι μετέφυν, τόσον ἄρ σφισιν αἰεὶ
καὶ τὸ φρονεῖν ἀλλοῖα παρίσταται.[108]
(B 108 [= EMP D 244a Laks-Most])

For Empedocles says that when people change their condition they change their knowledge:

> For it is in respect of what is present that cunning intelligence is increased.

And elsewhere he says:

> Insofar as they change over to become of a different sort, so far do they always find their thinking too providing different things.

According to Aristotle, Empedocles, by arguing for external conditions affecting the internal structure of our mind, and so the quality and quantity of the individual thinking, *de facto* identified sense perception and cognition. In Aristotle's interpretation, Empedocles' lines assert that thinking and understanding are 'nothing more than unwilled and uncontrolled reactions to one's own physiological state and surroundings'.[109] However, that Aristotle's reading is an oversimplification of Empedocles' verses and theories of perceiving, thinking and knowledge is evidenced by the fact that, as we have already seen, Empedocles distinguished between a superficial perceptual cognition and an understanding of things that makes use of perceptual inputs but goes beyond them. Indeed, Empedocles developed elaborate reflections on how sensation may or may not elicit intellectual cognition on both perceptual and non-perceptual things. In B 2 (= EMP D 42 Laks-Most) mere perceptual cognition is explicitly contrasted to a kind of understanding that, going beyond it, can know the whole of physical reality. Similarly, in B 3 (= EMP D 44 Laks-Most) the process of knowing is opposed to mere superficial perception, as it makes use of perceptual data for intellectual reflection. Thus, human beings who only rely on superficial perceptions, acquired through narrow knowing devices, are unable to gain genuine

[108] The translation is by Inwood (2001: 247). In the *Metaph.*, Aristotle relates the Empedoclean fragments to Parmenides' fragment B 16 (= PARM D 51 Laks-Most), Anaxagoras and an unknown Homeric phrase, whereas in *On the Soul* they are connected to *Od.* 18.136. On Parmenides' B 16 (= PARM D 51 Laks-Most) and his theory of cognition, see Bredlow (2011) and Tor (2017: 169–96).

[109] The quote is by Tor (2017: 330).

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knowledge of the things Empedocles is revealing and even of things they come across. In contrast Pausanias, who is prompted to pay attention to perceptual data while receiving Empedocles' revelation, will know matters beyond the reach of ordinary human perception.

More plausibly, B 106 (= EMP D 243 Laks-Most) and B 108 (= EMP D 244a Laks-Most) express the idea that the range of things we experience in our surroundings increase and expand our ability to think and know. Specifically, B 106 (= EMP D 243 Laks-Most) affirms that our 'cunning intelligence' (*mêtis*), increases in relation to what is present to us. Moreover, B 108 (= EMP D 244a Laks-Most) conveys the idea that changes in our constitution lead to changes in awareness and cognition or, more precisely, 'to changes in what is available for us to experience and register'[110] and this represents an opportunity to expand our repertoire of experiences upon which our judgement, thought and cognition can rest. Thus, what the two Empedoclean quotations imply is the importance of the quality of the environment we experience, hence of the epistemic inputs we incorporate, for thought production and knowledge acquisition. The second quotation seems to hint at external affections producing a change in our internal mixture, which in turn yields a change in our thinking. As M. M. Sassi has highlighted:

> The qualities of the environment are included among the ingredients of the mixture of elements that determines different cognitive states from a subject to another. It is clear that in the visual process the external fire (or water) is added to the internal one and thus 'increases' it, and the resulting product of this mixture, which is different according to the initial physiological conditions of the eye, is ultimately responsible for the perceptive process.[111]

Thus, the quality of the environment plays a central role both in perception and knowledge acquisition, since the effluences emanated from it, once added to the blend of elements in the body, influence and change the mixture of our sense organs and mind. As the human mind is affected by what comes to pass, it follows that, when confronted with the right external conditions, people can improve their *krasis*. Indeed, Empedocles' belief in a specific process that enables the disciple, rebirth after rebirth, to climb the ranking of living beings and become a god must be in consonance with the idea of a mind that can be 'sharpened' and accordingly changed and attuned to what is divine.

[110] Tor (2017: 331–32) relates the phrase 'they change over to become of different sort' in B 108.1 (= EMP D 244 Laks-Most) to the notion of rebirth, although he admits that the changes here implied are not limited to different rebirths; rather, they are connected to all imaginable physiological and constitutional changes mortals may experience during their life-time(s).

[111] See Sassi (2015: 457).

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By analogy with sensation, we may assume that a process of adaptation analogous to that involving the eye in vision is at work when people want to improve the *krasis* of their minds.[112] As we have seen above, according to Empedocles, a different mixture of elements in the sense organ is able to adapt differently to the effluences of a perceptual environment: thus some animals see best by night and others by day. Moreover, the perceiving *kraseis* in sense organs can be improved: they can be trained to adapt to specific effluences. For instance, although, in general terms, we see better by day than night, it is a common experience that our vision can progressively adapt to a dark environment and improve its ability to see. Therefore, not only does the environment play a fundamental role in structuring our eyes and the resultant vision, but also the elemental structure of sensory pores in the eye can be trained to adapt to the environment to improve its perceptive ability. If we apply what we have learned for vision to other perceptions, we could assume that, by analogous standards, we can train our sense of smell to perceive more prominently certain odours rather than others, our hearing to recognize different sounds and tones and our taste to distinguish diverse flavours in food and drinks. We can conclude, therefore, that though ordinary sense organs are congenitally 'narrow' (see B 2.1 [= EMP D 42 Laks-Most]), they can be trained *ad hoc* to expand or sharpen their range and power.

In analogy with sense organs, the blend of blood and, consequently, its epistemic range and power can be trained so that, by processing the external effluences coming from objects, it converts them into epistemic elements. Thus, just as most human eyes have regular vision but can be trained to see more sharply, most human minds are able to know in a standard human way, presumably by just processing basic elements of knowledge, easily accessible through sensations. Yet, given that, as we just saw above, the quality of the environment, hence of the epistemic inputs we incorporate, can affect our mind and change its cognitive potential, the inference is that the right inputs, indeed the most important epistemic notions, such as the nature of things that Empedocles explains in his philosophy, can enable our mind's potential to expand to incorporate

[112] This may well work according to the principle that 'external elements cause internal elements to grow', as argued by A. A. Long (1966: 270). See also Sassi (2015: 457–59). In commenting on fragment DK 31 B 106 (= EMP D 243 Laks-Most), Sassi, at p. 458, points out that the phrase πρὸς παρεόν is a significant indication that Empedocles, in analyzing the corporeal conditions of the cognitive processes, 'considered not only the variance of capabilities among different individuals, but also the changing of cognitive states within the same subject, as determined *from time to time* both by the constitution of the body and by the material effluences from the objects entering into it through pores, and thus producing ever new mixtures' (Sassi's emphasis).

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them and, thereby, to produce thinking and understanding worthy of a divine mind. In the next section I will further explore the way in which, according to Empedocles, the human mind can be trained to direct its attention to the right concerns, attune in this way to divine wisdom and, by virtue of this, change its mortal nature into a divine one. Therewith we will finally see that genuine understanding of the physical world is presented by Empedocles as a way – if not *the* way – to climb the rankings of living, rational beings and become divine.

6.4 The Wealth of a Divine Mind[113]

In the previous section, I argued that, while the elemental *krasis* of sense organs can be trained and expanded to perceive more sharply, so too can the *krasis* of our mind in order for human beings to think and know the highest, divine things. In Section 6.3.3 I explored this issue by looking at the role the right external inputs – hence the notions concerning the true nature of the physical world (namely, Empedocles' philosophical revelation) – play in expanding and sharpening the human mind so that it will be able to incorporate divine epistemic data. From a slightly different perspective, in this section I will look at the role a person plays in order that their mind can focus on the right epistemic inputs. In other words, I am now going to explore what is demanded of Pausanias, and therefore of each of us, if we want to know genuinely the true nature of the physical world and then exploit this knowledge to become gods.

In this respect, let us consider B 110 (= EMP D 257 Laks-Most):

εἰ γάρ κέν σφ' ἀδινῆισιν ὑπὸ πραπίδεσσιν ἐρείσας
εὐμενέως καθαρῆισιν ἐποπτεύσηις μελέτηισιν,
ταῦτά τέ σοι μάλα πάντα δι' αἰῶνος παρέσονται,
ἄλλα τε πόλλ' ἀπὸ τῶνδ' ἐκτήσεαι· αὐτὰ γὰρ αὔξει
ταῦτ' εἰς ἦθος ἕκαστον, ὅπη φύσις ἐστὶν ἑκάστωι. 5
εἰ δὲ σύ γ' ἀλλοίων ἐπορέξεαι, οἷα κατ' ἄνδρας
μυρία δειλὰ πέλονται ἃ τ' ἀμβλύνουσι μερίμνας,
ἦ σ' ἄφαρ ἐκλείψουσι περιπλομένοιο χρόνοιο
σφῶν αὐτῶν ποθέοντα φίλην ἐπὶ γένναν ἱκέσθαι·
πάντα γὰρ ἴσθι φρόνησιν ἔχειν καὶ νώματος αἶσαν. 10

For if, thrusting them in your crowded praecordia
well-disposed you will gaze on them with pure attention
these things will all be with you throughout your life

[113] See B 132 (= EMP D 8 Laks-Most) with n.1 above.

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and many other things will spring from them: these will
increase them, each according to its character, where each has its origin.
But if you will turn to other things, such as
the ten thousand wretched things which are among people and blunt their solicitudes,
quickly they will leave you with the passing of time
desiring to get to their own spring:
know that everything has thought and a share of understanding.

One of the problems raised by the interpretation of these lines is the reference of the neuter plural scattered throughout. Precisely, what are those things, which under certain circumstances will be with Pausanias throughout his whole life, making other things spring from them and increase them, while, under other circumstances, they will leave him and return to their source? The hypotheses of scholars can be divided into those advocating a reference to Empedocles' teachings or true statements about the world, those suggesting a reference to the elements and those combining the two previous readings, suggesting that the neuter plural refer to (Empedocles') words in their physical, elemental form.[114]

As lines 4–5 talk of some sort of growth (αὐτὰ γὰρ αὔξει / ταῦτ[α]), a reference involving the elements seems to be necessary. In fact, unless αὔξει here has a merely figurative meaning, when Empedocles speaks about growth, the elements as constituents of the material structure of things are clearly involved. This has led scholars to understand the reference of *tauta* as being the four elements.[115] However, the verses above make clear that *tauta* are such that, if you direct all your concerns and attention to them, these will be by you throughout the rest of your life, while many other things will spring from *tauta* and increase them. This detail excludes the four elements as a referent, because they, being the basic principles of every existing thing and representing the total amount of stuff of the universe, as we saw in Chapter 4.1, cannot give rise to other (portions of) elements and

[114] Diels-Kranz interpreted the neuter plural as 'die Lehren des Meisters', whereas according to Schwabl (1956) the reference is to 'die Gründkräften der Natur'. Analogously, Mansfeld-Primavesi (2011: 525 = F 125.5) read a reference to the 'Element als Gedanketräger'. Similarly, Laks-Most (2016: 579) refers the neuter plural to the elements. A. A. Long (1966: 269) suggested that σφε refers to 'my teachings' or 'true statements about the world . . . conceived in physical terms' and αὐτὰ . . . ταῦτα to 'external elements (teaching in its physical term)', whereas Bollack (1969: vol. 3, 577) argues for a reference to the 'puissances . . . sans doute le six'. Trépanier (2004: 160) argued that the referent could be identified *prima facie* with Empedocles' teachings, but these, 'in as much as they are true, can be conceived analogously to, or rather simply identified with, the elements themselves'. More convincingly, Wright (1995: 259) takes the neuter plural as referring to words and thoughts with their physical basis.

[115] See the previous note.

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be increased by them. It follows that although the neuter plural in the above-quoted lines refer to something that is made of elements, the referent here cannot be moved to the level of the four principles but must remain at the level of perishable compounds.

In line with this conclusion, my interpretation is that the neuter plurals refer to all inputs Pausanias may gain by sensation, ranging from Empedocles' words to every single piece of information the disciple can gain by observing, touching, smelling and tasting 'each thing as it shows itself'. In other words, the neuter pronouns here likely indicate all kinds of *aporroai* emanated by the surrounding world and above all those coming from Empedocles' words. Moreover, since they are able to increase themselves if pushed firmly in the organs of thought, they likely include all 'secondary' epistemic inputs one may obtain by reasoning and thinking; that is, thoughts potentially useful to gain, produce or deepen one's own knowledge.

As we have seen above, all kinds of *aporroai* are outflows of elements. Thoughts are also traditionally regarded as *sômata* and, accordingly, Empedocles argues that, as we have seen above, they are produced by processing those *aporroai*'s elements stored up, thrust in and cut up in the mind. Thus, all epistemic inputs in the mind are *sômata* and can increase both each other and the person's body if one reflects on them. Put differently, the process of thinking is seen as an increase of elements, whereas thought production also makes the mind grow, as we read in B 17.14 (= EMP D 73.243 Laks-Most):

> ἀλλ' ἄγε μύθων κλῦθι· μάθη γάρ τοι φρένας αὔξει
>
> But come! Hear my words; for learning will expand your mind.

As we apprehend, the process of learning deriving from Pausanias' attention to, hence his reflection upon, Empedocles' words favours growth in the body and, precisely, in the mind.[116]

Thought production and subsequent growth of the mind only occur, however, if Pausanias is well disposed towards the epistemic inputs the environment continuously emanates as well as towards those gained through reflection and thinking. Empedocles recommends reflecting on these well-disposed and with pure attention: εὐμενέως καθαρῆισιν ἐποπτεύσηις μελέτηισιν (B 110.2 [= EMP D 257.2 Laks-Most]). The

[116] At this point, it is worth noting that there are some scholars who take Empedocles' physical language describing epistemic inputs and mental products figuratively, intending therefore that, for example, Empedocles' teachings create an increase in understanding rather than an expansion of the mind: see Kamtekar (2009: 233–35) and Mackenzie (2021: 148–49). In my view, however, which takes its cue from A. A. Long (1966), increased understanding goes hand in hand with change (and expansion) of the mind.

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language is that of initiation and intentionally hints at the ascetic rules Empedocles collects in the *Purifications*.[117] Precisely, the verb ἐποπτεύσηις alludes to a mystery ἐποπτεία, the vision of the truth the initiates receive at the end of their training. Analogously, καθαρῆισιν . . . μελέτηισιν (at l. 2) call to mind a purity-initiatory context, and καθαρῆισιν in particular hints at those purificatory exercises according to rules Empedocles prescribes for the individual to escape rebirths; while μελέται recalls the initiatory training consisting of 'constant practise and effort, as in athletic training, military duty or rehearsing'.[118] Similarly, in B 110.7 (= EMP D 257.7 Laks-Most) the adjective δειλός qualifying unimportant things to which ordinary people direct their attention, is used elsewhere to indicate 'the misery of those who violate the precepts of purifications'.[119] All these elements suggest that Empedocles is highlighting the necessity, if the disciple is to obtain true knowledge about the nature of things, of ensuring that Pausanias' behaviour conforms to a lifestyle conducted in purity according to the advice and exercises taught by Empedocles; that is, Pausanias shall not only be committed to Empedocles' philosophy, but also carry on a process of purification.

Within the context of B 110 (= EMP D 257 Laks-Most), the content of Empedocles' teaching is that initiation and a process of purification enable thought production and knowledge acquisition. Indeed, they are requirements to gain clear understanding of the physical world. More specifically, as we have seen in Section 6.3.3, true knowledge depends on the environment and external epistemic inputs we incorporate. Yet a clear understanding also requires a subject that is well-disposed to those inputs and prepared to assimilate them. It follows that attention paid to the 'the ten thousand wretched things which are among people and blunt their solicitudes' (B 110.7 [= EMP D 257.7 Laks-Most]) will impede clear understanding of what really matters: the true nature of the physical world Empedocles is

[117] See Bignone (1916: 480–81) and Wright (1995: 259). Kingsley (1995: 230) points out that the language hints at 'the standard vocabulary employed in the mysteries of Persephone and Demeter. If we follow the allusion we see that he (i.e., Empedocles) is referring to the stage when – after the pupil to whom the poem is addressed has gone through a preliminary stage of purification (*katharmos*), and has then absorbed the knowledge transmitted to him by his teacher (*paradosis*) – "there is nothing left to learn".'

[118] Wright (1995: 259).

[119] The quote is by Kahn (1960: 8 n.12). The Empedoclean fragment is B 141 (= EMP D 31 Laks-Most). See also B 132 (= EMP D 8 Laks-Most), where δειλός defines the one 'who has an obfuscated opinion about the gods'; that is, those who are not initiated into Empedocles' philosophical doctrine. Moreover, at B 124 (= EMP D 17 Laks-Most) the adjective qualifies the human race because it derives 'from strife and groanings', against which the principle of Love and Empedocles' purifications work.

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revealing. Its epistemic inputs will abandon a 'distracted' Pausanias, coming back to their own source (B 110.8–9 [= EMP D 257.8–9 Laks-Most]).[120] The expression ἀμβλύνουσι μερίμνας, which is said of things that blunt people's thoughts, also recurs in B 2 (= EMP D 42 Laks-Most), where similar things dulling people's attention are taken as a further reason, together with the narrow nature of sense organs and the short span of human life, for people's ignorance of 'the whole'. Moreover, the verb ἀμβλύνω resembles ἀμβλυωπέω employed by Theophrastus in his report on Empedocles' various types of vision resting on the different *kraseis* of fire and water in the eye.[121] There, daylight or darkness were said to dull one's vision by negatively influencing the mixture of elements in the eye.

By way of analogy, wretched things can dull and impair one's own thoughts, if people concentrate their attention and solicitudes on them. Given that, as we have seen in the previous section, the quality of the environment influences and modifies the elemental composition of our body, the inference is that wretched things negatively influence the mixture of the elements in blood, leaving it with reduced cognitive potential. By contrast, attention to the right things ensures that the *krasis* of blood improves and so too does its cognitive potential. However, the fragment quoted above adds the notion that, in such a process, the good disposition of the knowing subject, reached through a path of purification, plays an equally fundamental role in knowledge acquisition.

It is worth recalling that the process of purification is first and foremost a means to a more religious end, as it is the way through which people can leave the cycle of rebirths. Since, as we now apprehend, it is also a means to gain clear and certain knowledge of the nature of all things, the inference is that purifications are also a means to enhance the balance of the mind's elemental mixture and its ability to be symmetrical and commensurate to the highest epistemic inputs coming from Empedocles' divine revelation. In other words, causing the nature of our mind to change from mortal to divine, purifications are here given a 'physical' explanation and purpose. It is only a life of purity, in fact, that will make Empedocles' revelation on the nature of things take hold and stay in the

[120] It is worth noting that when the elements separate at death, they analogously abandon the body and come back to their spring. Thus, Empedocles, by relating the physiological condition of ignorance to a separation of elements (hence to Strife as the principle of separation), assimilates it to fragmentation and death.

[121] *Sens*. 8, for which see above. See moreover the use of ἀμβλύς with reference to sensations: of sight, ἀμβλὺ ὁρᾶν, -ύτερον βλέπειν, Pl. *Thaet*.174e, Arist. *PA* 656b36, al.; of hearing, τῆς ἀκοῆς οὔσης -υτέρας αἰσθήσεως ἢ τῆς ὄψεως; Id. *Probl*. 886b32; see also ἀμβλύς with reference to feelings or mind, ἀμβλυτέρᾳ τῇ ὀργῇ less keen, Thucyd. 3.38; ἀμβλύτερον ποιεῖν τι, ('less vigorous') Id. 2.65.

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mind forever, increasing over time, producing other valuable data and expanding one's own cognitive ability (B 110.1–5 [= EMP D 257.1–5 Laks-Most]).

To sum up, Empedocles argues that the wealth of a divine mind is achieved through a deep understanding of the nature of the physical world. To this end, two requirements are fundamental. First, as human nature is congenitally unable to perceive and know the whole but can nonetheless be trained to expand its tools of knowledge, Pausanias must be confronted as much as possible with the right epistemic inputs; that is, with what really matters, which is the nature of all things that Empedocles explains in his philosophy. By incorporating those inputs, Pausanias' mind will improve the harmonious and balanced nature of its elemental blend and so increase and sharpen its cognitive potential.

Second, in order that the right epistemic inputs reach Pausanias' mind and there take hold, he must have attention and a good disposition towards them, which is achieved by undergoing the same process of purification prescribed by Empedocles to escape rebirths. Only by giving the most important matters, such as the nature of things, his unconditional, *pure* devotion will Pausanias never be abandoned by those things but will increase his thoughts and knowledge to the point of divine nature. In other words, Pausanias must devote himself to Empedocles' philosophy and undergo a process of purification which, being first and foremost the way for the individual's release from mortality and rebirths, is also the means to improve the mind's *krasis* and to enhance its epistemic potential to the level where it can think and know like a divine mind. Thus, Pausanias will not only be able to understand the principles of the physical world, but will relate to them in a super-human manner and in a way in which he will finally be able to control their power like a god.

6.5 Conclusions

This chapter has investigated the interconnection between knowledge of the nature of things, the change of a mortal nature into a divine one and, indirectly, one's release from rebirths. To do so, it has explored the way in which genuine understanding of the physical world is thought to impact a person's bodily constitution on the elemental level and thus enable this change. Lastly, it has demonstrated that those who want to know clearly must undergo a process of purifications as the pathway to train their mind to assimilate divine inputs and thus acquire the wealth of a divine being.

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Having explored, in the first part of this chapter, the question of what Empedocles may have regarded as true knowledge and, to this end, having examined the background against which his ideas developed, by investigating some of the most relevant epistemological reflections on divine and human cognitive potential in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, I have shown that Empedocles makes himself the divine source of a true philosophy, while promising Pausanias that he will not only genuinely know the nature of things, but also relate to the forces of nature as a god.

Since this claim implies that at the end of his philosophical training Pausanias is promised a change of being from mortal to god, in the second part of this chapter we have seen that it is the reception and understanding of Empedocles' philosophy that enables such a change. My analysis has shown that this possibility is explained by Empedocles at the level of the processes of perception, thought and knowledge, which are conceptualized as physiological processes in which external elements and elements within the body interact in such a way as to expand a person's cognitive potential and overcome human cognitive limitations. Finally, having seen that genuine knowledge and understanding of the physical world is given as the main way through which we can change our being, transcend our mortal condition and become divine, we were also able to appreciate the 'physical' role of purification processes as a means of directing our unconditioned attention to Empedocles' revelation, and thus prepare our minds to grow to a divine level of knowledge.

In light of all this, it can be concluded that Empedocles' *On Nature* is thought to be the major pathway to become divine. Not only does it mean that Empedocles' doctrine is divine, but it also entails the promise that the wealth of a divine mind is achieved by understanding the true nature of things. However, as this is only possible by first undergoing a process of purification, this chapter has finally shown the deep interconnection between Empedocles' concept of rebirth and his physical interests. Indeed, they cannot stand alone, for it is a life of both purity and knowledge that will allow Pausanias to change his being to the point where he will be ready to be released from rebirths and mortal nature.

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