KRISIS: FRAGMENT 2

I discussed above, especially in the Introduction and Chapter 2, some of the important links between Homer's *Odyssey* – especially the *Apologoi* and, even more so, *Odyssey* 12 – and Parmenides' poem. That analysis only scratched the surface, however, and in the beginning of this chapter I shall examine the relationship between these two poems at much greater length. Fortunately, we can pick up where earlier studies have left off.[1] If much of the literary analysis performed by scholars of Parmenides has focused on the Proem, this is partly because there is much to say.[2] What is important for our purposes at this stage is the manner in which the proem establishes a progressively more Odyssean ambience, creating a dramatic setting that, as it proceeds towards Fragment 2, evokes the relationship between Odysseus and Circe on Aeaea more and more specifically.

  Havelock's comparison begins with the claim that 'books ten to twelve of the *Odyssey* (or a section approximating thereto)' are Parmenides' 'central frame of reference' in his poem.[3] This case can be made in terms of the proem's language, imagery, characters, and dramatic scenarios, much of which is reminiscent of these books of the *Odyssey*.[4] Odysseus' description of the land of the Laestrygonians is recycled nearly wholesale;[5] similarly, the

---

[1] See esp. Introduction, 13–15 above.
[2] See esp. Introduction, 13 and nn. 28–29.
[3] Havelock (1958) 138; see also Introduction, 13–14.
[4] On the connections between the proem and the *Odyssey* more generally, see remarks at Morrison (1955) 60; Diechgräber (1959) 27; Dolin (1962) 96; Pfeiffer (1975) 18–20, 54–56, 78–80; Miller (1979) 14 with notes; Miller (2006) 18; Coxon (2009) [1986] 9–10; Palmer (2009) 56; see also Slaveva-Griffin (2003), Latona (2008), and now Forte and Smith (2016) for parallels between the chariot race in *Iliad* 23 and the proem. See also nn. 6–9 below.
[5] Homer's ἐγγὺς γὰρ νυκτός τε καὶ ἤματός εἰσι κέλευθοι (*Od.* 10.86) becomes ἔνθα πύλαι νυκτός τε καὶ ἤματός εἰσι κελεύθων (Fr. 1.11). See e.g. Havelock (1958) 139; Mourelatos (2008b) [1970] 9, 15; Pfeiffer (1975) 21; Coxon (2009) 9, 275–76; Granger (2008) 12–13; Tor (2017) 345 n. 22.

'Daughters of the Sun', the guardians of the Sun's cattle on Thrinacia (*Od.* 12.131–36), are 'converted from herdsmen into outriders' who lead the chariot bearing the *kouros* (Fr. 1.9–10).[6] Collectively these images and intertextual echoes conjure a setting redolent of the 'world's end ... a mysterious borne far off the beaten track, a region of mystery and peril but also of revelation'.[7]

This in turn figures the *kouros* as a kind of Odysseus.[8] As the latter's voyage in the *Apologoi* extends 'beyond normal human latitudes', so the former's 'journey is also an excursion beyond the bounds of accepted experience' and seems 'modeled on the bold enterprise of an epic hero, Odysseus'.[9] Odysseus' encounters in the *Apologoi* have been seen to be patterned on the dynamics of the quest, which involves his arrival at an unknown place followed by a meeting with 'someone who gives information or acts as a guide' to help him complete the quest[10] – all of which describes Parmenides' *kouros* and his situation in Fragment 1 to perfection.

But not just anyone will act as his guide: the 'foreground of Parmenides' imagination is occupied by Circe on Aeaea'[11] – Circe, who is, after all, the Daughter of Helios, and Aeaea which is, after all, where 'Dawn has her dancing floor and the sun rises' (*Od.* 12.3–4).[12] The links connecting Circe and the unnamed

---

[6] Havelock (1958) 140. For the *Odyssey*'s treatment of the Heliades in relation to other mythical renditions, see also Coxon (2009) [1986] 274; Cordero (2004) 25–26; Bakker (2013) 101.

[7] Havelock (1958) 139.

[8] See esp. Mansfeld (1964) 230. See also Mourelatos (2008b) [1970] 24–25; Cassin (1987); Cassin (2011), esp. 72; Montiglio (2005) 147–50; and a brief discussion in Tor (2017) 264–65 (my disagreements with which I shall register shortly). I leave aside here the more complex question of Fr. 1.1–4, discussed at length in e.g. Diechgräber (1959) 27, Mansfeld (1964) 229–31, Cosgrove (1974), Cosgrove (2011), Coxon (1986) 157–59, Lesher (1994b), Palmer (2009) 376–78; for more general discussion, with bibliography, see now Tor (2017).

[9] See Havelock (1958), esp. 139, and Gallop (1984) 5, respectively.

[10] See Bakker (2013) 13–35, esp. 23–27, and Peradotto (1990) 35–41; these mirror Mourelatos (2008b) 20–21. Recall that Tiresias begins his audience with Odysseus by observing: νόστον δίζηαι ('you are questing for a homecoming', *Od.* 11.100). On the encounter, see esp. Nagler (1980), and for Parmenides, see Havelock (1958) 139. Parmenides' *dizēsis*, an apparent neologism, is derived from this verb; see Mourelatos (2008b) 67–68, Curd (1998b) 42–43, 42 n. 55 for discussions of the verb in this passage in Homer, Heraclitus B 22 and B101, and Parmenides. On the other hand, Tor (2017) 265–67 provides a stimulating discussion of the word in respect to the language of oracles.

[11] Havelock (1958) 140.

[12] On Aeaea and its relationship to the Sun, see e.g. Page (1973) 60 and West (2005) 43–45; see also n. 5 above.

goddess of Parmenides' poem are rich and multifaceted.[13] Circe, 'goddess endowed with dread speech' (*Od.* 10.136 = *Od.* 11.8 = *Od.* 12.150), has the ability to 'report verities of the mantic world and thus induce or at least indicate the hero's' further travel: 'her helpful power is to … facilitate for him further stages of his symbolic journey'; Circe helps Odysseus 'penetrate … to a deeply guarded area of the mythic geography' where knowledge of incomparable magnitude is to be found.[14] In short, Circe, a female divinity with exceptionally privileged access to knowledge, guides the mortal male hero Odysseus on a journey which includes travel to a place where he will attain a level of profound knowledge: a description that could hardly better fit the dramatic scenario of fragments 1–8.[15]

What is more, Circe has long been recognized as a vital turning point in Odysseus' wanderings.[16] According to one popular analysis, the Nekuia serves as the pivot around which is wrapped the elaborate series of nested ring compositions that form the episodes of the *Apologoi*;[17] since it is from Circe's isle that the trip departs and to Circe's isle that it returns – and, as we have seen, on Circe's orders, and only thanks to her guidance, that the trip is successfully undertaken – this makes Circe (in her instruction-giving mode, after her threat to Odysseus has been neutralized) a central figure anchoring the entire *Apologoi*.[18] There are a number of different facets to this point, and one can tease out at least four implications for Parmenides' poem.

---

[13] See Section 2.4, esp. Section 2.4.2 above.

[14] Nagler (1996) 148–49.

[15] See e.g. Gallop (1984) 6; for the more general point, see also Section 2.4.2 above.

[16] Structural analyses of the *Apologoi* have a venerable history running from Woodhouse (1930) 43–44 through Germain (1954) 332–33 and Whitman (1958) 288–89 to Niles (1978); Redfield (1983); Scully (1987); Most (1989), esp. 21 n. 36; Montiglio (2005) 55–61; Bakker (2013), esp. 21–35; and Cook (2014) 76–84.

[17] See e.g. the series of ever-modified charts in Whitman (1958) 288; Niles (1978) 51; Scully (1987) 405; Most (1989) 22; Bakker (2013); Cook (2014) 82, 83.

[18] It is worth bearing in mind the sort of double role played by Circe in the *Apologoi*. As Bakker (2013), esp. 24–25, illuminates, the encounter with Circe in *Odyssey* 10 resembles the other quest episodes which are concatenated together to form *Odyssey* 9 and 10 (e.g. the encounter with the Cyclops, or Aeolus, or the Laestrygonians), while in the encounter in *Odyssey* 12 she is a 'cornerstone of the *Odyssey*'s architecture' insofar as she shifts from 'from dangerous adversary in the rescue quest to helpful guide' enabling Odysseus' successful return or *nostos*. This has important implications that previous diagrammatic analyses of the *Apologoi* (see n. 17 above) have not yet taken into account; see Figure 5.1 below.

Most importantly, scholars have noted that the encounter with Circe divides the *Apologoi* into two parts. Before encountering Circe, Odysseus and his men wander; after, they sail with the direction and purposefulness that only her supernatural guidance makes possible.[19] Odysseus' pre-Circean wanderings are epitomized by the calamitous episode bookended by encounters with Aeolus, king of the winds. Having taken their leave of his harmonious kingdom with all the winds but one held at bay for their convenience, Odysseus and his men have very nearly completed their journey in full (ὁδὸν ἐκτελέσαντες, *Od.* 10.41) – the hearth fires of home are even in sight! – when Odysseus' men, mistrustful that the spoils Odysseus has collected along the way will be evenly distributed, open the sack holding the winds; once loosed, these promptly blow the ship all the way back to the shores of Aeolus' floating island. (As scholars of Parmenides have on occasion noticed, the episode thus embodies the very paradigm of a backward-turning path.)[20] By contrast, from the moment they depart Circe's island up until they reach Thrinacia – the full extent of the itinerary for which Circe gives her instructions – Odysseus and his men make clear, unambiguous, linear progress towards their final destination of Ithaca.

There is another way of putting the matter. Scholars have discerned a number of thematic and compositional patterns characterizing the relationship between different episodes in the *Apologoi*,[21] and careful consideration of these analyses suggests that Circe's island serves as the mirror across which beckons the second, positive, goal-directed reflection of the first, wandering half of the *Apologoi*. Here, recourse to the graphs of various analysts of the *Apologoi*'s ring compositions are useful. A slightly

---

[19] See the incisive remarks at Montiglio (2005) 56–58, also 150.

[20] See e.g. Havelock (1958) 138–39; Mourelatos (2008b) [1970]; Montiglio (2005) 149.

[21] Between, for example, episodes where hosts confront Odysseus and his men with two extremes of bad hospitality (Most (1989), esp. 25) or a repeated confrontation with the different variations on the series 'temptation, physical attack, taboo' (Niles (1978), esp. 51).
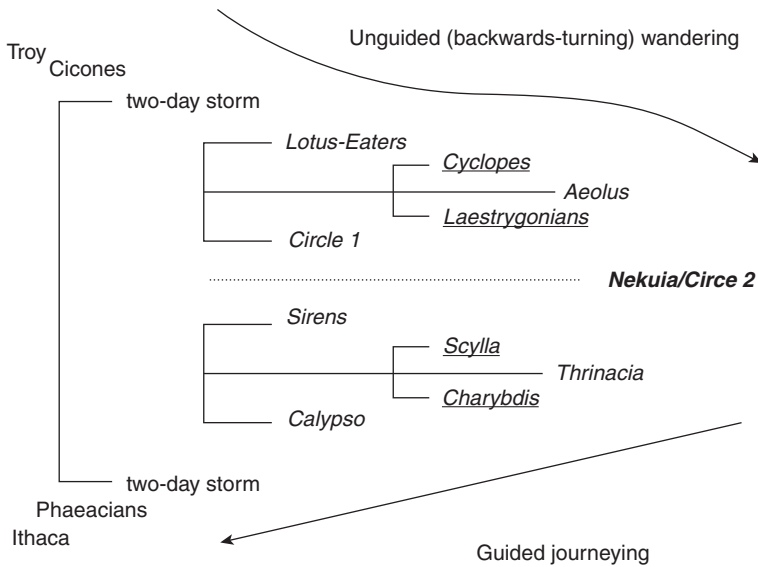
198

Figure 5.1 The structure of Odysseus' *Apologoi*

modified form of Most's graph in Figure 5.1 helps make the point vividly.[22]

By choosing to model his *hodos dizēsios* on the portion of the *Apologoi* that begins not at the departure from Troy, but rather from Aeaea – a kind of second point of departure, or a first point of informed departure – Parmenides in effect cuts off half of the *Odyssey*'s ring composition, thereby rendering linear the circular form of the erstwhile ring;[23] as we shall see, the effect is compounded by honing in on the first phase of the second half of the trip (the leg spanning Aeaea, Sirens, Scylla/Charybdis, Thrinacia) where the clearest progress is made anywhere in Odysseus' journey home. Were one looking to shift from a circular, backward-turning mode of discourse in order to create a sequential, goal-directed mode of discourse, beginning from the very centre

---

[22] Most (1989) 25, which is itself modelled on Niles (1978) 51.
[23] In this, one may perhaps be tempted to see a transition from the 'geometrical' ring composition characteristic of 'archaic thought' to the linear, sequential form of argumentation that will come to be increasingly prominent in the classical age and beyond.

199

of the ring would accomplish this elegantly by shearing off a linear discursive pattern.

This observation leads to two further points. As noted, scholars have also discerned in the Circe episode a deeper shift from one kind of story-type to another; Circe's island, that is, marks the point where a quest type becomes a *nostos* type – or rather, *nostos* becomes the mission of the quest.[24] The narratological correlate of the unguided wandering of the *Apologoi* before Odysseus 'tames' Circe is a kind of indefinite concatenation of quests, one linked to the other apparently without end. On the other hand, with Circe's instructions in hand, the *nostos*, with its highly marked sense of destinationality, *becomes* the goal of the quest. A plot structure revolving around arrival at a single, ultimate destination, rather than in indefinite series of concatenated quests, could hardly have proved more useful to Parmenides' notion of a *hodos dizēsios*.[25]

Finally, there is also a geographic dimension to the point. The near miss with Ithaca after the first sojourn on the island of Aeolus only underscores how, from the perspective of the *telos* of Ithaca, Odysseus' movement in the first half of the *Apologoi* is centrifugal. In certain respects, Circe's island represents the far apogee of this centrifugality; not only is it at the end of the earth, near where the Sun has his dancing field, but it is also the one place where Odysseus himself forgets Ithaca and must be reminded by his crew.[26] Thanks to the goddess's instructions, Odysseus' movement through space, centrifugal up until his arrival on Aeaea, becomes centripetal.[27] In short, at the thematic, structural, narratological, and geographic levels, Parmenides would have found in the Circe episode elements of enormous value to rework for his own ends.

What does this mean for Parmenides? First, that scholars are mistaken when they attempt to draw a contrast between the *kouros* in Parmenides' poem and Odysseus. Only if one fails to consider how the encounter with Circe divides the entire *Apologoi* into two

---

[24] For this and the next two sentences, see Bakker (2013) 20–26, discussed at greater length in Part III, *Doxai*, below.
[25] See again Part III, *Doxai*, below.
[26] See Montiglio (2005) 55–56.
[27] See again n. 19 above.

parts – pre-Circean wandering, post-Circean journeying – can one claim, for example, that while 'both protagonists travel far beyond the familiar track into eschatological locations, their journeys diametrically diverge'.[28] In fact, exactly the reverse is true. While it is certainly the case that 'the *kouros*' divine guides escort him directly to his goal . . . and precisely prevent him from undergoing the wandering which the poem associates throughout with error and ignorance', that 'Odysseus is repeatedly made to wander astray' *before* his encounter with Circe is irrelevant.[29] What matters is that Odysseus' divine guide also guides him directly to his goal that he may avoid the wandering which had plagued him earlier in the *Apologoi*.[30] Similarly, it is incorrect to assert that in Parmenides' poem 'the meandering Odyssean adventure is . . . reshaped as a linear journey'.[31] Attending to the structure of the *Apologoi* and the decisive role Circe plays in this portion of the *Odyssey*, we see instead that Parmenides leverages with tremendous skill a distinction between wandering and goal-directed journeying that was already clearly demarcated in Homer. By choosing to model his *hodos* on just the point in the *Apologoi* where Odysseus receives instructions from his female divinity with privileged access to knowledge (the guided, directed journeying that forms a true *hodos*, and not the untethered, backward-turning wandering of ignorant mortals), Parmenides plucks the

---

[28] Tor (2017) 264.
[29] Tor (2017) 265, 264.
[30] This also weakens the 'pointed divergence' between the *Odyssey* and Parmenides' poem that Tor seeks to 'sharpen' ((2017) 265). It is true that 'it is fundamental to the *Odyssey* that, for the narrative of *nostos* to take place, Odysseus must reject the offers of divinization which are proffered to him by his female host Calypso', and this does offer a contrast to readings of Parmenides' poem that posit that the *kouros* must undergo a process of divinization (provided by a female divinity) as a precondition to his attainment of his ultimate goal, knowledge of what-is. But the relevant point of contrast to accepting divinization need not necessarily be 'the life of the wandering mortal'. Though the *Odyssey* may in general associate the human condition with wandering (see Montiglio (2005)), that is not at all the contrast dramatized by the portion of the *Odyssey* that Parmenides' selects – book 12 – as his intertext. It is thus hard to see the *kouros* as 'pointedly outdo[ing] Homer's Odysseus in willingly accepting divinisation' (Tor (2017) 265) when the Odysseus Parmenides chooses as a model accepts the instructions offered to him by a female divinity with privileged access to knowledge as willingly as Parmenides' *kouros* does. I am grateful to Shaul Tor for his exchanges with me regarding these points.
[31] Montiglio (2005) 148.

portion of the *Apologoi* that suits his needs while sanitizing it of Odysseus' pre-Circean wanderings by relegating them to a separate, distinct *hodos* he emphasizes must be avoided at all costs.[32] Instead, it is much more accurate – and much more interesting – to point out that by isolating a portion of the circumference of the Homeric ring composition that forms the *Apologoi*, the circular movement of the thematic and discursive progression of the Homeric text is refashioned as a linear, goal-directed (or at least non-circular) movement – a movement that is paralleled much more macroscopically by the transition Parmenides effects from a myth of *nostos* (of a return to a place of origin) to an extended deductive argument that leads to a conclusion.

This takes us to just the moment in *Odyssey* 12 when Circe promises to give Odysseus the instructions he will need to undertake his journey (*Od.* 12.25–26):

> . . . αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ δείξω ὁδὸν ἠδὲ ἕκαστα
> σημανέω.

> . . . But I shall indicate your *hodos* and each thing
> Sign out.

Before she narrates the *hodos* to Odysseus, however, she 'takes him by the hand' (ἡ δ᾽ ἐμὲ χειρὸς ἑλοῦσα, *Od.* 12.32) in order to speak to him alone;[33] then she begins the tale of the *hodos*. In Parmenides' poem, having travelled to a distant place of revelation, a place at land's end far from the usual haunts of men (ἀπ᾽ ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου, Fr. 1.27),[34] the male mortal voyager of the

---

[32] The model for *both* routes described in fragments 6 and 7 is thus presented in the *Apologoi*. See also Chapter 2 above for a discussion of Parmenides' strategy of drawing rigorous distinctions (between superior, epistemically impeccable claims and mere *doxai*; between journeying and wandering) by mapping them onto the distinct branches of a forked *hodos*. This insight also previews the benefits of assessing the relationship between Parmenides' poem and the *Odyssey* using the flexible model afforded by Foucault's analysis of discursive architecture. What we see shall see is that Circe's speech in *Odyssey* 12 provides Parmenides with a *framework* for constructing discourse, one which allows him to slot in other episodes from elsewhere in the *Odyssey* in a recombinatorial fashion, rather than requiring that we map the *hodos* formed by fragments 2, 6, 7, and 8 onto the *hodos* of *Od.* 12.39–141 in a strictly bijective way.

[33] Odysseus, for his part, obliges by telling her everything that has happened (πάντα κατὰ μοῖραν κατέλεξα, *Od.* 12.35).

[34] For the Homeric connotations of the phrase ἀπ᾽ ἀνθρώπων, see Floyd (1992) 258–60.

202

proem is greeted by a female divinity with privileged access to knowledge by nothing other than a clasp of the hand – χεῖρα δὲ χειρί | δεξιτερὴν ἕλεν (Fr. 1.22–23).[35] Then, she, too, begins the tale of the *hodos*.[36]

5.1 Disjunctions

The tight parallels between Parmenides' poem and *Odyssey* 12 extend beyond the dramatic scenario and the *dramatis personae*, and – what is much less recognized[37] – well beyond the proem. When Parmenides' goddess speaks, her language, too, echoes the Circe of *Odyssey* 12. So Circe opens her speech (*Od.* 12.37–38):

> . . . σὺ δ᾿ ἄκουσον,
> ὥς τοι ἐγὼν ἐρέω, μνήσει δέ σε καὶ θεὸς αὐτός,

and introduces the choice between the two *hodoi* (*Od.* 12.56–58):

> ἔνθα τοι οὐκέτ᾿ ἔπειτα διηνεκέως ἀγορεύσω
> ὁπποτέρη δή τοι ὁδὸς ἔσσεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς
> θυμῷ βουλεύειν· ἐρέω δέ τοι ἀμφοτέρωθεν.

What follows there I shall no longer narrate piece by piece
Which of two possibilities will in fact be your *hodos*, but
Consider this carefully yourself: I shall tell you both from this point.

Parmenides' goddess, meanwhile, begins (Fr. 2.1–2):

> εἰ δ᾿ ἄγ᾿ ἐγὼν ἐρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῦθον ἀκούσας,
> αἵπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός εἰσι νοῆσαι.

But come now and I shall tell you (and you, having heard it, preserve the account)
Just which *hodoi* of inquiry alone there are to be thought/for thinking.[38]

---

[35] For discussion of the gesture's Homeric resonances, see Coxon (2009) [1986] 10; Floyd (1992) 254–56; Cordero (2004); Mansfeld (2005). While Homeric aspects of the gesture have been observed since at least Diels (1897) 53, the connection with Circe's gesture at *Od.* 12.32 does not seem to have been noticed. She, too, will reveal 'all things' (πάντα πυθέσθαι, Fr. 1.28); see n. 33 above.

[36] See also n. 33 above for another echo of *Od.* 12.25–35 in Fr. 1.27–28.

[37] See Introduction, 13.

[38] The difference between the verb understood as transitive infinitive ('to be thought of') as opposed to a dative infinitive ('for thinking') is discussed at greatest length – and with extensive bibliographical citation – in Palmer (2009) 69–73. The parallel with

The linguistic overlap is striking: the goddess in question declares that she will tell her mortal charge (ἐγὼν ἐρέω, *Od*. 12.38; ἐρέω, *Od*. 12.58; ἐγὼν ἐρέω, Fr. 2.1) what comes next;[39] underscores the importance of listening to her (σὺ . . . ἄκουσον, *Od*. 12.37; σὺ . . . ἀκούσας, Fr. 2.1); mentions a closed set of *hodoi* that she will present (ὁπποτέρη . . . ὁδὸς . . . ἀμφοτέρωθεν, *Od*. 12.57–58; αἵπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι, Fr. 2.2);[40] and invokes the being of these roads, be it possible or actual, present or future (ὁδὸς ἔσσεται, *Od*. 12.57; ὁδοὶ . . . εἰσι, Fr. 2.2).

Continuing with these two passages, we find yet another similarity in the use of *men . . . de . . .* clauses to introduce the alternatives. In Circe's *hodos* telling, *men . . . de . . .* clauses play an important role in articulating both pairs of alternatives one finds in the 'Choice' discourse-unit of the *hodos* (*Od*. 12.55–81, 12.73–110; see Section 4.2.2 above). So, too, Parmenides' goddess presents the two *hodoi* as follows (Fr. 2.3–5):

ἡ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ εἶναι . . .
ἡ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεών ἐστι μὴ εἶναι . . .

The one, that . . . *is* (. . .)[41] and that it is not possible [for] . . . *not to be* (. . .) . . .
The other, that . . . *is not* (. . .) and that it is right [for] . . . *not to be* (. . .) . . .

Furthermore, in both *Od*. 12.59–81 and Fragment 2 lines 3 and 5, the goddess who expresses the *krisis* or fork in the road takes great care to present the two alternatives in a highly symmetrical manner. Circe correlates the same words (πέτραι, 12.59; λὶς πέτρη,

[39] Empedocles' Fr. 3.10 provides striking support for the second option (see e.g. Palmer (2009) 70 and 70 n. 61).
The phrase εἰ δ' ἄγ' ἐγὼν ἐρέω is also quintessentially Homeric in the view of Cordero (2004) 37 n. 133; see also Coxon (2009) [1986] 57 and Böhme (1986) 47–48 for parallels.

[40] Where ὁπποτέρη . . . ὁδὸς . . . ἀμφοτέρωθεν highlights the mutual exclusiveness of the terms, αἵπερ ὁδοὶ μοῦναι would emphasize their exhaustiveness. For more discussion see n. 43 below.

[41] For the semantics of *einai*, much work on the use of the word in Parmenides before Brown (1994) is out of date (exceptions include Kahn (1973), Furth (1974), Mourelatos (1979b)). Since then, Kahn (2002), Mourelatos (2008b) xx–xxvi, Mourelatos (2008a) all make headway on the sense and function of the word in Parmenides, while Kahn (2009a) articulates a general framework of its syntax and semantics in early Greek. One of the most productive outcomes of this reconsideration has been an emerging consensus that 'rather than choose between the various senses, we need to acknowledge their interplay' (Miller (2006) 44). See also Kahn (2002) 88–89; Curd (2011) 19. The rendering here is based on – but freely modified from – the translation given by Miller (2006).

204

12.64 [Planctae]; πέτρη. . .λὶς, 12.79 [Scylla]), the same characters (e.g. Amphitrite (12.60 and 12.97)), and the same technique of 'description-by-negation' (12.62–4 and 12.83–84).[42] Likewise, the scrupulous congruities defining the phrasing of Parmenides' Fragment 2 lines 3 and 5 have been illustrated by the close symmetry marking the pair rendered in propositional form (e.g. 'to think that A and that B' and 'to think that not-A and that not-B') and in rudimentary logical notation – e.g. 'A and necessarily ¬(¬A)' and '¬A and necessarily ¬A'.[43]

The similarities between Parmenides' Fragment 2 and *Od.* 12.55–126 extend to the level of discourse modes and the types of dependence that define their relationship (Figure 5.2). Recall that the normal *discourse*-unit in *Odyssey* 10 and 12 involves a narration portion, followed by description, which in turn provides the raw material for the instruction and/or argument that follows (Section 3.2, Section 4.2); the 'either-or' disjunction of the *krisis* was associated with its own variant of this pattern, with two distinct levels of description used to advocate rejecting and/or selecting one alternative (Section 4.2). The key features of this pattern are replicated in Parmenides' Fragment 2. A narration section gives a choice between two *hodoi* (*Od.* 12.55–58; Parmenides Fr. 2.1–2), introduced via a *men . . . de . . .* clause, with close symmetry between the two terms. In the *Odyssey*, these terms are immediately subjected to a further qualification; so, of the πέτραι ἐπηρεφέες introduced by *men . . .*, Circe says (*Od.* 12.61):

> Πλαγκτὰς δή τοι τάς γε θεοὶ μάκαρες καλέουσι.

> But the blessed gods call these the Planctae.

While of οἱ . . . δύω σκόπελοι, introduced by *de . . .*, Circe says of the first (*Od.* 12.80):

> μέσσῳ δ' ἐν σκοπέλῳ ἔστι σπέος ἠεροειδές. . .

> And about halfway up it there is a misty cave. . .

---

[42] See Ch. 4, n. 33 above; the sentence here paraphrases Hopman (2012) 26–27.
[43] Cordero (2004) 43 and Thanassas (2011) 295, respectively. See also e.g. Miller (1979) 23, 33 n. 36; O'Brien (2000) 31–32; Cordero (2004) 37–57, esp. 42–44, 54–57. For discussion of the significance of this carefully crafted formulation, see e.g. O'Brien (2000) 28–33; Cordero (2004) 69–79; Miller (2006) 28–33; Palmer (2009) 83–105.
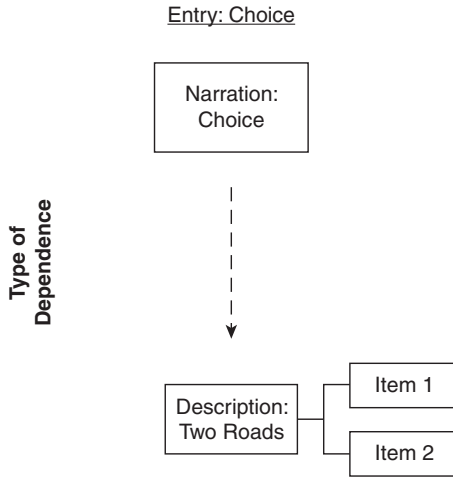
205

Entry: Choice

Figure 5.2 Levels of dependence, *Od.* 12.55–81 and Fr. 2.1–6

In Parmenides, meanwhile, the following qualities are attributed in the *men . . . de . . .* clause (Fr. 2.4, 2.6):

Πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος – Ἀληθείη γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ . . .
τὴν δή τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν.

This is the path of Persuasion, for she attends upon Truth . . .
This is a track from which no learning/report[44] comes whatsoever, I point
    out to you.[45]

All four lines just presented are classic description, with verbs in the third person present (καλέουσι, ὀπηδεῖ) and predicative uses of *einai* (Πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος, and, in indirect speech, παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν). If description is 'oriented to the statics of the world', then lines 4 and 6 of Parmenides' Fragment 2 are perfect examples of it, attributing qualities to the two *hodoi* in question.

 Fragment 2 then proceeds as follows (Fr. 2.6–8):

τὴν δή τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν·
οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἐὸν – οὐ γὰρ ἀνυστόν –
οὔτε φράσαις.

---

44 See Mourelatos (2008b) 23–24 and Mourelatos (1979b) 359; I shall discuss the meaning
    of this word elsewhere.
45 See Mourelatos (1965).

206

This is a track from which no learning/report comes whatsoever, I point out
  to you:
For you could not apprehend *what-is-not* as such[46] (for it cannot be
  accomplished),[47]
Nor could you indicate[48] it.

For their part, lines 7–8 display an 'argument' discourse mode
comparable to Circe's instructions at *Od.* 12.106–10:

> . . . μὴ σύ γε κεῖθι τύχοις, ὅτε ῥοιβδήσειεν·
> οὐ γάρ κεν ῥύσαιτό σ' ὑπὲκ κακοῦ οὐδ' ἐνοσίχθων.
> ἀλλὰ μάλα Σκύλλης σκοπέλῳ πεπλημένος ὦκα
> νῆα παρὲξ ἐλάαν, ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺ φέρτερόν ἐστιν
> ἐξ ἑτάρους ἐν νηὶ ποθήμεναι ἢ ἅμα πάντας.

> . . . May you not chance to be present there when Charybdis sucks down,
> For no one could rescue you out from out of that ill, not even Poseidon.
> But driving your ship hard by Scylla's rock
> Sail on swiftly, since it is far better
> To mourn six men from your ship than all of them together.

In both cases we find a conclusion (Fr. 2.6, *Od.* 12.106) justified
(*gar*)[49] by a modally charged (*an/ken*) negation (*ou*[*te*])
(*Od.* 12.107a, Fr. 2.7a, 8).[50] If Fr. 2.1–6 resembles the first fork
in the *hodos* presented by Circe (*Od.* 12.55–81), at the upper levels
of dependence – narration followed by description – Fr. 2.6–8
resembles the second (12.82–126) at the lower part of the level of
dependence – description followed by argument.

---

46 Translation after Miller (2006) 4, whose rendition is one of the few to incorporate the
    limitative, and also the intensive, forces of the particle γε. Indeed, all three categories of
    'forces' that Denniston (1951) 114–15 attributes to the particle seem apt: the
    'Determinative' ('what-*is-not*', regardless of any other qualities this 'what' may poten-
    tially have), the 'Limitative' ('what-is-not, as such'), and the 'Intensive' ('what-
    absolutely/radically-is-not'). On the 'Limitative', see also O'Brien (1987) 18: 'you
    could hardly come to know what is not – whatever else you might come to know.' On
    γε here, see also Cordero (2004) 81 and 81 n. 334.
47 I plan to address this word, especially in light of Homeric usage, in an article; for now,
    see remarks in Mourelatos (2008b) 23 and n. 36; Coxon (2009) 10–11.
48 For further nuances, see Mourelatos (1965) and Mourelatos (2008b) 20 and n. 28, more
    generally *DELG* and *LfgrE* s.v. φράζω.
49 Likewise, *epei* at line 109 resembles the four appearances of *epei* that help articulate the
    four *sēmata* of Fr. 8 – especially given that it, too, is followed by the predicative *esti* (see
    Ch. 4). On the role played by *gar* in delineating the argumentative structure of Fr. 2.6–8,
    see Cordero (2004) 79 and Palmer (2009) 103.
50 For further discussion of the grammar of Fr. 2.7–8, see O'Brien (1987) 17.

207

The major continuities between Parmenides' Fragment 2 and *Od*. 12.55–126 thus obtain not only at the level of diction, but also in terms of the discourse modes used and the order of their sequencing: first narration, then description, and finally instruction/argument. But two very striking differences must also be noted. The first is verbal form. The two 'conclusions' of the 'argument' sections in the *Odyssey* take the form of second person imperative optatives (or infinitives) – μὴ σύ … κεῖθι τύχοις (*Od*. 12.106) and Σκύλλης σκοπέλῳ πεπλημένος ὦκα | νῆα παρὲξ ἐλάαν (*Od*. 12.108–09) – while the justifying support takes the form of the third person – οὐ … κεν ῥύσαιτό (*Od*. 12.107) and πολὺ φέρτερόν ἐστιν (*Od*. 12.109). In Parmenides, by contrast, the justifying support takes the form of the second person – οὔτε … ἂν γνοίης … οὔτε φράσαις (Fr. 2.7–8) – while the conclusion takes the form of a third person indicative (in indirect speech) – τὴν … παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν (Fr. 2.6).

Second, in Homer the 'argument' sections are, as discussed, examples of practical reasoning and arguments insofar as they conclude in an imperative to a particular action. In Parmenides' Fragment 2, by contrast, the conclusion is a proposition asserting a state of affairs, namely, that a certain object (the second route) has a particular quality (viz., being *panapeuthēs*). And, strikingly, the support for this claim now encompasses two actions – *gignōskein* and *phrazein* (Fr. 2.7–8) – as opposed to the Homeric patterns of deliberation, where the argumentative support is often anchored in basic facts about the world (e.g. the evil that Scylla is, is immortal – ἀλλ᾽ ἀθάνατον κακόν ἐστι [*Od*. 12.118] – because of the six heads *that she has* – τῆς ἦ τοι πόδες εἰσὶ δυώδεκα πάντες ἄωροι | ἓξ δέ τέ οἱ δειραὶ περιμήκεες [*Od*. 12.89–90]).

These transformations bring to the fore two developments of major import. In Homer, facts about the world, expressed in the third person indicative (sometimes negated with a modal charge) serve as the basis for (or provide the raw material for premises of) a kind of practical argument yielding a second person imperative pertaining to some action. In Parmenides, by contrast, second person actions (now negated with the modal charge of the

Homeric description sections)[51] serve as the basis supporting and justifying the assertions that play the role of description, stating facts about the world and attributing qualities to entities that have been introduced (in this case, via the predicative *esti*, the fact that the second route is 'entirely without report', Fr. 2.6). The underlying relationship or 'type of dependence' between these two discourse modes has been reversed: the 'argument', in both cases centring on actions that can or cannot be taken by the interlocutor, in Parmenides' poem ultimately supports the assertions made about the world (i.e. descriptions). If Parmenides is one of the first to defend, justify, or argue for his conclusions about the nature of the world, identifying the manner in which he adopts this traditional *form* of deliberation but *reverses* the relationship between description and action is of decisive importance (see Table 5.1, Figure 5.3).

Second, the reversal of person between the verbs of conclusion and premise in Homer and Parmenides spotlights the crucial importance of one of Parmenides' argumentative strategies: his argument's *dialectical* nature.[52] This dialectical nature is invaluable for securing the foundations of his argument because Parmenides' assertion at Fr. 2.7–8 'is axiomatic *within a dialectical context*'.[53] This manoeuvre responds to the problem of what strategy a thinker whose goal is to 'cut free from inherited premises' can devise to accomplish this goal.[54] If one can no longer make arguments on the basis of facts established by description (and even if one wants to do just the reverse, and establish facts through the arguments one presents) how should

---

[51] Strictly speaking, a statement concerning the impossibility of performing certain actions (such as we find in e.g. Fr. 2.7–8) is a statement of a fact that concerns an action.

[52] As emphasized by e.g. Furth (1974) 250–51 and Mackenzie (1982); see also Robbiano (2006) 61–88. It is infelicitous that the word 'dialectic' should be used to mean both a 'process of discourse . . . carried on by more than one person' (Mackenzie (1982) 9 n. 8 on Parmenides) and a particular pattern of generating claims and pursuing arguments – also vitally important to Parmenides' thought – centring on position, negation, and denial of negation (see the series of studies: Austin (1986), S. Austin (2002), Austin (2007), Austin (2011), Austin (2013), Austin (2014)). It is plainly the first sense in play here; see n. 65 below.

[53] Mackenzie (1982) 1, and see generally the excellent analysis at Mackenzie (1982) 1–2. Interpretations of Fr. 2.7–8 along similar lines include Owen (1960); Tugwell (1964); Hussey (1972) 85–86; Hintikka (1980); and the powerful O'Brien (2000), esp. 30–34.

[54] Owen (1960) 95. It is for this reason, of course, that references to Descartes's *cogito* are so common: see e.g. Owen (1960) 95, followed by Tugwell (1964), Guthrie (1965) 15 (see discussion at Mourelatos (2008b) 271); Hintikka (1980) explores this question at length (see esp. Hintikka (1980) 12–13, 12 n. 16).

209

Table 5.1 *Verbal person and type of 'situation'*[56] *in 'description' and 'argument' sections,* Od*. 12 and Fr. 2*

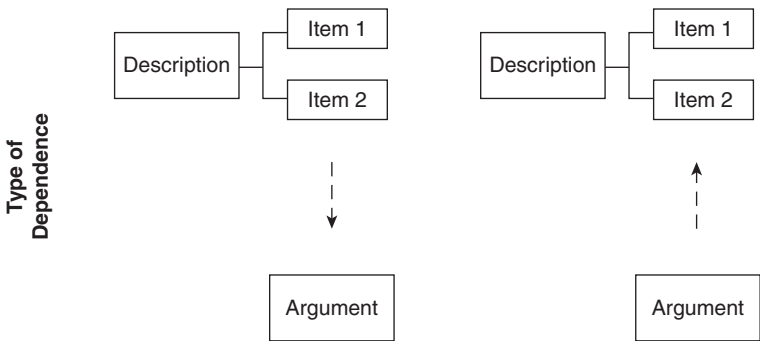|	Homer (*Od*. 12.106–10)	Parmenides (Fr. 2.6–8)
Conclusion	2nd person, action	3rd person, state of affairs (is description section)
Support	3rd person, state of affairs (from description section) + modal charge	2nd person, (state of affairs concerning) action + modal charge

Figure 5.3 Types of dependence, *Od*. 12.83–110 and Fr. 2.3–8

one proceed? What else could one do other than 'start from an assumption whose denial is particularly self-refuting'?[55]

These are not the only elements from *Od*. 12.55–126 to feature prominently in Parmenides' Fr. 2. Of course, third person singular indicative forms of *einai* continue to be very important beyond the beguiling but portentous names given to the *hodoi* at Fragment 2 lines 3 and 5. Similarly, predicative uses of *esti* attribute qualities to these *hodoi*, as at Fragment 2 lines 4 and 6. Finally, the particle *gar* links the conclusion (stated first) to its argumentative support. Finally, the modally charged negations important in *Od*. 12.55–126 remain fundamental to Parmenides' Fr. 2, serving as the essential premises for

---

[55] Owen (1960) 95.
[56] See the modified Kenny-Vendler chart in Figure 1.1 above.

major conclusions (*Od.* 12.107 for conclusion at *Od.* 12.106; Fr. 2.7–8 for conclusion at Fr. 2.6) – and if one accepts the view that the force of Fragment 2.6–8 springs from the self-defeating nature of any attempt to refute it, the *persistence* of the modally charged negation (combined with the switch from third to second person) acquires momentous significance for the history of thought.[57]

We have already discussed at great length the arresting confluence of features found where Gill's Homeric pattern of deliberation – consideration of different courses of action, rejection of one course, conclusion – intersects with a forking of a *hodos*. In this special case, 'course of action' and 'course' – viz. a *cursus*, part of the itinerary of a journey through physical space – are perfectly coextensive (Section 4.2.3, 'Assessments and Cautions'); accordingly, basic dynamics of the use of space, namely, the impossibility of travelling two routes at the same time (a crystalline way of imaging – or indeed imagining, thematizing – the abstract notion of mutually exclusive, exhaustive alternatives), or the impossibility of getting from point A to point C except by way of some point B, shapes the nature of the choice. As a result, when Homeric deliberation about what courses of action to take is deliberation *about* courses, the matrix of possible decisions is concretized in the form of two mutually incompatible, exhaustive alternatives: in other words, a *krisis*, or exclusive disjunction (see Figures 5.4a, b, c).[58]

In the 'Choice' *hodos*-units of *Odyssey* 12, we saw that the rejection of one option as a crucial preliminary to a conclusion can take various forms (see Figure 5.5a, b, c). In the case of the Two Roads, the rejection is merely implicit, and emerges from an extended series of 'descriptions-by-negation' which are in fact tantamount to a 'proscription-by-negation' (Section 4.2.2). In the case of the Two Rocks, the rejection and selection of the other alternative are explicit (*Od.* 12.106–08). This rejection takes on a special kind of potency within the framework of the mutually exclusive, exhaustive alternatives of the forking *hodos*. Circe lays bare the power of the either/or choice when noting that Scylla is to be selected not because she represents a desirable option (six men

---

[57] See n. 63 below.
[58] See on this point Mansfeld (1964) 56–62, though also with the cautions of Kahn (1970); see also Kahn (2009c) 150–51, and the remarks at Cordero (2004) 66, with footnotes.
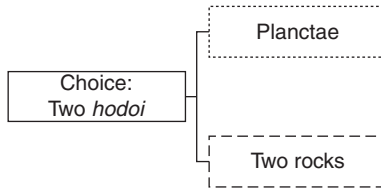
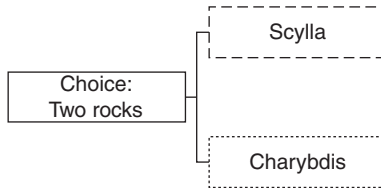Figure 5.4a Circe's exclusive disjunction (routes), *Od.* 12.55–83

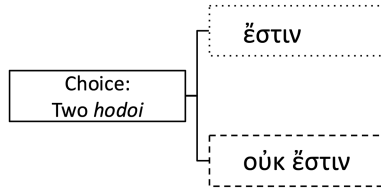Figure 5.4b Circe's exclusive disjunction (rocks), *Od.* 12.73–126

Figure 5.4c Parmenides' goddess's exclusive disjunction, Fr. 2.2–5

will die); rather, given that nobody would survive the alternative, she is in practice the *only* option (*Od.* 12.106–10).[59]

Finally, modally charged negation plays *the* crucial role in eliminating one of the alternatives in the case of the Two Rocks choice (12.107), in effect *forcing* Odysseus to choose the other term, no matter how grim the prospect (Section 4.2.2.1, 'Three Features'). Framed in terms of modally inflected impossibility – *nobody* would be able to save Odysseus, not even Poseidon,

---

[59] Encapsulated by the comparative construction πολὺ φέρτερόν ἐστιν | ἐξ ἑτάρους ἐν νηὶ ποθήμεναι ἢ ἅμα πάντας (*Od.* 12.109–10).

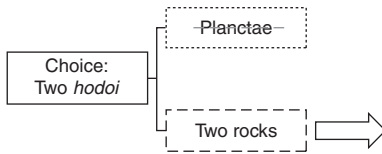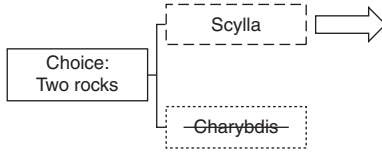Figure 5.5a *Od*. 12.55–83: Rejection implicit, selection explicit

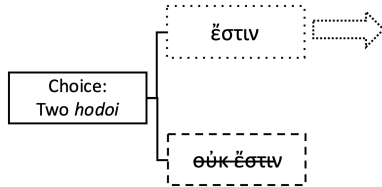Figure 5.5b *Od*. 12.73–126: Rejection explicit, selection explicit

Figure 5.5c Fr. 2: Rejection explicit, selection implicit

master of the sea (*Od*. 12.107) – this rejection takes on a kind of general, theoretical force, expressing something like a categorical claim. What we see in Fragment 2, then, is a very powerful synthesis of features common in Homeric language and thought – the pattern of Homeric deliberation deemed typical by Gill, a modified 'description-by-negation' technique (with a modal charge) – that, when applied to a specific kind of choice (between bifurcating paths denoting physical movement through space), combine to *require* the selection of one possibility by virtue of the *necessary rejection* of the other.[60] This is the moment to cash

---

[60] There are many possible ways of expressing this, and here is one point where the distinction between observers' categories and actors' categories becomes particularly loaded; O'Brien (2000) 32, for example, aptly describes the matter in terms of a strategy for 'ensuring that we make the right choice'.

213

out the observations in Section 4.2.3 of the previous chapter. Seen from this perspective, Parmenides' *krisis*, or 'exclusive disjunction', at Fr. 2 loses its novelty and becomes an argumentative device taken over ready-made; it is the *use* to which this argumentative strategy is put that is transformative and revolutionary.

5.2 Opening Moves

The majority of the transformations effected by Parmenides that we have examined so far come at the level of 'types of dependence'; there is also, however, one vitally important change undertaken by Parmenides at the level of rhetorical schemata. In Homer, the 'Choice' *hodos*-unit comes in the middle of the journey, after the meadow of the Sirens and before Thrinacia. In Parmenides, by contrast, the *krisis* portion forms the very first *hodos*-unit we encounter (see Figure 5.6).

Why is this significant? Lloyd noted that 'the *aims* of *The Way of Truth* are clear: Parmenides sets out to establish a set of inescapable conclusions by strict deductive arguments from a starting point that itself has to be accepted. Those are features it shares with later demonstrations.'[61] The development of interconnected deductive arguments we shall explore in the next chapter; what is at stake here is the notion that, as Parmenides' successor Diogenes of Apollonia would put it some decades later, 'anyone beginning an account ought to make the starting point [or principle] indisputable' (64B1).[62] Fragment 2 plays the definitive role in securing this.[63]

To put everything together: Parmenides accomplishes this groundbreaking leap in the structure of rigorous argumentation by reconfiguring and recombining discursive elements found in Homer. At the level of 'types of dependence', he reverses the roles between description and argumentation, using the argument section to support an assertion advanced in the description section. This argument in turn can be decoupled from previously established facts and remain freestanding: it is self-supporting or self-verifying,[64] partly as a result of

---

[61] Lloyd (1979) 67–79; see also Lloyd (2000) 244–45 and Lloyd (1990) 81–86.
[62] For discussion of this claim and further bibliography, see Curd (1998a) 1–2, 1 n. 1.
[63] See e.g. Lloyd (1979) 69; see also n. 57 above.
[64] See formulations at e.g. Owen (1960) 95; Hintikka (1980) 12 n. 16; Miller (2006) 35.
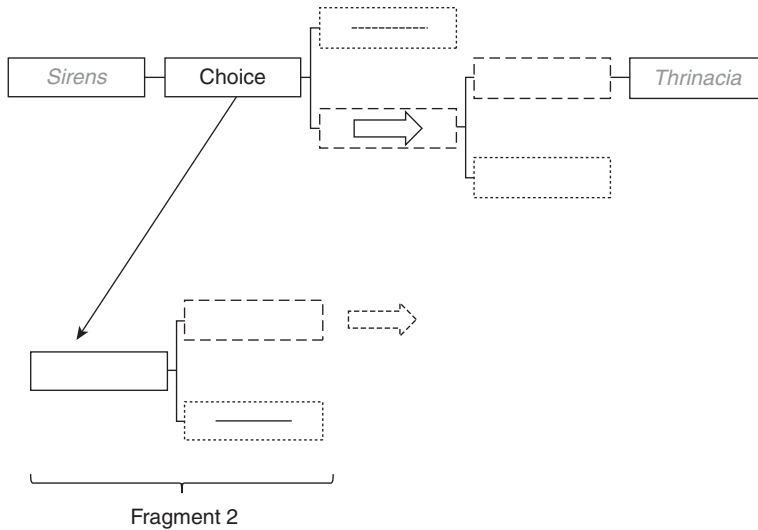
214

Figure 5.6 Shift: *Krisis* placed at the beginning of the *hodos*

the use of the second person, which gives the argument its dialectical dynamics and force.[65] And this argument section, insofar as it works in the service of a claim that, in typical Homeric fashion, rules out one alternative – and does so, following *Od*. 12.55–126, in the context of an exclusive disjunction[66] – therefore demands the selection of the

---

[65] See M. Mackenzie (1982) 2: 'The dialectical context is introduced by the myth of a dialogue between the goddess and the Kouros . . . But this conceit recedes into the background, and Parmenides appears to argue directly with the reader, who becomes his interlocutor throughout the *Alētheia*.' See also Furth (1974) 250–51, Robbiano (2006) 61–88.

[66] That frs. 2.3 and 5 articulate *what is at this stage* an exclusive disjunction is strongly suggested. See e.g. Cornford (1933), in response Palmer (2009) 64–65. See also important discussions in Owen (1960) 91–92; Furley (1973), Furth (1974) 254–55; Gallop (1979) 67; Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (2007) [1983] 245; Lesher (1984) 13–18, esp. 14; O'Brien (1987) 152–53; O'Brien (2000) 31–32; McKirahan (2010) 153–56. Recent discussions include Crystal (2002) 207–08; Cordero (2004); Mansfeld (2005); Warren (2007) 83; Lewis (2009); Bredlow (2011) 295; Thanassas (2011) 295–96. This point is accepted even by those who feel there is no 'argument' in Fr. 2.7–8 (e.g. Curd (1998a) 15–17 and Lesher (1984)). Whether the modal complements of fragments 2.3b and 2.5b render the terms in question complementary – but not contradictory – has also been debated: for extended discussion (and comprehensive bibliography), see Palmer (2009) 51–105.

215

other alternative.[67] Moreover, the modal charge attached to the rejection of the one possibility generates a kind of symmetrical modal valence that is projected onto the other route, which must necessarily be selected if one is to proceed further down any path at all.[68] All this takes place within one *hodos*-unit on the journey spelled out by the female goddess to her male mortal charge. Moving this unit to the front of the itinerary, meanwhile, not only forces the mortal voyager down a particular path, ruling the alternative out, but does so *from the very beginning* of the voyage– before there is any chance of selecting a different starting point, before there is any alternative but to confront this decisive initial *krisis*.[69]

---

[67] This is where the likes of Curd (1998a) 15–17 part company from e.g. Barnes (1982) 159; see also n. 43 above. For discussion of the word ἔλεγχος (Fr. 7) in this context, see e.g. Lesher (1984); Lesher (2002); Furley (1989) 2; and Mourelatos 2013a.

[68] Herein lies the force of the modal complements at fragments 2.3b and 2.5b. This is the most controversial aspect of the rendition presented here, one in harmony with important aspects of e.g. Cordero (2004); Thanassas (2011); Miller (1979) 22–24; Miller (2006) 28–33.

[69] Here, too, we also have an opportunity to reassess some of the questions raised at the end of the last chapter (Section 4.2.3, 'Assessments and Cautions'). What we saw there was a quite a high degree of distinctiveness in the Homeric passage, a distinctiveness that is now underscored by the very high degree of overlap these distinctive features share with Parmenides' Fr. 2. In the choices between travelling by way of the Wandering Rocks or the Two Rocks, between Scylla and Charybdis, we saw a confluence of Gill's pattern of Homeric deliberation – two courses of action are considered and, one course being rejected on the basis of the consequences implied by selecting it, the other is selected – with the use of opposites observed by Lloyd. What is more, entirely unlike anything we saw in either Hesiod or the gold tablets, passage by one route is rigorously barred via modally charged negation, which is in turn supported, implicitly or explicitly, by argumentation of some kind in the form of clauses introduced by *gar* and/or *epei*; this forces the selection of the other alternative. What we have seen in the exact usage of all these features by Parmenides thus not only underscores the distinctiveness of the Homeric model, but also illuminates point by point the very high degree of overlap with Parmenides.