

earth, and "probably extends as far as the moon." It was of "a fiery nature, a brightly-beaming, pure fire-air,* of great subtlety and eternal serenity." This definition perfectly coincides with its etymological derivation from *αἶθειν*, to burn, for which Plato and Aristotle, from a predilection for mechanical views, singularly enough substituted another (*ἀεὶ-θεῖν*), on account of the constancy of the revolving and rotatory movement.† The idea of the subtlety and tenuity of the upper ether does not appear to have resulted from a knowledge that the air on mountains is purer and less charged with the heavy vapors of the earth, or that the density of the strata of air decreases with their increased height. In as far as the elements of the ancients refer less to material differences of bodies, or even to their simple nature (their incapacity of being decomposed), than to mere *conditions of matter*, the idea of the upper ether (the fiery air of heaven) has originated in the primary and normal contraries of *heavy and light, lower and upper, earth and fire*. These extremes

* Empedocles, v. 216, calls the ether *παμφανόων*, brightly-beaming, and therefore self-luminous.

† Plato, *Cratyl.*, 410 B., where we meet with the expression *ἀειθεῆρ*. Aristot., *De Cælo*, 1, 3, p. 270, Bekk., says, in opposition to Anaxagoras: *αἰθέρα προσωνόμασαν τὸν ἀνωτάτω τόπον, ἀπὸ τοῦ θεῖν ἀεὶ τὸν αἰδίων χρόνον θέμενοι τὴν επωνυμίαν αὐτῷ. Ἀναξαγόρας δὲ κατακέχρηται τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ οὐ καλῶς· ὀνομάζει γὰρ αἰθέρα ἀντὶ πυρός.* We find this more circumstantially referred to in Aristot., *Meteor.*, 1, 3, p. 339, lines 21-34, Bekk.: "The so-called ether has an ancient designation, which Anaxagoras seems to identify with fire; for, according to him, the upper region is full of fire, and to be considered as ether; in which, indeed, he is correct. For the ancients appear to have regarded the body which is in a constant state of movement, as possessing a divine nature, and therefore called it ether, a substance with which we have nothing analogous. Those, however, who hold the space surrounding bodies to be fire no less than the bodies themselves, and who look upon that which lies between the earth and the stars as air, would probably relinquish such childish fancies if they properly investigated the results of the latest researches of mathematicians." (The same etymology of this word, implying rapid revolution, is referred to by the Aristotelian, or Stoic, author of the work *De Mundo*, cap. 2, p. 392, Bekk.) Professor Franz has correctly remarked, "That the play of words in the designation of bodies *in eternal motion* (*σῶμα ἀεὶ θεόν*) and of *the divine* (*θεῖον*) alluded to in the *Meteorologica*, is strikingly characteristic of the Greek type of imagination, and affords additional evidence of the inaptitude of the ancients for etymological inquiry." Professor Buschmann calls attention to a Sanscrit term, *áschtra*, ether or the atmosphere, which looks very like the Greek *αἰθήρ*, with which it has been compared by Vans Kennedy, in his *Researches into the Origin and Affinity of the principal Languages of Asia and Europe*, 1828, p. 279. This word may also be referred to the root (*as, asch*), to which the Indians attach the signification of shining or beaming.