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Eleatic Ontology from the Hellenistic Period to Late Antiquity

Edited by Anna Motta & Christopher Kurfess

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Introduction

Anna Motta & Christopher Kurfess

Parmenides is widely regarded as the most important and influential of the Presocratic philosophers. Born c. 515 BCE at Elea, a Greek colony in southern Italy, he is often considered to be not only the founder of Eleatic philosophy, but the father of deductive reasoning, the originator of rational theology, and the wellspring of the Western ontological tradition. The impact of Parmenides' account of Being or "what *is*" (ἐόν) on subsequent thought has been vast, lasting, and various. It is also true, as David Sedley has written, that "with Parmenides, more than with most writers, any translation is an interpretation."[1] Thus both the profundity of Parmenides' thought and the rich verbal density of his poetry pose challenges to modern scholars – just as they did to his ancient readers. These challenges were felt particularly keenly in later antiquity – a period of focus in the present collection of essays – when doing justice to the authority of the ancients obligated commentators to reconcile a long and complex tradition of sometimes incompatible interpretative commitments. Certain Neoplatonists (in)famously "harmonized" points of possible tension by allowing that the Presocratics, though not far from the truth, employed enigmatic and ambiguous language, whereas Plato conveyed the truth in a clearer and more appropriate way. In this manner the Presocratics, Parmenides among them, could be saved from apparent errors and their unique conceptions and terminology could be incorporated within a Neoplatonic philosophical framework.

The "Eleatic school" is commonly understood to include Parmenides, his fellow citizen Zeno, and Melissus of Samos. (Traditionally, Xenophanes of Colophon had also been included, his views about divinity seen as anticipating Parmenides' account of Being.) Parmenides and his two pupils are distin-

[1] "Parmenides," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998 ed.

guished by their concern with methods of proof and for conceiving Being as a unitary substance, which is also immobile, unchangeable, and indivisible. The Eleatics began a series of reflections on the relation between demonstration and reality that eventually developed into Socratic and Platonic dialectic, and Plato's portrait has played a decisive role in the subsequent reception of Eleatic ideas. Since Plato's *Sophist*, Parmenides has been almost as famous for apparent inconsistencies as for the rigid dicta that seemed to land him in them. Moreover, in the *Parmenides*, which dramatically presents Parmenides and Zeno conversing in Athens with a very young Socrates (*Prm*. 127a–b), Plato subjects his own characteristic doctrine to critique by his Eleatic predecessors, thereby initiating a tradition of critical examination of Eleatic ontology that would last until Late Antiquity and beyond.[2] Plato's dialogues exhibit such a profound engagement with Eleatic thought that Eleatic ontology can be regarded as the hidden foundation of Platonic metaphysics.

Of course, Plato and the Platonic tradition are only part of the story, and the present collection seeks, with no pretense of being exhaustive, to provide a representative survey of the reception of Eleatic ontology during the Hellenistic and late ancient periods.[3] The essays included offer fresh perspectives on crucial points in that reception, reveal points of contact and instances of mutual interaction between competing traditions, and allow readers to reflect on the revolutionary new conceptions that thinkers of these eras developed in the course of the continuing confrontation with the venerable figure of Parmenides and the challenges posed by his thought. This volume is a collaborative effort by an international array of scholars, reflecting a range of outlooks and approaches, and exploring some of the various forms taken by the reception of Parmenides' ontology. Some of the essays were invited by the editors, others were selected by blind review from submissions made in response to a call for papers.

The arrangement of essays is roughly chronological in order. In chapter 1, "Being at Play: Naming and Non-Naming in the Anonymous *De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia*," Christopher Kurfess considers the way that names are handled in a curious document transmitted as part of the Aristotelian cor-

[2] On this tradition, see J.D. Turner & K. Corrigan (eds.), *Plato's* Parmenides *and Its Heritage*, 2 vols. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

[3] For earlier phases in the reception of Eleatic ontology, see N. Galgano & R. Cherubin (eds.) *Eleatic Ontology: Origin and reception*, in *Anais de Filosofia Clássica* 14, issues 27 and 28 (2020) and D. Bronstein & F. Mié (eds.), *Eleatic Ontology in Aristotle*, in *Peitho: Examina Antiqua* 12, no. 1 (2021).

pus, noting its continuities with earlier instances of the reception of Eleatic thought. In chapter 2, "Healthy, Immutable, and Beautiful: Eleatic Pantheism and Epicurean Theology," Enrico Piergiacomi reconstructs an Epicurean view of, and response to, a pantheistic Parmenidean theology. In chapter 3, "Dualism and Platonism: Plutarch's Parmenides," Carlo Delle Donne introduces us to Plutarch's Platonism, reading Parmenides as a forerunner of Plato in both ontology and the account of the sensible world. In chapter 4, "Clement of Alexandria and the Eleatization of Xenophanes," William H.F. Altman focuses on Clement of Alexandria's role in preserving several key theological fragments of Xenophanes and invites us to reconsider modern scholars' dismissal of both Xenophanes' status as an Eleatic and Clement's claim of Greek philosophy's debt to Hebrew Scripture. In chapter 5, "Parmenides' Philosophy through Plato's *Parmenides* in Origen of Alexandria," Ilaria L.E. Ramelli explores the reception of Parmenides' thought in Origen, one of the main exponents of patristic philosophy. In chapter 6, "Platonism and Eleaticism," Lloyd P. Gerson provides an analysis of the appropriation of Eleatic philosophy by Plato and the Platonists, with a particular focus on Plotinus. In chapter 7, "Augustine and Eleatic Ontology," Giovanni Catapano illustrates the general aspects and the essential contents of Augustinian ontology as they relate to distinctive theses of the Eleatics. In chapter 8, "Proclus and the Overcoming of Eleaticism without Parricide," Anna Motta investigates the debt that Plato incurred with the Eleatics according to Proclus. In chapter 9, "Why Rescue Parmenides? On Zeno's Ontology in Simplicius," Marc-Antoine Gavray examines the role Simplicius attributes to Zeno in Eleatic ontology and tries to determine his place within the Neoplatonic system.

Ancient texts and authors are cited using the abbreviations in LSJ, rev. 9th ed. (i.e., H.G. Liddell & R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford, 1940; rev. supplement 1996]) except where otherwise indicated. Journal titles are abbreviated as in *L'Année Philologique*. In citations of fragments of the Presocratics, those cited with "DK" refer to H. Diels & W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951–1952); references with "LM" refer to A. Laks & G.W. Most, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 9 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

No knowledge of Greek is assumed. Apart from the footnotes, all Greek in the essays is accompanied by a translation. Translations are the author's own, unless otherwise indicated. Scholarly literature is cited with full bibliographical information on its first occurrence; subsequent citations of the same

source within a given chapter use a shortened form. Full information for all references can be found in the detailed list at the end of each chapter.

* * *

The essays collected here began as part of the international research project, *Eleatic Ontology: origin and reception* (Project EON). The present volume began as tome 6 of that project and was subsequently included in a section of an international agreement programme between the Department of Humanities of the University of Naples Federico II and the Department of Philosophy of the Free University of Berlin. The editors are grateful to the editorial board of FedOA for including this volume in the series. We warmly thank each of the contributors for their enthusiastic collaboration at every stage of this project. Financial support from the University of Naples "Federico II" and the Department of Humanistic Studies have been fundamental for the realization of this volume.

This volume is dedicated to the memory
of Giovanni Casertano

1.
Being at Play: Naming and Non-Naming in the Anonymous *De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia*

Christopher Kurfess
(Gettysburg College)

Abstract: The work now known as the *De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia*, or *MXG,* was not always so titled. In the manuscripts, where titles appear at all, the three sections of the work are related to Xenophanes, Zeno, and Gorgias, respectively. While the modern correction is well-founded, studies of the work often overlook a noteworthy feature of the text that allowed for the confusion in the first place. Strangely, in the first section, devoted to Melissus, the author avoids expressly naming him, either in the paraphrase of Melissus' argument or in the criticism that follows. Though many prominent Presocratics are mentioned, Melissus' name does not actually appear until the second section, that is, until the discussion of an argument attributed to Xenophanes. In this second part, Xenophanes' own name, which was among those that had appeared earlier, is now withheld. Gorgias, meanwhile, is not only unnamed in the third section, which tradition correctly associates with him, but anywhere else in the work. These are not, I suggest, accidental omissions, but deliberate stylistic choices, attention to which can reveal something of our author's manner of engagement with the philosophical matters discussed. Treating such omissions as well as the occasions on which the author decides to name names as significant, I seek to make some sense of the array of names that appear over the course of the work, and to situate the author in a tradition of playful reflection on the nature of naming as well as being.

Keywords: Melissus, Xenophanes, Gorgias, Zeno, Eleatic, Plato, Parmenides, Naming, Being, repetition, *De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia*, *Sophist*, *Parmenides*.

Casually surveying the titles of the extant Aristotelian corpus, one might expect the work commonly known as *On Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias* (hereafter *MXG*)[1] to be of major importance for students of early Greek

* I wish to thank Stefania Giombini, André Laks, Richard McKirahan, and Alexander Mourelatos for questions and comments on an earlier version of this paper, read at the 5th Biennial Conference of the International Association for Presocratic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin in 2016, and to thank Anna Motta, Sarah Star, and Panagiotis Thanassas for their careful readings of the present version.

[1] Authors and works are regularly cited according to the abbreviations in LSJ, rev. 9th ed., with the following departures and additions: 1) "*MXG*" is used (without an indication of the author) in place of "Arist. *Xen.*" or "[Arist.] *Xen.*" to better reflect the content of the work as well as the doubts about its authorship; 2) "DK" = Diels & Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed., 3 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951), fragments from which are typically referred to by chapter and letter/number combination (e.g., DK 28 B1); 3) "LM" = Laks & Most, *Early Greek Phi-*

philosophy, especially those interested in Eleatic thought. That title conveys rather transparently the contents of the work: each of its three main sections reports, and offers criticism of, arguments of an ontological character that can be linked with Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias, respectively. If genuine, the *MXG* would arguably be the earliest piece of scholarship on the Eleatics to survive intact.[2] As matters stand, however, the *MXG* is a decidedly second-tier document, its component parts typically studied in isolation from one another, depending on whether it is Melissus, Xenophanes or Gorgias in whom one happens to be interested. "As a rule," Jaap Mansfeld has written, "it has been exploited as a source for the views of Melissus Xenophanes Gorgias rather than studied as a philosophical essay in its own right."[3] There are various reasons for the general neglect of the work as a whole, but one is surely that the manuscripts' attribution of authorship to Aristotle (or to Theophrastus, as at least one scribe would have it) has for some time been widely regarded as spurious.[4]

losophy, 9 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), fragments from which are also referred to by chapter and letter/number (e.g., LM 19 D4); 4) "FHSG" = Fortenbaugh, Huby, Sharples & Gutas, *Theophrastus of Eresus: Sources for his life, writings, thought and influence*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1992), appearing, e.g., in "Thphr. frag. 224 FHSG."

[2] "Intact" does not, in this case, mean that it has been perfectly preserved, as is evident from the many supplements and indications of lacunae in editions of the text, especially in the section on Gorgias. Nonetheless, such lacunae are not grounds for hypothesizing the loss of entire sections on Zeno or Parmenides, as some scholars have done (e.g., E. Zeller, *A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. I: From the earliest period to the time of Socrates*, transl. S.F. Alleyne [London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1881] 535–538 and 554; J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 4th ed. [London: Macmillan and Co., 1930] 126). Zeller took mentions of Zeno in chapters 5 and 6 as internal evidence for a lost treatment of Zeno, asking, "With what right could the author assume in readers *who had first been instructed by himself concerning the opinions of Melissus and Xenophanes*––such intimate acquaintance with the doctrines of Zeno, that he might thus refer to them as to something they knew perfectly well?" (*History*, *I*, 536 n.2, emphasis added). In reply, one might ask with what right Zeller could assume that the work was intended as a "first instruction" in the Eleatics. The longstanding confusion—to be discussed presently—over the title(s) of the work exhibits plainly the difficulties posed by readers' lack of acquaintance with the views and authors treated. Against the hypothesis of an earlier chapter on Parmenides, moreover, is the fact that questioning of the general principle that nothing comes to be from nothing occurs in the response to Melissus. Had there been an earlier section devoted to Parmenides, one would expect it to have been made there.

[3] J. Mansfeld, *Studies in the Historiography of Greek Philosophy* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990) 200. The work was more studied and held a higher status for much of the 19th century. A sense of the decline since can be gleaned by comparing the more than twenty heavily-footnoted pages devoted to the treatise by Zeller (*History, I*, 533–555) with W.K.C. Guthrie's discussion, under four pages in length (*A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. II: The Presocratic tradition from Parmenides to Democritus* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962] 367–370). Barbara Cassin's 646-page monograph, *Si Parménide: Le traité anonyme De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia. Edition critique et commentaire* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1980), is an obvious exception to this trend. I have unfortunately not had the opportunity to give that study the attention that it deserves or been able to take much account of it here.

[4] Zeller still felt the need to argue at length against Aristotelian authorship (*History, I*, 551–555). By the time Guthrie was writing, he could forgo any discussion and simply pronounce the *MXG* "certainly not written by Aristotle" (*History, II*, 367). For a rare, recent exception to this trend, see M. Wesoły, "La «Dimonstrazione propria» di Gorgia," *Peitho* 4 (2013) 159–188.

There is some justification for putting little faith in the manuscripts' attributions of authorship, for none of the manuscripts seems to have gotten the title of the treatise right either. While "*MXG*" is the work's conventional abbreviation today, scholarship of the nineteenth century regularly referred to the "*X.Z.G.*," reflecting the title as it appeared in Immanuel Bekker's edition of Aristotle's works: *On Xenophanes, On Zeno, On Gorgias*.[5] That the first section of the work deals with Melissus, however, and not Xenophanes (or Zeno, as suggested by the section titles in some manuscripts), is made clear by comparing a sketch of Melissus' argument preserved in Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, and is further confirmed by Simplicius' direct quotations from Melissus' own work.[6] That the second section discusses Xenophanes (as the section titles in some manuscripts also indicate) rather than Zeno is supported by a closely parallel account attributed to Xenophanes, also preserved in Simplicius' commentary.[7] For the third sec-

[5] The main title is Περὶ Ξενοφάνους, περὶ Ζήνωνος, περὶ Γοργίου in the most important ms. for Bekker's edition, Vaticanus gr. 1302 (**R** in Diels; **Ra** in older editions), and other mss. featured titles with the names in the same order (see I. Bekker, *Aristotelis Opera, Tom. VI* [Oxford: 1837] 189). Lipsiensis gr. 16 (**L** in Diels; **Lps**. in older editions), largely unused by Bekker but in some ways superior to **R**, offers no main title, and the separate sections are headed Ἀριστοτέλους περὶ Ζήνωνος, Ἀριστοτέλους Περὶ Ξενοφάνους, and Ἀριστοτέλους περὶ Γοργίου respectively. **R** also includes section titles for the first two sections, giving περὶ Ζήνωνος for the first and περὶ Ξενοφάνους for the second, thus reversing the order given in the main title. There is no title for the third section in **R** and several other mss.

[6] That Melissus was the focus of the first section was demonstrated in G.L. Spalding, *Commentarius in primam partem libelli de Xenophane Zenone et Gorgia* (Berlin: A. Mylius, 1793). The sketch in Simplicius (*in Ph*. 103.15–104.15 Diels = DK vol. I, 268–272 = LM 21 D20) is introduced by the words ὁ Μέλισσος περὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς ἄρχεται τοῦ συγγράμματος οὕτως and was taken to preserve multiple verbatim fragments for almost a century afterward, until it was shown, in A. Pabst, *De Melissi Samii fragmentis* (Bonn: C. Georgus, 1889), to be more paraphrase than quotation. Pabst's general conclusion seems universally accepted, although the beginning of the paraphrase is sometimes, given the immediately preceding words, thought to be not far removed from a verbatim quotation: Εἰ μὲν μηδὲν ἔστι, περὶ τούτου τί ἂν λέγοιτο ὡς ὄντος τινός; εἰ δέ τι ἐστίν, ἤτοι γινόμενόν ἐστιν ἢ ἀεὶ ὄν (see Burnet, *EGP*[4], 321 and now B. Harriman, "The Beginning of Melissus' *On Nature or On What-Is*: A Reconstruction," *JHS* 135 [2015] 19–34, 23–25). The second sentence (and what follows) should be compared with the beginning of the *MXG* and DK 30 B1 (= LM 21 D2a); see below, with note 18. Unfortunately, Burnet's identification of the author of the sketch as Theophrastus (see J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 1st ed. [London: A. & C. Black, 1892], 337–338; cf. Burnet, *EGP*[4], 321 n.4) has been forgotten. In support of that identification, see C. Kurfess, "Eleatic *Archai* in Aristotle: A Dependence on Theophrastus' *Natural History*?," in C.C. Harry & J. Habash (eds.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Presocratic Natural Philosophy in Later Classical Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2020) 261–288, 280–285.

[7] *In Ph*. 22.26–23.20 (= DK 21 A31 = LM 8 R4–5 = Thphr. frag. 224 FHSG). The parallel in Simplicius provides assurance that the *MXG* author had Xenophanes in mind, although scholarship since Zeller has resisted crediting Xenophanes himself with the argument given in the texts, which has been described as an "argument of a type impossible before Parmenides" (Guthrie, *History, II*, 368). Since Simplicius unambiguously attributes it to Xenophanes and names Theophrastus as his source (see note 21 for the text), defending this position involves supposing that Simplicius is citing Theophrastus only through an intermediary influenced by the *MXG*. Against that supposition, see Kurfess, "Eleatic *Archai* in Aristotle," 263–272.

tion, while there has been less confusion about it than the other two, we are still fortunate to be able to compare the report in Sextus Empiricus of Gorgias' *On What Isn't, or On Nature*.[8] As Gorgias' title seems to be a playful inversion of Melissus' title, recorded by Simplicius as *On Nature, or On What Is*,[9] Sextus' account further reinforces the identification of Melissus as the subject of the first part of the treatise in addition to confirming Gorgias as the main focus of the third.

While we can be confident that the title in common use today reflects the content of the three main sections of the work more accurately than did Bekker's title, scholarship on the *MXG*, by tending to focus on the sections individually, seems to have overlooked an intriguing feature of the text as a whole that allowed for the confusion in the first place. Curiously, in the first section (chapters 1 and 2) the author avoids expressly naming Melissus, either in the paraphrase of Melissus' reasoning that begins the work or in the criticism that follows. Though a number of prominent Presocratics are named over the course of the first two chapters, Melissus' name is missing in places where we would expect to find it, such as the opening sentence of the work, where the verb φησίν ("says") is left without an explicit subject.[10] Melissus is not named openly until the second part of the second section, that is, until the critique of the argument associated with Xenophanes.[11] In this second section, it is Xenophanes himself who, although mentioned earlier, now goes unnamed.[12] Gorgias, meanwhile, is unnamed not only in

[8] S.E. *M*. 7.65–86 (= DK 82 B3 = LM 32 D26b). How closely Sextus' text follows Gorgias' original and whether Sextus or the *MXG* better preserves Gorgias' arguments are matters of scholarly dispute. For the beginning of Sextus' account, see below, with notes 24 and 25.

[9] See Simp. *in Ph*. 70.16–17 (= DK 30 A4 = LM 21 D1b); *in Cael*. 557.10–11 Heiberg (= DK 30 A4 = LM 21 R22).

[10] When a more specific reference is needed, the *MXG* author uses a demonstrative adjective rather than Melissus' name. The author uses ἐκεῖνος to refer to Melissus four times, at 975a29, 975a31, 976b31, and 976b38. The intensive αὐτός is used at 976a11 and 976a23. Cf. notes 12 and 13.

[11] What I am calling the "second section" of the work comprises chapters 3 and 4 in the standard presentation, chapter 3 being the *MXG* author's report of Xenophanes' argument, chapter 4 providing the author's critique. It should be noted that, contrary to the impression given by some summaries (e.g., the table of contents in T. Loveday & E.S. Forster, "*De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia*," in W.D. Ross (ed.), *The Works of Aristotle*, *Vol. VI: Opuscula* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913]), the conventional division between chapters 1 and 2 in the first section does not mark a break between the "views of Melissus" and the *MXG* author's criticisms thereof. The "criticisms" in fact begin midway through the first chapter (at 974b8) and include a critique of the general principle that nothing can come to be from nothing prior to addressing the particulars of Melissus' argument. It is still more misleading to present chapters 5 and 6 as the "views" and "criticisms" of Gorgias respectively. In the third section, the *MXG* author's comments and judgments are interwoven with the presentation of Gorgias' "views."

[12] Xenophanes is named at 976a32, the only place his name appears in the work. In chapters 3–4, the author uses οὗτος to refer to him twice (at 977b21 and 978b25) and αὐτός once (979a5).

the third section, with which he is unanimously and rightly associated, but anywhere else in the work.[13]

I do not know how many earlier readers, if any, have remarked on our author's odd reluctance to name the figure under discussion in each of the work's three sections. I am not aware of any other treatments of this feature of the text, but I think it deserves some discussion. The main aim of this paper, therefore, is to call attention to this and other aspects of our author's peculiar habits related to naming. The non-naming of Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias is generally hidden in translations, where names missing in the Greek text are often supplied. The 1913 Oxford Translation by T. Loveday and E.S. Forster, for example, not only opens with the words, "Melissus says that, if anything is, it is eternal," but repeats Melissus' name eight more times over the course of the first two chapters, though it does not appear once in the Greek. Chapter 3 of the same translation likewise begins with "Xenophanes," which appears four more times in chapters 3 and 4, while "Gorgias" is added to the translation twice, once as the opening word of the fifth chapter, and once in chapter 6.[14] Such additions can be useful, helping the reader to keep track of the argument, and they may seem like minor liberties compared with the other editorial supplements that the poor condition of the text often makes necessary. Nonetheless, they may also conceal an important feature of the text, for the withholding of names does not seem to be an accident. The consistent omission, in each of the work's three sections, of the name of the principal figure under discussion seems unlikely to be coincidental, and if we allow that these omissions are intentional, it is probably a mistake to eliminate or ignore them.

Having noticed this seemingly deliberate, if bizarre, stylistic device, we are naturally confronted with the task of explaining what purpose the omissions might serve. Given the confusion that later arose over the identity of the figures under discussion, the *MXG* author's choice to withhold their names

[13] For references to Gorgias, the author reverts to ἐκεῖνος; see 979a33, 979b14, and 979b16. In addition to these references to Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias, ἐκεῖνος is used once to refer to Empedocles (at 975b1), and both οὗτος and ἐκεῖνος appear in a problematic passage at the very end of the work where the referents are not quite clear. For the titles in some mss. featuring Gorgias' name, see note 5 above.

[14] W.S. Hett's Loeb translation (*Aristotle: Minor Works* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934]) is more restrained in the first section, with "Melissus" appearing only twice in chapters 1 and 2, but gets freer as the work proceeds, with "Xenophanes" six times in chapters 3 and 4, and "Gorgias" four times in chapters 5 and 6. As in the Oxford Translation, each of the three main sections in Hett's translation begins with the name of the figure under discussion.

seems to be willfully courting misunderstanding. Why would the author do such a thing? This is an important question, to which only the beginnings of an answer are provided in what follows. A fully satisfactory answer would require a more complete consideration of the treatise than can be given here, where the principal aim, as mentioned, is simply to draw attention to certain noteworthy but neglected features of the text.

As a preliminary observation, however, and to better elucidate the phenomena that need explaining, we may note that omitting the names of the figures under discussion seems rather unlikely behavior for an author who intends to offer elementary instruction or a doxographical report.[15] On the contrary, omitting the names appears to assume a definite familiarity on the audience's part with the thinkers and doctrines involved. Indeed, I suspect that any adequate answer to the question of what the author's purposes were requires recognizing that the author is imitating, after a fashion, a fairly conspicuous but often under-emphasized feature of the pronouncements of Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias themselves: central to the apparently ontological arguments of each of these authors are statements about the being or non-being of some subject which remains unidentified or under-identified.

To illustrate this point, let us consider the opening words of chapters 1, 3 and 5. These present, respectively, the key theses of Melissus, Xenophanes and Gorgias as articulated by our author.[16] As observed above, the work opens with the following non-mention of Melissus: Ἀίδιον εἶναί φησιν εἴ τι ἔστιν, εἴπερ μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι γενέσθαι μηδὲν ἐκ μηδενός.[17] This *may* be rendered: "He says that, if anything is, it is eternal, since it is impossible that anything can come into being from nothing."[18] So translated, the subject of Melissus' entire

[15] See note 2 above, and cf. Mansfeld, *Studies*, 202: "Clearly, Anonymus is reliable in the sense that in his descriptive sections he rather faithfully reflects the sources used: a rather good doxography for Melissus, a problematical doxography for Xenophanes paralleled, however, by the account in Simplicius, and a rather good doxography for Gorgias paralleled by what is in Sextus. His aim, however, is not so much to describe the views of earlier thinkers as to criticize them from a systematical point of view." On Gorgias' own supposed doxographical efforts, see note 36 below.

[16] It deserves noting that the formulations in the *MXG* are not verbatim quotations but paraphrases that, among other changes, give a somewhat standardized appearance to their claims that is presumably suited to the *MXG* author's own purposes. While this raises the possibility of misrepresentation and would have involved greater adaptation in the case of Xenophanes, who wrote in verse, than for Melissus or Gorgias, the features I shall be discussing below are not the invention of the *MXG* author. Pertinent parallel texts for the *MXG* author's formulations are quoted in notes 18, 19, 21, 24 and 25 below.

[17] *MXG* 1 974a2–3. Here and elsewhere, the Greek text of the *MXG* is quoted from H. Diels, *Aristotelis qui fertur De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia libellus* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1900).

[18] This is, again, the Oxford Translation, but replacing "Melissus" with "he." Cf. Simplicius' direct quotation of

line of argumentation, which goes on to claim that, being eternal, it is also infinite (ἄπειρον, 974a9), one (ἕν, 974a11), alike in every way (ὅμοιον … πάντη, 974a13), unmoved (ἀκίνητον, 974a15), and without pain or distress (ἀνώδυόν τε καὶ ἀνάλγητον, 974a19) or otherwise altered, appears to be "anything."[19] That is, Melissus, read in this way, seems to be making a deduction of arresting generality: anything that *is* must, by virtue of its being, also be eternal, infinite, one, alike in every way, and so on. This is, I think, how most translations of the opening go, and that is perhaps indefinite enough. However, another (and I think preferable) way of understanding the protasis is to take the indefinite pronoun τι not as the subject of the verb, but adverbially, or as a predicate, and to translate, "if it is at all" or (reading εἴ τί ἐστιν) "if it is anything."[20] So taken, Melissus' deduction would no longer apply to the totality of beings, but to some particular though as yet unspecified being, whose nature or way of being is such that for it to be at all is for it to be eternal, infinite, one, and so on. Understood this way, Melissus' statement is a sort of provocation. By leaving the subject unspecified, Melissus forces his readers to ask, "If *what* is?" and readers are challenged to test their answers to that question through the following stages of the argument. The *MXG* author, by withholding Melissus' name in turn, would be displaying an awareness of the way Melissus' argument is operating and posing a similar challenge for readers of the *MXG*, who, faced with the subjectless φησίν ("says"), are expected to be familiar enough with the writers and arguments involved to make the identifications needed to follow the train of thought.

Melissus at *in Ph*. 162.24–26 (= DK 30 B1 = LM 21 D2): ἀεὶ ἦν ὅ τι ἦν καὶ ἀεὶ ἔσται. εἰ γὰρ ἐγένετο, ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι πρὶν γενέσθαι εἶναι μηδέν. † εἰ τύχοι νῦν μηδὲν ἦν, οὐδαμὰ ἂν γένοιτο οὐδὲν ἐκ μηδενός. (In DK the obelized εἰ τύχοι νῦν is replaced with εἰ τοίνυν.) See note 6 for the beginning of Melissus' argument as sketched at *in Ph*. 103.15–17.

[19] Cf. Simplicius' quotation of Melissus at *in Ph*. 111.19–21 (cf. DK 30 B7, LM 21 D10): Οὕτως οὖν ἀίδιόν ἐστι καὶ ἄπειρον καὶ ἓν καὶ ὅμοιον πᾶν. καὶ οὔτ' ἂν ἀπόλοιτο οὔτε μεῖζον γίνοιτο οὔτε μετακοσμέοιτο οὔτε ἀλγεῖ οὔτε ἀνιᾶται.

[20] For "if it is at all," one might print either Diels' εἴ τι ἔστιν or εἴ τί ἐστιν, depending upon whether one chooses, with Diels, to follow the editorial practice, advocated in G. Hermann, *De Emendanda Ratione Graecae Grammaticae* (Leipzig: G. Fleischer, 1801), 84–90 and still common, of using the orthotone ἔστιν to mark "existential" and "potential" uses of "is," or whether one chooses, with C.H. Kahn, A.H. Coxon and others, to follow "the rule of Herodian (i, 553) that whether it is orthotone or enclitic depends solely on its position, sc. ἔστι when initial or following οὐ, καὶ, εἰ, ἀλλὰ, ὡς, τοῦτο, otherwise enclitic whatever its sense" (A.H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, rev. ed. [Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2009] xiii–xiv). For discussion, see W.S. Barrett, *Euripides: Hippolytos* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) 424–426 and C.H. Kahn, *The Verb 'Be' in Ancient Greek* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003) 420–424. In Eleatic texts that can often be ambiguous on this point, it is an advantage of Herodian's rule that it does not prejudge whether a given instance of the verb is, say, existential rather than copulative.

The same ambiguities are present in the opening statement of chapter 3, although the author helps readers out by remarking that what is said applies to "the god": Ἀδύνατόν φησιν εἶναι, εἴ τι ἔστι, γενέσθαι, τοῦτο λέγων ἐπὶ τοῦ θεοῦ (*MXG* 3 977a14–15).[21] In the Oxford Translation, this runs: "Xenophanes declares that if anything is, it cannot possibly have come into being, and he argues this with reference to God." As before, the translators supply a proper name absent in the Greek, and they treat τι as the subject of ἔστι in translating εἴ τι ἔστι. But once again, taking τι differently and eliminating the name supplied by the translators, we might equally well translate, "He claims that it is impossible, if it is at all (*or* "is anything"), that it came to be, saying this in the case of the god."[22] On this construal, without the additional remark about "the god," neither who is responsible for the claim related nor what the subject of that claim is would be immediately apparent. Given that additional remark, it seems we have reason to favor the second construal, since "the god" seems, much more than does "anything," like the sort of thing about which it might be claimed that for it to be is to be ungenerated. In addition to being ungenerated, this being is, like the one encountered in the first chapter, also argued to be eternal (ἀίδιος, 977a23), one (εἷς, 977a24), and alike in every way (ὅμοιος … πάντη, 977a36); further, it is claimed to be spherical (σφαιροειδής, 977b1), neither infinite nor finite (οὔτ' ἄπειρον οὔτε πεπεράνθαι, 977b3), and neither moved nor unmoved (οὔτε κινεῖσθαι οὔτε ἀκίνητον, 977b9–10).[23] Despite these additional characteristics, one may well still have doubts, as with Melissus' argument, about the identity of the god or being in question. And, once again, the *MXG* author can be read as mimicking these points of indeterminacy by leaving the author of the argument unnamed.

[21] There are no close parallels for this in the Xenophanean verses in DK, although DK 21 B14 (= LM 8 D12) implies that mortals are mistaken to suppose that gods are begotten, and DK 21 A12 (= LM 8 P16) may also reflect this argument. Cf. Simp. *in Ph*. 22.26–31 (= DK 21 A31 = LM 8 R4 = Thphr. frag. 224 FHSG): μίαν δὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἤτοι ἓν τὸ ὂν καὶ πᾶν καὶ οὔτε πεπερασμένον οὔτε ἄπειρον οὔτε κινούμενον οὔτε ἠρεμοῦν Ξενοφάνην τὸν Κολοφώνιον τὸν Παρμενίδου διδάσκαλον ὑποτίθεσθαί φησιν ὁ Θεόφραστος ὁμολογῶν ἑτέρας εἶναι μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς περὶ φύσεως ἱστορίας τὴν μνήμην τῆς τούτου δόξης. τὸ γὰρ ἓν τοῦτο καὶ πᾶν τὸν θεὸν ἔλεγεν ὁ Ξενοφάνης· ὃν ἕνα μὲν δείκνυσιν ἐκ τοῦ πάντων κράτιστον εἶναι. With the argument for the god's being ungenerated and eternal that follows (*MXG* 1 977a15–23), cf. *in Ph*. 22.33–23.4.

[22] Again (see above, with note 20), for "if it is anything," the text should be εἴ τί ἐστιν.

[23] Beyond the generally deductive character of the argumentation (see note 7), it is the last two pairs of predicates that many scholars have been reluctant to attribute to the historical Xenophanes. Faced with the problem of the parallel in Theophrastus (see the text in note 21), Diels changed the presentation of Simplicius' text by placing parentheses around καὶ οὔτε πεπερασμένον οὔτε ἄπειρον οὔτε κινούμενον οὔτε ἠρεμοῦν as though the words were Simplicius' own (see Diels, *MXG*, 36; cf. DK 21 A31). The text has appeared recently and rightly without parentheses in Thphr. frag. 224 FHSG and LM 8 R4. For discussion, see Kurfess, "Eleatic *Archai* in Aristotle," 267–274.

The same considerations apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the opening words of the third section: Οὐκ εἶναί φησιν οὐδέν· εἰ δ' ἔστιν, ἄγνωστον εἶναι· εἰ δὲ καὶ ἔστι καὶ γνωστόν, ἀλλ' οὐ δηλωτὸν ἄλλοις (*MXG* 5 979a12–13).[24] In the Oxford Translation: "Gorgias declares that nothing exists; and if anything exists it is unknowable; and if it exists and is knowable, yet it cannot be indicated to others." Nearly every translation known to me of Gorgias' first thesis, whether here or in the corresponding passages in Sextus,[25] renders it in the same manner, as "nothing exists" or something syntactically equivalent, such as "nothing is" or "there is nothing."[26] These are, of course, perfectly plausible translations of the words εἶναι … οὐδέν or οὐδὲν ἔστιν in isolation, taking οὐδέν as the subject of ἐστίν used with some sort of existential force. Indeed, those words are so deployed earlier in the work,[27] and it is in this way, moreover, that Gorgias' thesis was remembered by certain ancient authors, among them Isocrates, who credits Gorgias with being so bold as to claim that "none of the things that are *is*" (οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων ἔστιν).[28] However, in the present context, where the words εἰ δ' ἔστιν (εἰ καὶ ἔστιν in Sextus) follow without specifying a new subject, that reading becomes a bit awkward. For then Gorgias would be following

[24] Cf. S.E. *M*. 7.65 (quoted from Diels, *MXG*, 37): ἐν γὰρ τῷ ἐπιγραφομένῳ Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἢ Περὶ φύσεως τρία κατὰ τὸ ἑξῆς κεφάλαια κατασκευάζει, ἓν μὲν καὶ πρῶτον ὅτι οὐδὲν ἔστιν, δεύτερον ὅτι εἰ καὶ ἔστιν, ἀκατάληπτον ἀνθρώπῳ, τρίτον ὅτι εἰ καὶ καταληπτόν, ἀλλά τοί γε ἀνέξοιστον καὶ ἀνερμήνευτον τῷ πέλας. H. Mutschmann, *Sexti Empirici Opera*, *Vol. II* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914) 16 prints the above, except for the words ἐν γὰρ τῷ ἐπιγραφομένῳ and κατασκευάζει, in expanded type, apparently indicating that Mutschmann—in my view rightly—took this to be Gorgias' own wording. Cf. DK 82 B3 and LM 32 D26b.

[25] The passage of Sextus quoted in the preceding note continues: ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὐδὲν ἔστιν, ἐπιλογίζεται τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον· εἰ γὰρ ἔστι <τι>, ἤτοι τὸ ὂν ἔστιν ἢ τὸ μὴ ὄν, ἢ καὶ τὸ ὂν ἔστι καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν (*M*. 7.66). Along with the repetition of οὐδὲν ἔστιν in the first clause, the adoption, by Diels and others, of Bekker's supplement of <τι> to εἰ γὰρ ἔστι should be noted and compared with the habit of translators to supply "anything," "something" or the like when translating the protasis of Gorgias' second thesis (see below, with note 30).

[26] For exceptions, see note 32 below. In describing "nothing exists," "nothing is," and "there is nothing" as *syntactically* equivalent, I have in mind the common construal of οὐδέν as the subject of the verb. Naturally, such readings admit a range of meanings, which can differ widely. Cf. E. Schiappa, "Interpreting Gorgias's 'Being' in 'On Not-Being or On Nature'," *Phe&Rh* 30 (1997) 13–30, 22–27.

[27] Cf. *MXG* 1 975a14–15 (πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἕτεροι εἶναι μὲν οὐδέν φασι, γίγνεσθαι δὲ πάντα), 975a32–33 (εἰ ἅπαντα γίγνεται, ἔστιν δὲ οὐδέν, ὥς τινες λέγουσι) and 4, 977b26 (ἢ οὐδέν ἐστι [*sic* Diels] παρὰ τὸν θεὸν ἢ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀίδια πάντα). Note in these cases the sharp antithesis of οὐδέν with πάντα, which is absent from (or at least not explicit in) Gorgias' thesis.

[28] Isoc. *Hel*. 3. Cf. Isoc. *Antid*. 15.268: τὸ πλῆθος ἔφησεν εἶναι τῶν ὄντων ... Παρμενίδης δὲ καὶ Μέλισσος ἕν, Γοργίας δὲ παντελῶς οὐδέν. Although they are included among the B fragments for Gorgias in DK (see DK 82 B1; cf. LM 32 R24a–b), in neither of these passages does Isocrates reveal more than a passing familiarity with Gorgias' thesis, so neither should be granted too much weight in interpreting Gorgias' own intentions. S.E. *P*. 2.57–59 supplies evidence for a later reading of Gorgias' thesis along these lines (contrasting Gorgias' διάνοια, καθ' ἥν φησι μηδὲν εἶναι, with that of Heraclitus, καθ' ἣν λέγει πάντα εἶναι, and a third of those who say τάδε μὲν εἶναι τάδε δὲ μὴ εἶναι), but we need not regard that reading as Sextus' own.

the claim "nothing is" with "but (even) if it is, it's unknowable," where the subject cannot be "nothing" without (*i*) losing the clearly intended contrast with the prior claim and (*ii*) resulting in the surprising claim that nothing is unknowable, which plays no part in the argument that follows. While a few translators may be untroubled by this,[29] most evade the problem by following the lead of the Oxford Translation and helping themselves to a new subject for the second thesis, generally "anything" or "something."[30] But since no such subject is present in the text of either the *MXG* or the parallel statements in Sextus, this solution does not seem well justified.[31] Related problems arise should we try to take οὐδέν as a predicate, the complement to some unspecified subject.[32] For if we understand Gorgias to be following the thesis "it is nothing" with "but if it is, it's unknowable," then (*i*) the contrast between the first thesis and the supposition of the second is again lost, and (*ii*) the second thesis now amounts to the claim that what is nothing is unknowable. Although less startling than the claim "nothing is unknowable," the claim "what is nothing is unknowable" doesn't match what the text later records as Gorgias' argument either.[33]

[29] See, e.g., B. Cassin, *Sophistical Practice: Toward a Consistent Relativism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014) 31, translating the *MXG*: "Nothing is; if it is, it is unknowable"; and G. Kennedy, in R.K. Sprague, *The Older Sophists* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972) 42, translating Sextus: "first and foremost, that nothing exists, second, that even if it exists it is inapprehensible to man." Cf. G.B. Kerferd, "Gorgias on nature or that which is not," *Phronesis* 1 (1955) 3–25, 5: "Both MXG (979a 12–13) and Sextus (vii. 65) state the major divisions of the treatise in what are admitted to be identical terms: – Nothing is; If it is it is unknowable; If it is and is knowable, it cannot be communicated to others."

[30] E.g., among translations of the *MXG*: Hett, *Aristotle: Minor Works*, 497: "if anything exists"; Mansfeld, *Studies*, 215: "if it [Something in the required sense] is"; LM 32 D26a: "if [scil. something] is." Among translations of Sextus: R.G. Bury, *Sextus Empiricus, Vol. II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935) 35: "even if anything exists"; R. Bett, *Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 15: "even if there is [something]"; LM 32 D26b: "even if [scil. something] is". The bracketed supplements belong in each instance to the original translations. Cf. the editorial addition of <τι> at S.E. *M*. 7.66, quoted in note 25 above.

[31] The appeal by Bett (*Sextus Empiricus: Against the Logicians*, 15 n.34) to S.E. *M*. 7.77, "where "something" (*ti*) does appear in the text," to justify adding "[something]" to the text twelve sections earlier does not itself inspire confidence and, more importantly, ignores that the absence of τι in *M*. 7.65 and 66 (where Bekker would add τι) is paralleled three times at the beginning of *MXG* 5 (see 979a12–14).

[32] Cf. M. Gagarin & P. Woodruff, *Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 206: "Gorgias says: (a) [Anything you might mention] is nothing; (b) if it were something, it would be unknowable; and (c) if it were something and knowable, it could not be made evident to others." While this is unconventional in taking οὐδέν as a predicate in claim (a), it adopts the convention of supplementing claims (b) and (c) with "something." Another translation that seems to treat οὐδέν as a predicate is that of Edward Schiappa, but it is not always clear how the translation relates to the Greek: "Denying Be-ing, he says [it is] nothing; and if [it] *is*, it is unknowable; and if it *is* and [is] knowable, it cannot be made evident to others." ("Interpreting Gorgias' 'Being'," 13 and 23, brackets, italics and the hyphenated "Be-ing" in the original).

[33] As the *MXG* presents it, the argument for Gorgias' second thesis concludes: "even if they are, the things would be unknowable *to us*" (καὶ εἰ ἔστιν, ἡμῖν γε ἄγνωστ' ἂν εἶναι τὰ πράγματα, *MXG* 6 980a18–19). In Sextus, the argument opens with the statement "even if it should be something, that is unknowable and inconceivable to a

These difficulties may be avoided by taking οὐδέν adverbially, and translating as follows: "He claims that it is not at all; but if it is, that it is unknowable; and if it both is and is knowable, still it's not revealable to others."[34] So read, the tension between Gorgias' claims is preserved, there is no need to translate words that are not there, and the points of the summary agree with the arguments found in the text that follows. I am inclined, therefore, to prefer this way of construing Gorgias' theses to the alternatives of Isocrates and others. In any case, as with the statements of Melissus and Xenophanes, the subject of the argument reported is dramatically underdetermined, with either no specified subject or with its subject specified as "nothing," and the *MXG* author can be read as echoing this nothingness by withholding Gorgias' name.

Without denying that there may be something more serious going on, it seems plain that, as in his *Encomium of Helen*, Gorgias is indulging in a form of play, here involving the pronouncements of Melissus and other Eleatics.[35] It is worth stressing, however, that neither the *MXG* nor the parallel report in Sextus Empiricus gives the impression that Gorgias actually *named* those Eleatics. To be sure, it is stated explicitly at 979a12–18 that, in arguing for his first claim ("that it is not"), Gorgias "put together" (συνθείς) things said by others about beings, and the *MXG* author names Melissus and Zeno specifically at 979a22–23. This suggests that the *MXG* author viewed Gorgias' appropriation of earlier Eleatic arguments as transparent to those familiar with those argu-

human being" (κἂν ᾖ τι, τοῦτο ἄγνωστον τε καὶ ἀνεπινόητον ἔστιν [*sic* Diels] ἀνθρώπῳ, *M*. 7.77) and concludes "therefore, what *is* is not held in mind and apprehended" (οὐκ ἄρα τὸ ὂν φρονεῖται καί καταλαμβάνεται, *M*. 7.82).

[34] Given the possibility of reading τι in the theses of Melissus and Xenophanes either predicatively or adverbially, I formerly entertained the possibility of construing οὐδέν as a predicate provided that one translated "it is not anything" rather than "it is nothing." Hardly distinguishable from the adverbial reading ("it is not at all"), "it is not anything" would avoid the problems noted by supplying in the first thesis the "anything" that interpreters have so often understood as the subject of the second. At least two translators have effectively taken this route (cf. T. Taylor, *The Works of Aristotle, Vol. IX: The Metaphysics; The Treatise Against the Dogmas of Xenophanes, Zeno, and Gorgias; etc.* [London: 1812] 501: "there is not any thing"; D. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010] 747: "there is not anything"), but I am not convinced that it is a fully faithful rendering of the Greek. Cf. the remark in LSJ s.v. οὐδείς, III. B, that "the more emphatic and literal sense, *not even one*, i.e., *none whatever*, belongs to the full form, οὐδὲ εἷς, οὐδὲ μία, οὐδὲ ἕν, which is never elided." Translations along the lines of "it is not anything" or "there is not anything" do seem appropriate, however, for such statements as οὐκ ἄρα ἔστι τι at *M*. 7.66 (cf. κἂν ᾖ τι from *M*. 7.77 in the previous note).

[35] *Pace* Kerferd, "Gorgias," 3: "there is nothing humourous about the treatise and no indication that it was ever intended to be so." One can agree with Kerferd that it is not *simply* a parody or joke without embracing the opposite extreme that there is nothing humorous about it. Recall DK 82 B12 (= LM 32 D18): δεῖν ἔφη Γοργίας τὴν μὲν σπουδὴν διαφθείρειν τῶν ἐναντίων γέλωτι τὸν δὲ γέλωτα σπουδῇ. Gorgias famously describes his *Encomium of Helen* (DK 82 B10 = LM 32 D24) as a παίγνιον at the end of the speech (§21) and Olympiodorus describes what he refers to as Gorgias' Περὶ φύσεως (evidently the same work Sextus refers to as Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἢ Περὶ φύσεως) as "not without wit" (οὐκ ἄκομψον, DK 82 B2 = LM 32 P4+R23).

ments, but it does not imply that Gorgias himself named names.[36] The *MXG* author, by identifying Gorgias' sources, shows that he is in on Gorgias' game, and his not naming Gorgias is an indication that he is playing along in turn.

We may better appreciate this game by observing that Plato was in on it too. In his two most obviously Eleatic dialogues, the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*, Plato playfully pairs ambiguous ontological utterances with curious patterns of naming and non-naming. In the *Parmenides*, Zeno and Parmenides are each associated with "hypotheses" that share the amphibolous phrasing exhibited by εἴ τι ἔστι and the like in the *MXG*. Early in the dialogue, Zeno's book is presented as a dismantling, from multiple angles, of the supposition εἰ πολλά ἐστι.[37] Later, Parmenides offers an extended exercise in the dialectical "gymnastics" he recommends to Socrates, using "his own" hypothesis, εἰ ἕν ἐστι, as an example.[38] The dominant practice in translations of the exercise itself is to render Parmenides' hypothesis along the lines of "if one is" or "if there is one," taking ἕν as the subject of an existential use of the verb, but the words might also be taken as "if it is one," understanding ἐστι as a copula and ἕν as a predicate, with the subject left unspecified.[39] Likewise, Zeno's εἰ πολλά

[36] Nor, incidentally, do these remarks seem a good basis for regarding Gorgias as an early doxographer. According to Mansfeld, "although we cannot be sure that Gorgias mentioned names, we may safely assume that, because he assembled (συνθείς) the statements of others, he summarized the various views" (*Studies*, 61). Similarly, J. Palmer, "Classical Representations and Uses of the Presocratics," in P. Curd & D. Graham (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Presocratic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008) 530–554, 532–534, speaks of "Gorgias' doxographical classification" and "the treatise's doxographical preface" as givens, specifically appealing to the statement "*he collects what has been said by others who spoke about Beings*" (i.e., *MXG* 5 979a14–15, italics Palmer's). But in context, συνθείς suggests no more than the bringing together of ready-made statements to highlight a (purported) contradiction; it does not support the assumption that such comparisons were based on a "collection," "assembly," or "summary" of views that would be well described as "doxographical."

[37] For εἰ πολλά ἐστι *et sim*., see Pl. *Prm*. 127e1–2, 127e7–8, 128d5–6, and 136a5 Burnet; for οὐ πολλά ἐστι *et sim*., see *Prm*. 127e10, 127e12–128a1, 128b2 and 136a7. For εἰ πολλά ἐστι in verbatim quotations of Zeno, see Simp. *in Ph*. 140.29, 140.31 (= DK 29 B3 = LM 20 D11) and 141.6–7 (= DK 29 B1 = LM 20 D6), along with the careful paraphrasing preserving εἰ πολλά ἐστι at 139.8 (= DK 29 B2 = LM 20 R12) and 140.28 (= DK 29 B3 = LM 20 D11).

[38] For εἰ ἕν ἐστι *et sim*., see Pl. *Prm*. 128a8–b1, 128d1, 128d6, 137b4, 137c4, 142c3, 151e7, 160b7 (εἰ ἓν μὴ ἔστι), etc. From 142b3 onward, ἕν often precedes εἰ ἔστι (e.g., 142b5, 142c8, 155e4, 157b6, 159b3) or εἰ μὴ ἔστι (e.g., 160c6, 163c1, 164b5, 165c5) or both (166c3). The list at W.D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951) 92–93 ignores cases before 137c4, which may influence Ross' judgment that "there is no significance in the difference of the order of the words, and that in particular it is unjustifiable to distinguish the protasis in [deduction] (1) [i.e., 137c4–142a8] from that in (2) [i.e., 142b1–157b5] by supposing that the first is the hypothesis that the universe is one and the second the hypothesis that a One exists." In arguing for an existential reading of the hypothesis throughout the exercise, Ross relies specifically on passages from late in the dialogue (160b5 and later). Cf. notes 44 and 45 below.

[39] Ross's remarks in the preceding note reflect the still dominant trend. Cf. F.M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1939) 116 n.2; R.E. Allen, *Plato's Parmenides*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 5 n.5; and A. Hermann, *Plato's Parmenides: Text, Translation and Introductory Essay* (Las

ἐστι, although often translated "if many things are" or "if there are many," may also be construed as "if it is many" or "if they are many."[40]

That "one" and "many" are intended as predicates rather than subjects is suggested by the first mentions of the hypotheses in the dialogue, where Socrates supplies τὰ ὄντα as the subject of Zeno's hypothesis (127e1–2) and τὸ πᾶν as the subject of Parmenides' (128a8–b1).[41] Following Socrates' lead, some interpreters construe later occurrences of the hypotheses along the same lines, understanding "the beings" and "the all" as unexpressed but implicit subjects, at least initially. Thus, in much the way we have seen translators of the *MXG* supplying names missing from the Greek, the Loeb translation of the *Parmenides* repeatedly adds "existences" to formulations of Zeno's hypothesis without τὰ ὄντα (at 127e7–8, 127e10, 127e12–128a1 and 128d5–6) and adds "the all" where there is no corresponding τὸ πᾶν (at 128d1).[42] By 136a5, however, the dominant trend takes over: Zeno's hypothesis is there translated "if the many exist," and in what follows Parmenides' hypothesis is regularly "if the one exists" or "if one is."[43] Other translations exhibit a similar pattern, reading ἕν as a predicate into the first deduction of the exercise, but making it a subject beginning with the second.[44] The tendency to treat ἕν as a subject in the deductions of the exercise is supported by certain formulations later in the exercise, but for the most part Plato has Parmenides keep his expressions delicately ambiguous.[45] At least one translator treats πολλά and ἕν in articula-

Vegas, NV: Parmenides Publishing, 2010) 64, with n.115 and 107 n.53. See below, with notes 43 and 44. For fuller discussion, see M.L. Gill & P. Ryan, *Plato: Parmenides* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996) 65–71.

[40] Cf. Allen, *Plato's Parmenides*, 6 n.6; Gill & Ryan, *Plato: Parmenides*, 139 n.21; and Hermann, *Plato's Parmenides*, 101 n.43.

[41] Both τὰ ὄντα and τὸ πᾶν follow their respective hypotheses, as though each is something of an afterthought, intended to supply the explicit subject lacking in the standard formulations εἰ πολλά ἐστι and εἰ ἕν ἐστι.

[42] H.N. Fowler, *Plato IV*: *Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 203–207. L. Brisson, *Platon: Parménide*, 4th ed. (Paris: Flammarion, 2018) 94–97 similarly adds "les choses" in the places where Fowler adds "existences." Cf. Gill & Ryan, *Plato: Parmenides*, 66 and Hermann, *Plato's Parmenides*, 79 n.8 and 101 n.43.

[43] Fowler, *Plato*, 231 (Zeno), 235 *et passim* (Parmenides). Note esp. "that the one exists or that it does not exist" in Parmenides' initial description of his own hypothesis at *Prm*. 137b4. Unless emended, the most natural reading of εἴτε ἕν ἐστιν εἴτε μὴ ἕν is certainly "whether it is one or not one". Cf. Gill & Ryan, *Plato: Parmenides*, 67, with n.111.

[44] There is a shift from "if it is one" for εἰ ἕν ἐστι at 137c4 to some variant of "if one is" for ἕν εἰ ἔστι at *Prm*. 142b3 in J. Burnet, *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1914) 264–265; A.E. Taylor, *The Parmenides of Plato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934) 64 and 73; Gill & Ryan, *Plato: Parmenides*, 141 and 147; and Hermann, *Plato's Parmenides*, 107 and 127.

[45] The presence of the article makes it natural to read "the one" (τὸ ἕν) as a subject in the formulations of the hypotheses at *Prm*. 155e4 and 160b5 (cf. Ross in note 38 above), but these are exceptions (and relatively late ones) rather than the rule. Moreover, these instances follow the frequent use of τὸ ἕν (at 137c5, 137d3, 137d7, etc.) in the arguments of the first two deductions to characterize the subject *as hypothesized*, and it may be that Plato has the

tions of the hypotheses as predicates throughout the dialogue, understanding τὰ ὄντα and τὸ πᾶν as the intended (and functionally equivalent) subjects.[46]

Translations of the sort described are right, I think, to take Socrates' mentions of the hypotheses as points of departure for how we read them later. Still, it may be missing the mark to assume that the subjects that Socrates supplies are correct. For Zeno soon remarks that Socrates, despite his keen pursuit of what was said (τὰ λεχθέντα, 128c2), is rushing to judgment about certain aspects of his elders' arguments,[47] and it seems no coincidence that τὰ ὄντα and τὸ πᾶν are absent in later formulations of the hypotheses in the dialogue.[48] This is, I take it, one of many hints from Plato that the ambiguity of the hypotheses is something we are meant to puzzle over, a provocation of the sort suggested above in connection with the *MXG* author's presentation of Melissus' thesis. As readers, we are called upon to participate in the exercise ourselves, which means, among other things, confronting the indeterminacy of the hypotheses and endeavoring to identify the subject under consideration.[49]

Other elements of the dialogue play on points of indeterminacy which connect to naming in ways that parallel what we have seen with the *MXG*. Corresponding to the *MXG* author's reluctance to name Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias when reporting their theses, Plato gives his dialogue a complicated framing device in which the principal conversation is told at three removes, producing related challenges for readers. Pythodorus, who is said to have been present at the meeting of Socrates and the Eleatics, was the source for Antiphon, whose account a certain Cephalus reports in the outermost frame to an unidentified audience. Much of Socrates' encounter with Zeno and Parmenides thus involves lengthy stretches of indirect discourse, in the thick of which readers of the dialogue can, as with the *MXG*,

elderly Parmenides nod a bit in the course of his performance. Cf. Cephalus' slips in the narrative, pointed out in note 51 below.

[46] Brisson, *Platon: Parménide*[4], 19–28, 55–58, *et passim*. To my knowledge, Brisson's study (the first edition of which appeared in 1994) is the only one to carry a predicative reading through the whole of the dialogue.

[47] Parmenides speaks to similar effect later, again stressing Socrates' special gift with *logoi* (ὁρμῆς τῆς ἐπὶ τοὺς λόγους *Prm*. 130b1, 135d3). Cf. the caution about interpreting Parmenides expressed by an older and wiser Socrates at *Tht*. 184a2–3.

[48] See the passages cited above in notes 37 and 38. One occasion where an explicit subject, ἅπαντα, is given for both hypotheses is 129b5–6, where again it is Socrates speaking. Cf. the expressions of the Eleatic thesis at *Tht*. 180e3–4, 183d1, and 183e3–4, followed by the caution referred to in the preceding note.

[49] This is not limited to identifying the *grammatical* subject. Even if we should, for instance, settle on reading "the One" as the subject of the exercise, the question of what "the One" really is remains.

lose sight of just who is responsible for what is being claimed.[50] Indeed, Plato has Cephalus himself lose track of the narrative a bit at various points.[51] The introduction that establishes that framing also shows special concern with naming in various ways, including: 1) giving the narrator, an acquaintance of Plato's brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus, the same name as an interlocutor in the *Republic*; 2) having Cephalus and his unnamed (but "very philosophical"; μάλα φιλόσοφοι, 126b8) fellow Clazomenians oddly forget the name of Antiphon (the very person they have come to listen to) but remember the name of his father; and 3) further specifying that Antiphon was named after his grandfather (πάππον τε καὶ ὁμώνυμον, 126c7–8). Conversely, from 137c4 on, when Parmenides begins to "play the troublesome game" (πραγματειώδη παιδιὰν παίζειν, 137b2) which occupies the remainder (and more than two-thirds) of the work, testing his hypothesis with the assistance of a certain young Aristotle, this framing falls out of view entirely and no names appear in the text thereafter.[52]

In the *Sophist*, subtitled *On Being* (περὶ τοῦ ὄντος), ontological concerns and questions of identity are again connected conspicuously to naming, and the philosophical content is complemented by literary features that echo the *Parmenides* in various ways. The presence of an unnamed (but "very philosophical"; μάλα δ' ἄνδρα φιλόσοφον, 216a4) *xenos* from Elea prompts a question from Socrates about whether those in Elea believed the names "sophist," "statesman," and "philosopher" to name one, two, or three things (217a7–9). The *xenos* recasts this, using what seems to be a favored expression, as a question about the being (τί ποτ' ἔστιν, 217b3, cf. 218c1, 218c6–7, 221d7, etc.) of these types, the pursuit of which, in the case of the sophist, leads deep into the problems of non-being and to an attack on the pronouncements of "fa-

[50] At its most explicit, this results in Cephalus saying, e.g., ἔφη δὲ δὴ ὁ Ἀντιφῶν λέγειν τὸν Πυθόδωρον ὅτι ἀφίκοιντό ποτε εἰς Παναθήναια τὰ μεγάλα Ζήνων τε καὶ Παρμενίδης (*Prm*. 127a7–b1; cf. 136e5–8). At 127b6, by contrast, ἔφη is without an explicit subject, which caused some confusion for Proclus or one of his sources (see *in Prm*. 685.15–19 Steel, where it is assumed Pythodorus is meant). Translators who supply "Antiphon" here (e.g., Gill & Ryan, *Plato: Parmenides*, 126; Hermann, *Plato's Parmenides*, 77) are, like translators who add "Melissus" to the opening of the *MXG*, correct in their identification of the speaker, but perhaps not in incorporating the name into the text.

[51] As soon as *Prm*. 127d1 we encounter αὐτός τε ἐπεισελθεῖν ἔφη ὁ Πυθόδωρος. Similar slips occur intermittently until the framing disappears after 137c4.

[52] Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides*, 109, observed, "It has been noticed that from this point onwards the narrative form is abandoned and not a single name is mentioned," but unfortunately took this as license to recast the remainder of the dialogue as a monologue, judging that "nothing is gained by casting the arguments into the form of question and answer."

ther Parmenides" (241d1–7). In a manner reminiscent of Parmenides' exercise with Aristotle in the *Parmenides*, the initially reluctant principal speaker in the *Sophist* is the Eleatic visitor, assisted by the young Theaetetus, while the two Socrateses present—that is, the old philosopher and Theaetetus' friend—retreat quietly into the background. Both in receding from view and in sharing a name, the Socrateses are like Cephalus and Antiphon in the *Parmenides*, traces of whom fade as the tale they are responsible for telling proceeds, and each of whom, as remarked above, recalls another of the same name. Plato underscores this connection by having Theaetetus—likened in other respects to the elder Socrates by Theodorus in the *Theaetetus*—comment specifically on his agemate's sharing a name with the philosopher (τὸν Σωκράτους μὲν ὁμώνυμον, 218b3).[53]

At least some of the rules for the game that Plato plays so masterfully seem to have been set by Parmenides himself. The obvious precursor for the various hypotheses about an unspecified "it" being one, many, anything, or nothing, is the famously "bare" ἐστίν ("it is") of Parmenides' poem.[54] The unnamed or otherwise enigmatic figures in the *MXG* and Plato, meanwhile, have literary forebears in the unnamed youth who narrates the poem as well as in the anonymous goddess who instructs the youth in "all things," including, notably, the problems of mortal naming. Other rules presumably took shape over time, as criticism of Parmenides' poem by Protagoras and others, defenses by Zeno and others, and other contributions such as Gorgias' added to a growing body of literature.[55] In any case, Plato's work shows that the game was well

[53] Cf. Theaetetus' ἐμοί τε καὶ τῷ σῷ ὁμωνύμῳ τοὐτῳ Σωκράτει at Pl. *Tht*. 147d1–2 and the Eleatic doubling at *Tht*. 180e2, where Socrates speaks of "Melissuses and Parmenideses" (Μέλλισσοί τε καὶ Παρμενίδαι). For Theodorus' comparison, see *Tht*. 143e–144d, noting Theodorus' failure to remember Theaetetus' father's name, while Socrates recalls the name of the father but not the son.

[54] The starkest instances of the bare verb are in DK 28 B2.3, 2.5, 8.2, and 8.16 (= LM 19 D6.3, 6.5, 8.7, and 8.21). Cf. D. Sider & H.W. Johnstone, Jr., *The Fragments of Parmenides* (Bryn Mawr, Bryn Mawr Commentaries: 1986) 12, commenting on DK 28 B2.3: "Many scholars have tried to understand a subject for this bare use of ἔστι in Parmenides: Truth, Being (= Existence), ἡ ὁδός, "what can be talked about," etc., but perhaps none is to be supplied." L. Tarán, *Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965) 33–40 surveys earlier identifications of the subject and denies the need for any subject, while C.H. Kahn, "The Thesis of Parmenides," *The Review of Metaphysics* 22 (1969) 700–724, 709–710, insists, "it is legitimate to suppose that Parmenides' thesis *does* have a logical subject, and we have a right to ask what this is." See also, with references to more recent literature, P. Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides: Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2004) 9–15; P. Thanassas, *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007) 31–36; and A.P.D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides*, rev. ed. (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2008) xx–xxvi, 333–349 and 350–363.

[55] For a reading of the second part of the *Parmenides* as a response to a specifically Melissan monism as viewed through Gorgias' work, see M. Brémond, "Mélissos, Gorgias et Platon dans la première hypothèse du Parménide,"

developed by the time the *MXG* author composed our curious treatise, and opens avenues for better appreciating what our author was up to.

The features pointed out above suggest that the *MXG*, despite the uses to which it is generally put, is more than mere doxography. It is an informed and sophisticated, if derivative, piece of philosophical writing in what we might call an Eleatic literary style. Like the *Sophist* or *Parmenides*, it is hardly introductory, and requires from its readers not only a familiarity with the chief players and their basic doctrines, but a sensitivity to its playful engagement with the antecedent literature. As such, the *MXG* may have more to teach us than we have been accustomed for some time to allow. To the extent that it alerts us to elements that we may not have noticed in other works bearing an Eleatic stamp, it may also shed light on other texts that we tend to esteem more highly.

Clearly, learning such lessons will involve more work than can be accomplished in the remainder of this paper. The more modest task at hand, however, would be incomplete without briefly taking note of the names that our author *does* mention. For these too, if I am not mistaken, exhibit a concern with the literary dimensions of the Eleatic style, though each section does this in a different way.

In the first two chapters, following the summary of Melissus' argument, we encounter the following names in the following order: Hesiod (*MXG* 1 975a11), Empedocles (*MXG* 2 975a39), Anaxagoras (975b17–18); Anaximander and Anaximenes (975b22–24, the latter named twice); Democritus (975b28); Parmenides (976a6), Zeno (976a25), and Xenophanes (976a32); then Empedocles again (976a33), Hesiod again (976b16), Anaxagoras again (976b20), and Empedocles once more (976b23). There is an overall pattern here, signaled most conspicuously by the return to Hesiod, quickly followed by Anaxagoras and Empedocles. We return to the names with which we began, but not in precisely the same order. There is thus a suggestion of circularity, but closer inspection reveals a skewed chiastic pattern, featuring groupings of three names or figures each: Hesiod, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras constitute the first group (**A**), and they are also the last three figures named (**A′**), although the second time around Empedocles' name appears twice and the order within the group is varied. The second group (**B**) seems to consist of three names,

RPhA 37 (2019) 61–99. See also S. Hays, "On the skeptical influence of Gorgias' On Non-Being," *JHPh* 28 (1990) 327–338 and J. Palmer, *Plato's Reception of Parmenides* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 108–117.

but only two individuals, Anaximander and Anaximenes, although there is the hint of an unnamed third Milesian in the report that one of them claimed that the All (τὸ πᾶν) is water.[56] Corresponding to the Milesian group we have three Eleatics (**B′**): Zeno, Parmenides, Xenophanes. Finally, in the middle of the structure Democritus stands alone (**C**). In terms of philosophical outlook, we have pluralists at the extremities, materialist monists balanced by metaphysical monists in the interior, and at the center an individual atomist for whom being is no more than non-being.[57] We can represent the structure concisely as follows:

A. Hesiod, Empedocles, Anaxagoras	(Pluralists)
B. Anaximander, Anaximenes, Anaximenes	(Material Monists)
C. Democritus	(Atomist)
B′. Parmenides, Zeno, Xenophanes	(Metaphysical Monists)
A′. Empedocles, Hesiod, Anaxagoras, Empedocles	(Pluralists)

I cannot dwell on their significance here, but similar patterns, connected more or less explicitly to naming, appear in the proem of Parmenides' poem, in an Empedoclean passage rich in Parmenidean echoes, and in the introductions to the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*.[58] Such skewed chiasms are another element of the Eleatic style our author is imitating. Part of the effect of the structure seems to be drawing attention to the center, so the placement of Democritus is quite interesting.[59]

[56] *MXG* 2 975b21–25: ἔτι οὐδὲν κωλύει μίαν τινὰ οὖσαν τὸ πᾶν μορφήν, ὡς καὶ ὁ Ἀναξίμανδρος καὶ ὁ Ἀναξιμένης λέγουσιν, ὁ μὲν ὕδωρ εἶναι φάμενος τὸ πᾶν, ὁ δέ, ὁ Ἀναξιμένης, ἀέρα, καὶ ὅσοι ἄλλοι οὕτως εἶναι τὸ πᾶν ἓν ἠξιώκασιν. It is hard not to think of Thales when the author writes of "one claiming that the All is water," and difficult to believe that the *MXG* author would have been unaware of the association.

[57] See Arist. *Metaph*. 1.4 985b8 (= DK 67 A6 = LM 27 D31).

[58] For repetition and chiasmus in Parmenides' proem as preserved in S.E. *M*. 7.111 (= DK 28 B1.1–30 + B7.2–7; LM 19 D4.1–30 + D8.2–7) and in Emp. DK 31 B2–3 (= LM 22 D42 + D44), also preserved by Sextus (*M*. 7.123–125), see C. Kurfess, *Restoring Parmenides' Poem: Essays toward a new arrangement of the fragments based on a reassessment of the original sources* (Diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2013), 37–50 (Parmenides) and 107–122 (Empedocles). In Plato's *Parmenides*, note, e.g., the order of the names that appear at the beginning of Antiphon's account (*Prm*. 127a8–c1): (A) Pythodorus – (B) Zeno – (C) Parmenides – (C′) Parmenides – (B′) Zeno – Parmenides [a skewing element] – (A′) Pythodorus. (The third, skewing, mention of Parmenides plays a part in a secondary chiasmus, in which the reported attributes of Zeno answer, in reverse order, those of Parmenides.) In the *Sophist*, the order in which Socrates presents the "names" at *Sph*. 217a3 reverses the order in which they appear in his preceding speech, resulting in an extended chiasmus for the guises in which philosophers are said to appear: (A) philosophers – (B) statesmen – (C) sophists – (D) the "altogether mad" (παντάπασιν ἔχοντες μανικῶς) – (C′) sophist – (B′) statesman – (A′) philosopher.

[59] This apparent interest in chiasmus may help account for the curious ordering of the sections of the *MXG*. The first responds to Melissus' *On Nature, or On Being*, the second to Xenophanes' possibly nameless poem about a nameless divinity decidedly unlike natural beings, the third to Gorgias' *On Non-Being, or On Nature*.

In the second section, the author finally names Melissus at the beginning of chapter 4, but the only other names to appear are "Parmenides" and "Zeno." That is, in this section devoted to the figure once popularly regarded as the founder of the Eleatic school, the only names to appear are those of the other chief representatives of the school. Appropriately, each name appears once, and in relative isolation from the others, playfully reflecting, one presumes, the solitariness of Eleatic Being.

In the third section, each of the two younger Eleatics is named again, and with an apparent nod to the especially disruptive effects of Gorgias' *logos*, each is made to multiply: Melissus is named twice (*MXG* 5 979a22 and 6 979b22), Zeno thrice (*MXG* 5 979a23, 6 979b25, and 979b37).[60] Leucippus is also named, the first mention of his name being the final name to appear in the work (980a7–8). This would seem to answer in some manner the mention of Democritus at the center of the chiasmus in the first section of the work. As it was Leucippus who first pronounced that non-being, as void, *is* no less than being,[61] there is something fitting about him appearing in the discussion of Gorgias. Moreover, our author illustrates the non-being that Leucippus and Gorgias each represent by opting, when the time has come to critique Gorgias' additional arguments for the impossibility of apprehending or communicating the unnamed "it," to end the work abruptly, without a proper conclusion.

The present paper will end in a similar fashion, but not before noting, as a final provocation, that the sort of play in which we find our author engaged is paralleled elsewhere in the Aristotelian corpus. Although editions and translations tend to hide it, there is a curious repetition about Parmenides and Melissus in the *Physics* that seems to mimic Parmenides' own repetitive style.[62] Likewise, *Poetics* 12, a passage that appears to interrupt the flow of the general argument, has been condemned for its "feeble and repetitive definitions" and

[60] Interestingly, the first mention of each name appears during the summary of Gorgias' first argument. This violates the pattern, established in the first two sections, of keeping summary and critique separate, and suggests something of the incoherence that accompanies the adoption of Gorgias' theses. The ultimate punchline of the treatise is that, following the summary of Gorgias' third argument that, due to the complexities of *logos*, even if it is and is apprehensible, it cannot be made clear to others, the *MXG* author offers no critique at all.

[61] Cf. Simp. *in Ph*. 28.14–15 (= DK 67 A8 = LM 27 D32). Cf. above, with note 57.

[62] Cf. Arist. *Ph*. 1.2 185a8–12 with 1.3 186a6–10. The latter passage is bracketed by Ross, the former by Bekker; see W.D. Ross, *Aristotle's* Physics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936) 462. For various aspects of Parmenidean repetition, see Kurfess, *Restoring Parmenides' Poem*, 37–50; C. Kurfess, "Verity's Intrepid Heart: The Variants in Parmenides, DK B 1.29 (and 8.4)," *Apeiron* 47 (2014) 81–93; C. Kurfess, "The Truth about Parmenides' *Doxa*," *AncPhil* 36 (2016) 13–45, esp. 25–31; and C. Kurfess, "An Overlooked Fragment of Parmenides in Proclus?," *Apeiron* 51 (2018) 245–257.

excised by editors who have failed to notice that with his repetitions Aristotle is imitating a choral interlude.[63] And, as Professor Ronald Polansky has reminded me, Aristotle pointedly underscores his observation in *On Memory and Recollection* that memory is always marked by an awareness of "before" by conspicuously repeating the word πρότερον, thus deftly inducing in his readers an experience of the phenomenon in question when he says, e.g., "as has been said even before."[64] Although these touches have seemed excessively repetitious to some readers, they reveal a playfulness on Aristotle's part that seems to be shared by our author.[65]

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[63] See Arist. *Po.* 12 1452b14–27. The words quoted come from G. Else, *Aristotle: Poetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967) 94, as justification for relegating the passage to an appendix. Cf. the apparatus entry ad loc. in S.H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, 4th ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1932) 42: "totum hoc cap. secl. Ritter, recte, ut opinor." For the chapter as a playful choral imitation, see S. Benardete & M. Davis, *Aristotle: On Poetics* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2002) xxix–xxx and 32 n.81, and cf. J. Sachs, *Aristotle: Poetics* (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2005) 35 n.27.

[64] See esp. Arist. *Mem.* 1 449a26, καθάπερ εἴρηται καὶ πρότερον, where the words καὶ πρότερον are bracketed in W.D. Ross, *Aristotle*: Parva Naturalia (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), following Freudenthal and Biehl. Cf. also, among the more than dozen mentions of πρότερον in *Mem*., καθάπερ καὶ πρότερον εἴπομεν at 450a20 and ἐν τοῖς πρότερον εἴρηται at 453a5, in sharp contrast to the bare εἴρηται that closes the work at 453b11. Note also, in *Mem.* 2, where the focus becomes recollection and Aristotle emphasizes the need for a starting point (see 451b30–31, 452a12), the similarly pointed repetitions of πρῶτον and ἀρχή: e.g., τὸ πρῶτον at 451a21, 451a25, and ἐξ/ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς at 451a23, 451b1, 451b9–10, 452a2, 452a24–25, 453b2. See, further, R. Polansky, *Aristotle's* Parva Naturalia*: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024).

[65] For his own good humor, guidance, and friendship this paper is dedicated to Ronald Polansky, with gratitude and warmest wishes for a happy retirement.

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2.
Healthy, Immutable, and Beautiful: Eleatic Pantheism and Epicurean Theology

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Abstract: In this essay, I will reconstruct Parmenides' theology, which may be interpreted as a form of pantheism. Indeed, the philosopher argued that stars, the sky and the human passions are lesser divinities that may have been generated by an "unanimated" God identical with Being. Afterwards, I will study the reception of this theology in the Epicureans, who accused Parmenides of negating the immortality and blessedness of the divine, but at the same time may have received from him and his pupil Melissus the following ideas: 1) God is a perfect, immutable and unchangeable Being; 2) a perfect Being enjoys pure life and pleasure.

Keywords: Eleaticism; Epicureanism; Love and sex; Ontology; Pantheism; Philosophical polemic; Theology.

"Do not fear divinity," reads the *incipit* of the Epicurean τετραφάρμακος or "four-part remedy".[1] The reason lies in the fact that gods are anthropomorphic living beings that ignore humankind, since their only occupations are aimed at the preservation and contemplation of their own bliss.[2] The reflections of philosophers prior to Epicurus weighed considerably upon the development of this notion of divinity. Many scholars, for example, have hypothesized a strong influence from Aristotle, who would have anticipated the notion of the indifference of the gods and of their eternal engagement in the pleasure of self-contemplation.[3] In this essay I will argue that a remote influence on Epicurean theology can also be found in Eleaticism.

[1] Quoted by Philod. *PHerc.* 1005, col. 5.9 (ἄφοβον ὁ θεός), transl. mine, from the edition of A. Angeli, *Filodemo: Agli amici di scuola* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1988) 173.

[2] Cf. e.g. Epic. *Ad Her.* 76 and 81, Lucr. *DRN* 1.43–49, Cic. *ND* 1.19.49–51, 41.114, with A.J. Festugière, *Epicurus and His Gods* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956) 51–89; K. Kleve, *Gnosis theon* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1963); D. Lemke, *Die Theologie Epikurs* (München: Beck, 1973); H. Essler, *Glückselig und unsterblich. Epikureische Theologie bei Cicero und Philodem* (Basel: Schwabe, 2011) 37–119; R. Koch, *Comment peut-on être dieu? La secte d'Épicure* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 2005); E. Piergiacomi, *Storia delle antiche teologie atomiste* (Roma: Sapienza University Press, 2017) 49–115.

[3] See e.g. C. Diano, *Forma ed evento: principi per un'interpretazione del mondo greco* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1993);

I am not presenting a novel thesis. Bignone, Pesce, and Vassallo have already argued that Epicureanism was marked by Eleatic logic and ontology.[4] Saltzer went even further and dedicated a dissertation to the topic proposing that Eleaticism was the essential *Grundlegung* of the Epicurean physical and ethical theory.[5] Finally, some scholars have supposed that Lucretius was influenced by Parmenides' poetry and thought, although he never mentions the latter in his exposition of the ideas of the Presocratics.[6] At the same time, the thesis of an influence of Eleaticism on Epicureanism has been criticized by Capasso,[7] who finds little evidence in support of this hypothesis and contends that the Epicureans were essentially critical of Eleatic philosophy. My essay will follow a middle path between these two extremes. I will argue that, in terms of theological *content*, there was little in Parmenides' poem that the Epicureans would have approved of. But I will also try to defend the idea that Eleaticism may have provided a "framework" for Epicurean theology: a series of *formal* premises and lines of reasoning that had an indirect influence on certain Epicurean tenets.

The essay will be structured as follows. Firstly, I reconstructs how Parmenides' theology may have been interpreted by the Epicureans. Afterwards, I argue why the latter found the former unacceptable. Finally, I show where a distant and indirect influence of Eleaticism might be found.

1. *Velleius and Philodemus as readers of Parmenides' theology*

Two texts document the Epicurean reception of Eleatic theology. One is Cicero's report of the views of the Epicurean Velleius:

> Parmenides, on the other hand, in fact [proposes] a fabrication. He makes up something like a crown – he calls it a στεφάνη – a continuous blazing circle of light which encircles the heaven,

A. Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers as Theologians* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) 222; D.N. Sedley, *Creationism and Its Critics in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 170.

[4] E. Bignone, *Epicuro. Opere, frammenti, testimonianze* (Roma: Erma di Bretschneider, 1964) 19; D. Pesce, *Saggio su Epicuro* (Brescia: Paideia, 1974) 40–41, 62–68 and 180; C. Vassallo, *The Presocratics at Herculaneum* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021) 32-39.

[5] W.G. Saltzer, *Parmenides, Leukippos und die Grundlegung der epikurischen Physik und Ethik bei Lukrez* (Diss., Frankfurt am Main, 1964).

[6] Cf. *DRN* 1.635–920 and the section "Parmenides in Lucretius' Hymn to Venus. An *oppositio in imitando*?" below. Another Epicurean who excludes Parmenides from his list of Presocratics is Diogenes of Oinoanda, fr. 6 of M.F. Smith, *Diogenes of Oinoanda. The Epicurean Inscription* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1993).

[7] M. Capasso, "Epicureismo ed eleatismo. Secondo contributo alla ricostruzione della critica epicurea alla filosofia presocratica," in M. Capasso, *Comunità senza rivolta* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1987) 103–167.

> and he calls it god. But no one can believe that there is either a divine form or sensation in that thing. The same man also [invents] many marvels, since he deifies war, discord, love, and other things of that sort – things that are destroyed by disease or sleep or forgetfulness or old age; he does the same with the heavenly bodies, but let us not discuss it in connection with him since we have already done so in discussing someone else.[8]

The second text is a fragment from the second part of Philodemus' *De pietate*, re-edited by Vassallo. While it does not mention the name of Parmenides, the text certainly refers to his theological doctrines.[9] Vassallo's new readings and reconstructions have considerably expanded the scope of the text, but here we will focus only on the most legible lines:

> ...in fact, it seems that Parmenides makes the first god soulless, and the [gods] generated by this [god] are the same as the affections suffered by human beings...[10]

Velleius attributes three theological theses to Parmenides: 1) god coincides with a crown of lights that surrounds the sky; 2) passions like war, discord and love are divine, 3) the stars are gods. Philodemus adds that Parmenides 4) established a divine hierarchy, with a "first" inanimate god at the apex who generates some lesser divinities.

Velleius focuses on the way of "seeming" or δόξα of the Parmenidean poem. Parmenides here presents the opinions of mortals about a cosmology that makes birth, becoming and death the mixture of two "forms": light and night.[11] This means that Velleius attributes to Parmenides what he considers to be a misleading account (DK 28 B8.52: ἀπατηλόν), which however

[8] Cic. *ND* 1.11.28 = DK 28 A37, trans. modified from that by McKirahan, in A.H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, edited with New Translations by R. McKirahan (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2009) 144: *Nam Parmenides quidem commenticium quiddam coronae simile efficit (*στεφάνην *appellat), continentem ardorum lucis orbem, qui cingit caelum, quem appellat deum; in quo neque figuram divinam neque sensum quisquam suspicari potest. multaque eiusdem monstra, quippe qui Bellum qui Discordiam qui Cupiditatem ceteraque generis eiusdem ad deum revocet, quae vel morbo vel somno vel oblivione vel vetustate delentur; eademque de sideribus, quae reprehensa in alio iam in hoc omittantur.*

[9] Vassallo, *The Presocratics at Herculaneum*, 283-284.

[10] Philod. *De piet.* fr. 13 (= t. 47 in Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*; om. DK) of the *PHerc.* 1428, numeration by A. Schober, "Philodemi De pietate pars prior," *CErc* 18 (1988) 113, transl. modified from that of R. McKirahan in Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, 142. Vassallo's texts reads: ἔοικ[ε δ]ὴ τόν | τε πρῶτον [θ]εὸν ἄ|ψυχον ποιεῖν, τ[ούς || τε γεννωμένους ὑ|πὸ τούτου τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ τοῖς πάθεσιν | τοῖς περὶ ἀνθρώ||[πους].

[11] See DK 28 B7, B8.50–61, B9, B19. For discussion, see H. Fränkel, "Studies in Parmenides,"in R.E. Allen & D.J. Furley (eds.), *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy. Vol. II: the Eleatics and Pluralists* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1975) 1–47, 20–22; AA. Long, "The Principles of Parmenides' Cosmogony," in Allen & Furley (eds.), *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, 82–101, 89–98; A. Finkelberg, "Xenophanes' Physics, Parmenides' *Doxa* and Empedocles' Theory of Cosmogonical Mixture," *Hermes* 125 (1997) 1–16, 1–8; R. Cherubin, "Light, Night and the Opinions of Mortals: Parmenides B 8.51–61 and B9," *AncPhil* 25 (2005) 1–23; O. Primavesi, "Le chemin vers la révélation: lumière et nuit dans le proème de Parménide," *Philosophie antique* 13 (2013) 37–81.

represents the most plausible way to describe our world (cf. ἐοικότα in DK 28 B8.59).[12] The criticism levelled by the Epicurean philosopher attacks views that are perhaps not entirely attributable to Parmenides. Philodemus seems to note this point, since he introduces his exposition with a "seems" (ἔοικε). The verb could reflect an awareness that Parmenides expressed thoughts that he did not entirely accept.

We now come to the four specific theses. Thesis 1 is wrong insofar as it speaks of the existence of a single crown, since we know that Parmenides acknowledged the existence of *many* crowns.[13] Apart from this, Velleius gives a faithful overview of Parmenidean theology. Even if the doctrine of the structure and order of the crowns is a controversial topic,[14] it seems clear that the sky constitutes the outermost crown of the cosmos and could be considered a god. Certainly the celestial crown is one "of the narrower rings became filled with unmixed fire" or light and part of the "heaven which surrounds everything."[15] Moreover, fr. DK 28 B11.2–3 confirms that heaven could be identified with something divine, because it calls the ether "last Olympus."

Thesis 2 is far more problematic. Cicero writes that Parmenides *ad deum revocet* war, strife, love and similar affections. The Latin can mean three very different things:

A. God causes such affections;
B. God experiences these affections;
C. These affections are gods.

[12] For some perspectives, see J. Mansfeld, *Die Offenbarung des Parmenides und die menschliche Welt* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1964) 121–221; G.E.L. Owen, "Eleatic Questions," in Allen & Furley (eds.), *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, 48–81; G. Calogero, *Studi sull'Eleatismo* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1977)37–63; G. Casertano, *Parmenide: il metodo, la scienza, l'esperienza* (Napoli: Guida, 1978)122–144; N-L. Cordero, *Les deux chemins de Parménide* (Paris: Vrin, 1984) 176–214; G. Cerri, *Parmenide: Poema sulla natura* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1999) 69–77; M. Conche, *Parménide. Le Poème: Fragments* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999) 189–190; P. Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2004) 100–126; Cherubin, "Light, Night and the Opinions of Mortals", 13–19; A.P.D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides*, revised and expanded edition (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2008) 194–263; F. Ferrari, *Il migliore dei mondi impossibili. Parmenide e il cosmo dei Presocratici* (Roma: Aracne, 2010) 39–79; Primavesi, "Le chemin vers la révélation," 72.

[13] DK 28 B12 and A37 (= Aet. 2.7.1) with Conche, *Parménide*, 220.

[14] Fränkel, "Studies in Parmenides," 22–25; M. Pellikaan-Engel, *Hesiod and Parmenides* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1978) 87–99; Casertano, *Parmenide*, 169–171; A. Finkelberg, "The Cosmology of Parmenides," *AJPh* 107 (1986) 303–317; Conche, *Parménide*, 215–229; G. Cerri, "La sezione astronomica del poema parmenideo," *AION(filol)* 30 (2008) 27–37; Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, 362–371; Ferrari, *Il migliore dei mondi impossibili*, 85–90.

[15] DK 28 B10.5 (οὐρανὸν ἀμφὶς ἔχοντα) and 12.1 (αἱ γὰρ στεινότεραι πλῆντο πυρὸς ἀκρήτοιο), trans. McKirahan, in Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, 86 and 90.

Unfortunately, Philodemus' fragment hardly clarifies the question. Lines 30–34 allow us to add that what Velleius has in mind are affections that are somehow connected to the generated gods, but everything else remains obscure. Schober proposes to add the verb "to suffer" (πάσχειν) at the end of line 34,[16] thus making the text say that the deities in question experience the same affections as human beings and giving indirect confirmation to hypothesis B. This is an interesting but unverifiable hypothesis. We must then turn to other texts in order to find a tentative answer.

Simplicius quotes some verses of Parmenides that speak of a female demoness placed in the middle of crowns, governing everything and causing sexual arousal in living beings, so as to force males and females to generate offspring. She also devises Eros as the first of the many generated gods and "sends souls from the visible to the unseen at one time, and back again at another."[17] This last indication may mean that the demoness rules the cycles of birth (= the coming into the visible) and death (= the fall into the invisible). Therefore, she is also a destructive entity. Some arguments in favour of this hypothesis have been developed by Journée. According to this scholar, the reference to intercourse between females and males could correspond to the metaphysical mixture of the principles of light, which has a feminine/constructive power, and night, which has masculine/destructive features. If Journée's reconstruction is correct, then the demoness who mixes the two principles will be at the same time the positive and negative efficient forces of the universe.[18]

It is not clear who the demoness is. Aetius (2.7.1 = DK 28 A37) identifies her with Justice (Δική) or Necessity (Ἀνάγκη). Plutarch (*Amat.* 756E10–F1 = DK 28 B13) mentions Aphrodite. Unless we accept that Parmenides used different names to refer to a single divine principle that governs the whole of reality,[19]

[16] See Schober, "Philodemi De pietate pars prior," 113, for references. Richard Janko and Graziano Ranocchia (quoted by Vassallo, *The Presocratics at Herculaneum*, 284) propose πάσχοντας.

[17] Simp. *in Ph.* 39.10–20 (= DK 28 B12–13), transl. McKirahan, in Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, 240.

[18] See G. Journée, "Lumière et Nuit, Féminin et Masculin chez Parménide d'Elée: quelques remarques," *Phronesis* 72 (2012) 289–318, for arguments and texts. A problem with this interpretation is that it seems difficult to read the term τόκος (childbearing) in a symbolic way. Moreover, if the feminine is a positive principle, how could the demoness also destroy? The first difficulty can be solved by supposing that in DK 28 B12 Parmenides is describing both sexual intercourse by living beings and the light/night mixture (μιγῆν in B12.6). As regards to the efficient divinity, it could be suggested that it is considered feminine because its creative power prevails over its destructive side. After all, Parmenides' world is a κόσμος (cf. DK 28 B4 with Cerri, *Poema sulla natura*, 199–200, 244, 289). Alternatively, one could suppose that it is precisely because of similar inconsistencies that the way of seeming or δόξα is described as deceiving or ἀπατηλόν.

[19] M. Untersteiner, *Parmenide: testimonianze e frammenti* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1958) lxvii–lxxv; Mansfeld, *Die Offenbarung des Parmenides*, 222–273; Conche, *Parménide*, 208 and 219; Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, 280–281; G. Journée, "Les avatars d'une démone: à propos de Parménide fr. 28B13," *Elenchos* 35 (2014) 5–38.

it is necessary to choose one of these alternatives. I believe that Aphrodite is a better candidate, since Plutarch had direct knowledge of Parmenides.[20] Now, this suggests that, when Velleius says that Parmenides "deifies war, strife, love," he may be accepting interpretations A and C. Indeed, Aphrodite generates Eros and sexual arousal (which is a by-product of love), but probably also war and strife. After all, if the demoness is also a destructive entity, she may be responsible, for example, for males fighting over females in the animal world.[21] Therefore, Parmenides' war, strife, and love are rightly interpreted by Velleius as both the results of an efficient divine principle and as gods in themselves.

I now come to thesis 3. Velleius indirectly recognizes that Parmenides defended astral theology. He holds the same view as Alcmaeon, who conferred divinity upon the stars (cf. *dedit divinitatem* in Cic. *ND* 1.11.27 = DK 24 A12). Parmenides, then, may have considered these entities to be animate. Indeed, DK 28 B11 speaks of the μένος or "soul" of the stars and of their warmth, which is due to the fact that they have originated from the igneous ether of the sky (Aet. 2.15.7 and 20.8a = DK 28 A43–44). More controversially, DK 28 B15 compares the moon to a lover who turns around the sun and searches for his gaze; therefore, he describes it as a living being.[22] Combined with the fact that Parmenides made the sky a god and maybe also deified fire (cf. Clem. Alex. *Protr.* 5.64 = DK 28 A33), we can suppose that the divine character of the stars depends on their celestial origin.

We finally come to thesis 4. The real problem is represented here by Philodemus' reference to a "first" inanimate god. This can hardly coincide with Eros (despite the "first" or πρώτιστον of DK 28 B13) or with Aphrodite, since Parmenides describes them as animated. The difficulty is increased by the fact that, again, Philodemus presents Parmenides' theses with ambiguous words. The word πρῶτον may indeed signify three different things.

[20] See e.g. H. Martin, Jr., "*Amatorius*, 756 E–F: Plutarch's Citation of Parmenides and Hesiod," *AJPh*90 (1969) 183–200; J.P. Hershbell, "Plutarch and Parmenides," *GRBS*13 (1972) 193–208, 199–200; Cerri, *Poema sulla natura*, 266–269; F. Ferrari, "Afrodite timoniera del cosmo nel racconto di Parmenide," in G. Cerri, A.T. Cozzoli, & M. Giuseppetti (eds.), *Tradizioni mitiche locali nell'epica greca* (Roma: Scienze e Lettere, 2012) 121–146; Journée, "Les avatars d'une démone," 6 n.2.

[21] Some scholars even argue that positive and destructive forces were organized by Parmenides into pairs, by recovering and modifying Hesiod's perspective (cf. *Th.* 116–232). See H. Schwabl, "Zur 'Theogonie' bei Parmenides und Empedokles," *WS* 70 (1957) 278–289; E.F. Dolin, "Parmenides and Hesiod," *HSPh* 66 (1962) 93–98; M.D. Northrup, "Hesiodic Personifications in Parmenides A 37," *TAPhA* 110 (1980) 223–232; Finkelberg, "Xenophanes' Physics", 3–4.

[22] However, this could be a metaphor. See Cerri, *Poema sulla natura*, 276; Conche, *Parménide*, 237–238; Primavesi, "Le chemin vers la revelation", 77–78.

Philodemus may mean that this inanimate god is "first in importance and in time," and hence that it was the first thing to have a beginning and that it has generated everything else. The only entity that could fit this description is the crown of the sky. The sky has also been generated (cf. DK 28 B10.6) and might have generated all the other gods through the nourishing element of ether (DK 28 B11). This point is justified by the fact that everything is composed of fire or light (DK 28 B9.3–4), even the celestial crowns filled with night (DK 28 B12.6) and the soul (see the sources collected in DK 28 A45). The fragment discovered by Cerri in Boethius also says that the ether forms the body of a "sacred person", who according to the scholar is Parmenides' master.[23] Whether he is right or not, the important point is that a text explicitly reports that the sky can generate a divine being. Finally, we also know from Theophrastus that Parmenides believed that humankind derived from the sun,[24] and therefore that the crown of the sky gave birth to our species.

Another hypothesis is that πρῶτος means only "first in time," but not in importance, i.e. that this is the first thing ever generated but that there is a superior and ungenerated principle. This supposition still allows the identification with the crown of the sky, although with a significant change. Here we must look at DK 28 B10, which reports that the sky was and is forced by Necessity to be the limit of the stars. Since the stabilization of the boundaries of the celestial regions is basically the last consequence of a generative process, the text may be arguing perhaps that necessity generated the inanimate god/crown of the sky. This is a hypothesis that draws confirmation from the doxographical tradition (Aet. 1.25.3 = DK 28 A32), which qualifies necessity as providence and as the generating principle of the cosmos (κοσμοποιός).[25] The crown of the sky would therefore be first in time, because it is the first god to be born, but not first in importance, since providential necessity is superior even to the gods.

Both interpretations have the advantage to solve some contradictions often highlighted by scholars. I am thinking in particular of the tension between Velleius' claim that the god who holds everything resides in the most extreme crown of the cosmos and the sources that indicate that Aphrodite,

[23] Cerri, *Poema sulla natura*, 291–292.

[24] D.L. 9.22 = DK 28 A1, fr. 227D of W.W. Fortenbaugh et al. (eds.), *Theophrastus of Eresus: Sources for His Life, Writings, Thought and Influence*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

[25] Casertano, *Parmenide*, 166–168; Conche, *Parménide*, 208–209. *Contra*, Journée, "Les avatars d'une démone," 22–37.

who governs everything, resides in a crown at the centre of the cosmos.[26] At the summit we will have necessity, which fixes the celestial boundaries. Below it, we will have the crown of the sky, which continues the work of necessity by giving life to other, inferior deities. Finally, we will have Aphrodite, who has a cosmologically median position and does not rule the astral movements at the top, but only the earthly movements at the bottom.[27]

A third and final hypothesis is that πρῶτον is only first in importance but not in time, meaning that this superior divinity is not generated and generates all the others. The only entity of this kind that can be found in the fragments of Parmenides is the inborn, immortal, immutable, immobile and homogeneous Being, described in the path of the Truth (DK 28 B8), which does not simply deny phenomena and multiplicity: it is that stable something which allows becoming.[28] Eleaticism, then, is a form of pantheism. Although the equation "God = Being" is controversial and only some scholars endorse it,[29] what is important here to note is that the Epicureans may have interpreted Eleatic Being in this way. The equation in question had actually been defended in antiquity.[30] Nothing prevents us from supposing that Philodemus agreed with this tradition and concluded that Eleatic Being is a supreme inanimate god that generates all lesser deities.

[26] Aet. 2.7.1 (= DK 28 A37) and DK 28 B12.3. See also Vassallo, *The Presocratics at Herculaneum*, 42-43 and 549-554.

[27] Similar interpretations are developed by Pellikaan-Engel, *Hesiod and Parmenides*, 87–99; J. Mansfeld, "Bad World and Demiurge: a 'Gnostic' Motif from Parmenides and Empedocles to Lucretius and Philo," in R. van den Broek & M.J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1981) 261–314, 265–274; J. Frère, "Aurore, Eros et Ananké. Autour des dieux parménidiens (f. 12–f. 13)," *EPh* 60 (1985) 466–468. Different opinions in L.A. Bredlow, "Cosmología, cosmogonía y teogonía en el poema de Parménides," *Emerita* 78 (2010) 275–297, 293–294; Ferrari "Afrodite timoniera del cosmo," 124–128.

[28] Cf. the references already given *supra*, n. 12.

[29] A.L. Townsley, "Cosmic Eros in Parmenides," *Rivista di studi classici* 23 (1975) 337–346; K. Held, "Zur Vorgeschichte des ontologischen Gottes-Beweises. Anselm und Parmenides," *PPh* 9 (1983) 217–233, 222–230; Cerri, *Poema sulla natura*, 240; D.N. Sedley, "Parmenides and Melissus," in A.A. Long (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 113–133,120; Drozdek, *Greek Philosophers as Theologians*, 50–51; J. Frère, "Les dieux d'Élée et d'Agrigente," in J. Dillon & M. Dixsaut (eds.), *Agonistes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005) 3–12, 11–12; P. Curd, "Ruminations on Mansfeld's Melissus," in Pulpito (ed.), *Melissus Between Miletus and Elea* (Sankt Augustin: Akademie Verlag, 2016) 123–128. *Contra*, O. Gigon, "Die Theologie der Vorsokratiker," in H.J. Rose, *La notion du divin depuis Homère jusqu'à Platon* (Genève: Fondation Hardt Vandœuvres, 1954) 127–166,146–147; Untersteiner, *Parmenide*, cxxvi–cxxix; G. Reale, *Melisso: testimonianze e frammenti* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1970) 363–365; S. Zeppi, "Parmenide ateo?," in S. Zeppi, *Il pensiero religioso nei Presocratici. Alle radici dell'ateismo* (Roma: Edizioni Studium, 2003) 163–174; J. Mansfeld, "Melissus Between Miletus and Elea," in Pulpito (ed.), *Melissus Between Miletus and Elea*, 71–112, 181–182; M. Brémond, *Lectures de Mélissos* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017) 493.

[30] On Parmenides, cf. DK 28 A31 and the testimonia 127, 161 in Coxon, *The Frements of Parmenides*. On Zeno and Melissus, cf. DK 29 A30 and DK 30 A13.

We thus have two possible macro-interpretations of the "first god" (πρῶτος θεός) of the *De pietate* passage. One is that Philodemus' exposition refers to a sky-god, which means that – like Velleius – he is concentrating his attention only on the second part of Parmenides' poem. Another interpretation is that the Epicurean is attacking the whole poem, finding a weakness both in the discourse on the Being of the Truth and in the description of the cosmological theology of the way of "seeming" or δόξα. Both alternatives are promising, although I prefer to follow the second one, for the simple fact that the qualification of this first god as "inanimate" would not fit as well if we identified the god with the crown of the sky. Astral theology claims that celestial bodies are animate. Being is instead a more abstract entity that could be conceived as deprived of life.

One may object that the Epicureans believed that Parmenides defended a radical monism: the idea that only Being exists, which denies multiplicity and becoming. Moreover, Colotes and Philodemus attacked Parmenides, reproaching him for reducing everything to one and asserting that sensation is false in showing that many things exist or come to be. By so doing, they claim, the philosopher also makes our life impossible.[31] This objection can be solved by supposing that the Epicureans argued that Parmenides described both an immutable divine Being and many generated divinities, thus finding an unsolvable incoherence. If he had been truly coherent, Parmenides would have had to admit either that only Being exists and that even the generated gods are mere illusions, or that this theogony is clearly a sign that there are many divine beings.

An analysis of *ND* 1.11.28 and of *De piet.* fr. 13 suggests that the Epicureans interpreted Parmenides' theology as follows. Parmenides established a hierarchy of divine beings that govern the cosmos, whose apex is occupied by an inanimate god that coincides with Being, which in turn generates gods that influence the human world: the sky, the stars, Aphrodite and so on. Bearing this in mind, we can now move on to the criticism that the Epicureans level against this theology.

[31] Cf. Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1114B2–D5 (= DK 28 A34) and Philod. *Rhet.* fr. inc. 3.7, edited by S. Sudhaus, *Philodemus. Volumina Rhetorica* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1964), vol. 2, 169 (= DK 28 A49). On the topic, cf. R. Westman, *Plutarch gegen Kolotes* (Helsinki: Societas philosophica, 1955) 52–55, 234–242, 304–305; Capasso, "Epicureismo ed eleatismo," 130–137 and 152–154; M. Isnardi Parente, "Il Parmenide di Plutarco," *PP* 43 (1988) 225–236; Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, 36; E. Kechagia, *Plutarch against Colotes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011) 111–112; A. Corti, *L'*Adversus Colotem *di Plutarco. Storia di una polemica filosofica* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014), 144–146; Mansfeld, "Melissus Between Miletus and Elea," 93.

2. *The negation of the Epicurean πρόληψις of god in Parmenides*

Capasso has demonstrated that Parmenidean theology was rejected for its "strongly divinized connotation and its finalistic system," as well as for its anti-scientific foundation.[32] Such a perspective was unacceptable, because it affirmed that the gods are interested in human affairs and it was based on a non-scientific study of nature. What I would like to add to Capasso's reconstruction is that the Epicureans did not criticize Parmenides' theology only for its consequences, but also for its premises. The philosopher also says absurd things about the gods themselves.

The main thesis that I will defend is that the Epicureans criticized this theology because it denies the Epicurean πρόληψις of divinity, the common "preconception" that the gods are indissoluble, blessed, anthropomorphic living beings.[33] This is certainly true for the conception of Parmenides' sky-god. Velleius rejects the divinity of the latter in a single sentence: no one can imagine it to possess a divine form (*divina forma*), i.e. an anthropomorphic shape, nor sensation (*sensus*). Velleius often directs a similar accusation against the gods of non-Epicurean philosophers and the reason for this is to be found in *ND* 1.16.43–18.48. Parmenides' sky contradicts the "first notions" (he uses the expression *primae notiones*, which translates the Greek προλήψεις) that nature implanted in us through reasoning and which show that god must be anthropomorphic. Indeed, if it is true that beauty is a sign of perfection, then god must be human-shaped, for there is no shape more beautiful than the human one. The same charge, after all, is directed against Anaximenes, who denied the most beautiful form of god by affirming that the air is a divinity (*ND* 1.10.26 = DK 13 A10).[34] But Parmenides' sky contradicts the Epicurean "preconception" also for another reason. God is a living being, and therefore he must perceive (*ND* 1.10.23–24 and 14.37). Now, Parmenides' sky cannot be alive and perceive any-

[32] Capasso, "Epicureismo ed eleatismo," 148–151. Transl. mine of the quotation in p. 148 ("connotazione fortemente divinizzata e il suo impianto finalistico").

[33] Here see esp. Essler, *Glückselig und unsterblich*, 148–187; F. Verde, "Epicuro nella testimonianza di Cicerone: la dottrina del criterio," in M. Tulli (ed.), *Testo e forme del testo. Ricerche di filologia filosofica* (Pisa-Roma: Serra, 2016) 335–368; V. Tsouna, "Epicurean Preconceptions," *Phronesis* 61 (2016) 160–221.

[34] K. Kleve, "On the Beauty of God. A Discussion between Epicureans, Stoics and Sceptics," *SO* 53 (1978) 69–83, affirms that this argument is an invention of Cicero, because the Epicureans were indifferent to beauty. But cf. Lucr. *DRN* 5.1169–1174, and see J. Pigeaud, "Les dieux d'Épicure," in L. Jerphagnon, J. Lagrée, & D. Delattre (eds.), *Ainsi parlaient les anciens* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1994) 131–147, 133–138 and 146–147; J. Porter, "Epicurean Attachments: Life, Pleasure, Beauty, Friendship, and Piety," *CErc*, 33 (2003) 224–225.

thing. Lucretius (*DRN* 5.110–145) argued, indeed, that the sky is different from bodies that can contain a soul, namely those that are made of sinews and blood.

The same reasoning is used against the divinity of the stars. Velleius rejects Parmenides simply by recalling that he makes the same mistake as Alcmaeon (*ND* 1.11.27): he bestows immortality on things that are mortal (*nam sit sese mortalibus rebus immortalitatem dare*). Clarification comes from Lucretius and Philodemus, who argue that the stars have a birth and an end: they die each time that they rise and set on the horizon.[35] The stars, then, are not divine, for otherwise we would slip into an unjustifiable *contradictio in adiecto*: the idea that god is an immortal mortal. The only exception is Epicurus' himself, who is described by Lucretius as a mortal god (*deus mortalis*: *DRN* 5.1–12), because he has assimilated himself to god.[36]

We can note, therefore, that also the deified anthropomorphic personifications of war, strife and love are rejected because they implicitly contradict the preconception of god. Velleius claims that all these things cannot be divine, because they are destroyed by illness, sleep, oblivion and the passing of time. The destructive effect of these four causes are especially described by Lucretius, and sometimes even taken as signs of the mortality of the soul.[37] However, sleep is explicitly denied to the gods by Philodemus, so as to avoid suggesting that their nature is subject to destruction.[38] This means that Velleius is here continuing a line of criticism that is defended by his Epicurean school-partner. More importantly, Velleius is claiming that war, strife and love cannot be included among the gods, because they inhibit the immortality that any divine being possesses.

[35] Cf. Lucr. *DRN* 5.91–125, Philod. *De dis* III, col. 10.17–21, ed. H. Essler, "Die Götterbewegung (Phld., *Di* III, Kol. 10, 6 – Kol. 11, 7)," *CErc* 42 (2012) 259–275. On this topic, cf. also G. Arrighetti, "Filodemo, *De dis* III, col. X–XI," *SCO* 7 (1958) 94; P. Woodward, "Star Gods in Philodemus, *PHerc*. 152/157," *CErc* 19 (1989) 29–47; A.J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste. Vol. 2: Le Dieu Cosmique* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1990), 175 and 250–252; H. Essler, "Space and Movement in Philodemus' *De dis* 3: an Anti-Aristotelian Account," in G. Ranocchia, C. Helmig, & C. Horn (eds.), *Space in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2014) 101–123.

[36] Cf. here M. Erler, "Epicurus as *deus mortalis*: *homoiosis theoi* and Epicurean self-cultivation," in D. Frede & A. Laks (eds.), *Traditions of Theology* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2002) 159–181 and A. Hahmann & J.M. Robitzsch, "Epicurus' divine hedonism," *Mnemosyne* 74.3 (2021) 401–422.

[37] Cf. *DRN* 1.225–226, 2.69–70, 2.569–575, 2.1168–1174, 3.161–168, 3.208–215, 3.459–472, 3.487–509, 3.731–737, 3.769–775, 3.824–829, 3.902–930, 3.965–973, 3.1065–1067, 4.664–667, 4.916–961, 4.1285–1287, 5.306–350, 5.826–827, 5.972–965, 6.552–553, 6.657–664, 6.1090–1261. Cf. also Epicurus' fragments 21, 325 and 599, ed. H. Usener, *Epicurea* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1887); Philod. *De mort*. IV coll. 8.37–9.17, ed. B. Henry, *Philodemus. On Death* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009); Diogenes of Oinoanda, fr. 9 Smith, *Diogenes of Oinoanda*.

[38] *De dis* III 11.42–13.20, ed. G. Arrighetti, "Filodemo, *De dis* III col. XII–XIII 20 (*quasi corpus*, *quasi sanguis* ~ ποιὸς ὕπνος)," *SCO* 10 (1961) 112–121.

We finally come to the inanimate god equated with Being. Here we do not find any evidence about the possible criticism that Philodemus may have raised. Generally speaking, we could once again say that merely the adjective "inanimate" (ἄψυχον) is a sign that the Epicurean does not recognize in Eleatic Being the life that one would expect to find in a god. While this is true, we ignore what arguments could have been used by Philodemus. Although here the analysis becomes extremely speculative, we could suppose that he found at least two properties in Eleatic Being that contradict life.

One is immobility (DK 28 B8.26–31). Parmenides denies motion, because this implies a modification in Being, a dissolution or the need to move to a place which is different from Being itself. Hence, it entails the admission of non-Being, which was rejected in DK 28 B2 of the poem.[39] Now, Philodemus believed that a god must move, because there is no living being that does not move or is incapable of locomotion.[40] A second property that seems to contradict divine blessedness is the homogeneity and inviolability of Being, which Parmenides assimilates to a well-rounded sphere that has nothing outside it and extends uniformly throughout the universe.[41] Philodemus may have believed that this property reduces god to a non-anthropomorphic entity without parts, which is to say to an entity lacking soul, sensation and thought. Moreover, Philodemus could have added that since it has nothing outside itself, the divinity would be deprived of the kind of pleasures that make one blessed, i.e. the possibility of conversing and having a sexual relationship with another god.[42] The conception of a god-sphere has the inconvenience of depriving divine nature of many things that are worth experiencing.

One may however object that Parmenides' reference to the unshaken (ἀτρεμές) heart of truth (DK 28 B1.29)[43] could allude to the capacity of this divinity – if it indeed is a divinity – to perceive and rejoice of itself. This the-

[39] Cf. S. Austin, "Genesis and Motion in Parmenides: B 8. 12–13," *HSPh* 87 (1983) 162–164; Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides*, 84–88; Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides*, 115–122.

[40] Cf. the references in n. 35. The same criticism had already been raised by Plato (*Sph*. 248d3–249d5) and Eudemus *apud* Simpl. *in Ph*. 142.8–143.18 (= Eudemus fr. 45, ed. F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles. Band 8: Eudemos von Rhodos* [Basel-Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1969]).

[41] Cf. DK 28 B8.42–49 with Owen, "Eleatic Questions," 61–68 and Cerri, *Poema sulla natura*, 66–67, 240–242.

[42] Cf. here Philod. *De dis* III, coll. 13.20–14.13, which reports the ideas of the Epicurean Hermarchus – fr. 32 of F. Longo Auricchio, *Ermarco. Frammenti* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1988) –, and *ibidem* fr. 78, ed. G. Arrighetti, "Filodemo ΠΕΡΙΘΕΩΝ III fr. 74–82. *PHerc*. 157," *PP* 44 (1955) 322–356. For an analysis and bibliographical references, see Piergiacomi, *Storia delle antiche teologie atomiste*, 141–152 and 216–219.

[43] DK 28 B1.29. On this verse and its problematic textual constitution, see C. Kurfess, "Verity's Intrepid Heart: The Variants in Parmenides, DK B 1.29 (and 8.4)," *Apeiron* 47 (2014) 81–93.

sis is fascinating and may be true as far as Parmenides is concerned,[44] but it would be problematic for an Epicurean. Even if Philodemus acknowledged that Being has a heart, it would nonetheless have a heart without any motion (cf. this sense of ἀτρεμές in DK 28 B8.4). But an Epicurean would have never accepted this idea. A heart is indeed alive when it determines the motions of thought and perception (Lucr. *DRN* 3.138–293), therefore only a corpse would possess such an immobile organ.

3. *Parmenides in Lucretius' hymn to Venus. An* oppositio in imitando*?*

I now come to the relationship between Lucretius and Parmenides' theology, mentioned at the beginning. Scholars have noted that although the former never mentions the latter, it is certain that the opening of the *De rerum natura* – the so-called "Hymn to Venus" (1.1–43) – imitates the description of Aphrodite that rules over everything (DK 28 B12). Both divinities are described by Parmenides and Lucretius as the source of the desire for intercourse in living beings.[45] But is this a sufficient reason to conclude that the *De rerum natura* was influenced by Parmenidean theology? I believe that the answer is negative for two reasons.

The first simple but fundamental reason is that Lucretius immediately warns his reader, after the "Hymn to Venus" (1.44–49), that the true Aphrodite is an inactive deity that feels no concern about the world. Later on (*DRN* 1.225–229, 2.167–174, 2.436–439, 3.776, 4.1037–1128, 4.1148–1159, 4.1192–1277, 5.848, 5.888, 5.895–898, 5.962, 5.1017), the poet will also add that *Venus* must be interpreted as a symbol of many phenomena independent of any divine efficient force: the generation of life from matter, sexual arousal, embryological processes, and affection towards offspring. With the "Hymn to Venus" Lucretius is thus seeking to present a traditional view of the divine, which is however gradually rejected through Epicurean reasoning.[46] Par-

[44] Cf. C. Kurfess, "An Overlooked Fragment of Parmenides in Proclus?" *Apeiron* 51 (2018) 245–257.

[45] *DRN* 1.21 (*quae quoniam rerum natura sola gubernas*); Parm. fr. 12.3 (ἐν δὲ μέσωι τούτων δαίμων ἣ πάντα κυβερνᾶι); Saltzer, *Parmenides, Leukippos*, 91–103; M.R. Gale, *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 51–60, 119–120; L. Rumpf, "Lukrez und Parmenides," *Philologus* 149 (2005) 69; P. Jackson, "Parménide chez Lucrèce," *Letras Clásicas* 15 (2014) 51–61; G. Messina, "Lucrezio testimone di Parmenide," (2015), unpublished, free access here: https://www.academia.edu/12749387/Lucrezio_testimone_di_Parmenide 4; G. Cerri, "Parmenide in Lucrezio (Parm. B 12, 3–6 ≈ Lucr. 1, 19–21)," in M. Pulpito & P. Spangenberg (eds.), *'Οδοὶ νοῆσαι, Ways to Think: Essays in Honour of Néstor-Luis Cordero* (Bologna: Diogene, 2018) 208–209.

[46] For a *status quaestionis* on this problem, see Piergiacomi, *Storia delle antiche teologie atomiste*, 189–202.

menides instead seriously endorses providence even before his description of Aphrodite, since in the proem he describes a divine revelation disclosing the truth about Being.[47] As far as we know, his faith in the providential work of Aphrodite remains unchallenged throughout poem. So while Lucretius imitates DK 28 B12 of Parmenides, he does so only in terms of form and not content.

The second reason why it would probably be wrong to say that the *De rerum natura* was influenced by Parmenidean theology lies in a difference between the two philosopher-poets that has mostly gone unnoticed by scholars. DK 28 B12 stresses that Aphrodite leads living beings to engage in intercourse in order that they may experience "hateful birth" (12.4: στυγεροῖο τόκου). Sex, then, is a providential means adopted to ensure the generation of offspring, which is however described as a painful experience.[48] This perspective confirms that Aphrodite is also a cause of negative effects (cf. § 1 of the essay). By contrast, Lucretius' Venus is presented as a divinity that leads living beings to pleasure and to a pleasurable intercourse (*DRN* 1.1, 7–8, 14–15, 23). Moreover, she has only positive effects, for she actually hinders Mars from bringing war and strife to Rome (*DRN* 1.24–43). Even later on, when he shows that *Venus* is a non-divine force, Lucretius separates sex from love: he shows that the search for sexual pleasure is the real natural goal behind the destructive passion of *amor*, which in turn must be removed in order to maximize the joy of intercourse.[49] In short, Aphrodite is seen by Parmenides only as the source of life and its mixture with pain. Venus is instead interpreted by Lucretius also as the creator of pleasure or, better, as the embodiment of pleasure itself.

All this means that Lucretius imitates Parmenides, while at the same time introducing some important changes. The Parmenidean Aphrodite is gradually stripped of her destructive/providential properties and transformed into

[47] DK 28 B1. One must bear in mind, however, that scholars also debate whether Parmenides' description of a divine revelation is just a literary device, or the account of a real religious experience. I follow the latter perspective. For arguments in support of this view, see C.M. Bowra, "The Proem of Parmenides," *CPh* 32 (1937) 97–112; Mansfeld, *Die Offenbarung des Parmenides*, *passim*.

[48] I agree with Mansfeld, *Die Offenbarung des Parmenides*, 165–166 and Cerri, *Poema sulla natura*, 271, that the epithet "hateful" or στυγεροῖο must be applied only to birth and not to intercourse too, and that the expression does not have a pessimistic meaning suggesting that coming into life is a tragic event – *pace* Conche, *Parménide*, 225–227; Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, 16, 372. It simply denotes the empirical fact that childbearing is painful and dangerous – see R. Cherubin, "Sex, Gender, and Class in the Poem of Parmenides: Difference without Dualism?," *AJPh* 140.1 (2019) 29–66, 33–35.

[49] See here the fundamental monograph by R.D. Brown, *Lucretius on Love and Sex* (Leiden: Brill, 1987).

a Lucretian Venus, namely a symbol of life's joys. Lucretius' "Hymn to Venus" may thus be compared to a case of *oppositio in imitando*: a literary device that neutralizes the original model of Parmenides through the significant removal or transformation of some of its features.

4. *Does the Epicurean divinity possess "Eleatic" features?*

Here ends my reconstruction of the *pars destruens* and of the criticism that the Epicureans levelled against Parmenides' theology. By always working from the hypothesis that Eleatic Being could be interpreted as a deity, I will now also show that there might be similarities between the Eleatic god and that of the Epicureans. But I will also point out that even these common properties involve essential theological differences.

The first two properties that both divinities share are unbegottenness and deathlessness. Parmenides attributes both to Being in DK 28 B8.6–21, by arguing that Being cannot come out of nothing and by using what today we might call the "principle of sufficient reason." There is no logical-ontological need (χρέος) for Being to come into being "now," as opposed to before or later; hence, it will never experience birth or death.[50] Now, these arguments are taken up by Lucretius, Velleius and Diogenes of Oinoanda, although with two important differences. On the one hand, they use the principle of sufficient reason in order to negate the divinity's providential creation and care of the world, not its birth *tout court*. On the other hand, they accept the logical-ontological reason for the coming into being of creation and providence, while also adding a physical and psychological reason. If god created the world "now" and not before or later, it must have been either to receive the gratitude of humanity or out of love of novelty, which are however incompatible with the divine blessedness known through preconception. Indeed, both imply a need or lack in god, but this is absurd in a being which is eternally blessed.[51]

[50] More information in Casertano, *Parmenide*, 98–100; Austin, "Genesis and Motion in Parmenides," 154–168; Cerri, *Poema sulla natura*, 36–40 and 224–228; Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides*, 96–103; Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides*, 76–81.

[51] Lucr. *DRN* 1.43–49 and 5.164–185, Cic. *ND* 1.8.18–9.21, Diog. Oin. *Theol.* coll. 9.11–13.10, ed. J. Hammerstaedt & M.F. Smith, *The Epicurean Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda* (Bonn: Habelt, 2014). Cf. here Mansfeld, "Bad World and Demiurge," 310–311; W.J. Tatum, "Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, 1, 199–204," *AC* 67 (1998) 228–229; Rumpf, "Lukrez und Parmenides," 83–89; Sedley, *Creationism and Its Critics*, 139–146; Vassallo, *The Presocratics at Herculaneum*, 32-34.

As regards the rejection of god's unbegotteness, the reason is similar to the one adduced by Melissus (DK 30 B1–2). A generated living being cannot be eternal, since what has a beginning will one day have an end.[52]

Another similarity concerns the argument in favour of immobility. We have seen that the Epicureans could not accept the idea that a divine being is immobile. At the same time, an implication of their theory that gods lack nothing – and hence do nothing out of physical or psychological need – is the idea that gods will also not *move* in the direction of something that they lack. They might instead move in order to seek something pleasurable.[53] The logic of this similar perspective can be seen in Parmenides' DK 28 B8.32–33. Eleatic Being does not move because it lacks nothing: for if it lacked something, it would actually lack everything (ἔστι γὰρ οὐκ ἐπιδεές· μὴ ἐὸν δ' ἄν παντὸς ἐδεῖτο). Once again, however, Parmenides and the Epicureans start from a different conception of lack or need. The former thinks in terms of the lack of an empty space which is not occupied by Being, which implies the admission of an impossible "non-Being."[54] The latter refers to psychological need, like a pain in the body or an anguish in the soul, which forces living beings different from the gods to find a pleasurable thing that can heal this disturbance (Epic. *Ad Men.* 122, 128).

Finally, we can infer one last similarity between Eleatic Being and the Epicurean divinity by returning to the property of homogeneity. This time, however, we need to focus on the version of the argument that we find in Melissus. He demonstrates that homogeneity is a property of its infinite Being (DK 30 B3–6), because it is a "healthy" entity: one that does not suffer alterations, changes of disposition, pain and anguish (DK 30 B7). Moreover, in DK 30 B8, Melissus also claims that such a god is the only "strong reality" (§ 5), which is to say the only reality that truly exists. He then infers that things that in our experience change, suffer in their body and feel anguish are only illusions (§ 1).[55] This argument surely falls into some of the errors already found in Parmenides. I am referring to the denial that the gods have an anthropomor-

[52] Cic. *ND* 1.8.20, Philod. *De sign.* coll. 22.25–26, ed. P.H. De Lacy & E.A. De Lacy, *Philodemus. On Methods of Inference* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1978).

[53] Cf. again the references given in n. 35.

[54] Cf. Casertano, *Parmenide*, 105–106; Cerri, *Poema sulla natura*, 232–235; Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides*, 88–89; Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides*, 125–127.

[55] For further details on this interpretation put forward by Melissus, see Reale, *Melisso*, 158–175 and 386–392; R. Vitali, *Melisso di Samo sul mondo o sull'essere* (Urbino: Argalìa, 1973) 181–249; B. Harriman, *Melissus and Eleatic Monism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 145–181.

phic shape that can be divided into parts[56] and to the negation of our reality, which in turn makes our life impossible. Plutarch reports – though incidentally – that Colotes also attacked Melissus, probably by resorting to the same objections raised against Parmenides.[57] An Epicurean would also probably object that the Eleatic philosopher goes against our linguistic customs when he applies the adjective "healthy" to Being. An infinite entity does not have a body that can perceive anything,[58] and hence could not perceive that it is in a state of health. However, the idea that god is homogeneous because it does not change or feel pain or anguish fits perfectly with the Epicurean conception of a blessed and immortal divinity. Lucretius also adopts Melissus's argument to show that the soul is mortal, since illnesses and the movements that occur in it imply an addition or diminution of substance that will eventually lead to the soul's dissolution, but the same could also be said of the divinity. If the latter changed or felt pain or anguish, it would have a structure that can lose the immortality and blessedness known through preconception.[59] A pain or disturbance in god's structure would be sufficient to eventually lead it to its destruction and to preclude the perfect pleasure that it ought to perceive for all eternity.

No evidence can confirm that these similarities between Parmenides' and Melissus' Being and the Epicurean divinity derive from a deliberate recovery of the Eleatic doctrine in the philosophy of Epicurus. It is more likely, therefore, that they depend on the powerful influence that the ontology of the Eleatics had on the development of the basic philosophical language of antiquity (and later ages). Their mode of reasoning represented a sort of conceptual "framework" that became canonical in philosophy. The Epicureans were therefore "Eleatic" insofar as they based their reasoning on the idea that in an indissoluble or perfect divinity there can be no lack, alteration and arbitrary

[56] We must not forget that Melissus' homogeneity also implies a negation of void, locomotion and divisibility (DK 30 B7.7–9 and B9), which are instead found in the Epicurean god.

[57] *Adv. Col.* 1108B5–C4 (= T38 of Brémond, *Lectures de Mélissos*; om. DK); Kechagia, *Plutarch against Colotes*, 160–164; Corti, *L'*Adversus Colotem *di Plutarco*, 40–42; Mansfeld, "Melissus Between Miletus and Elea," 93; J. Palmer, "The Early Tradition on Melissus and Parmenides," in Pulpito (ed.),*Melissus Between Miletus and Elea*, 150–156, 154–156; Brémond, *Lectures de Mélissos*, 105, 210–211.

[58] Cf. the charge that Velleius directs against Xenophanes and Anaxagoras (Cic. *ND* 1.11.26–28 = DK 21 A34 and DK 59 A48), with Sedley, *Creationism and Its Critics*, 149–150.

[59] Cf. *DRN* 3.517–520 with J. Longrigg, "Melissus and the Mortal Soul (Lucretius III. 510–522)," *Philologus* 119 (1975) 147–149; Saltzer, *Parmenides, Leukippos*, 134–135; Vassallo, *The Presocratics at Herculaneum*, 559.

coming into Being, although this idea was later reinterpreted from a physical and psychological perspective. Philodemus and Velleius would have affirmed, in turn, that their agreement with Parmenides and Melissus is based on the fact that the latter thinkers do not always state what is false. Sometimes, they too affirm something that fits with the preconception of god, which is embedded in the mind and memory of every human being.

5. *Conclusions*

This essay has investigated the relationship between Eleatic and Epicurean theology. That investigation has reached mainly negative results. The Epicureans were keen critics of Parmenides and Melissus, because they believed that the two thinkers made claims that negated the blessedness, the immortality, the indifference towards humankind and the anthropomorphism of god. In this respect, Epicureanism has nothing in common with Eleatic theological views. At the same time, the investigation has also revealed that, through their analysis of the properties of Being, Parmenides and Melissus identified some fundamental ontological features that are also found in any Epicurean god: the impossibility of its birth and death, the absence of any lack that would induce it to move towards something that could fill this void, and the homogeneity that prevents it from experiencing even a slight alteration or change. The Epicureans can therefore be considered indebted to the Eleatic way of thinking and reasoning, rather than to its values and contents.

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3.
Dualism and Platonism: Plutarch's Parmenides

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Abstract: My aim is to take Plutarch's reception of Parmenides into consideration. In particular, I set out to examine the way Plutarch turns Parmenides' philosophy into a Platonic metaphysics. For it seems to me to be worth considering whether Plutarch is the first to read Parmenides as a forerunner of Plato (and, as a consequence, of himself too) or not. Moreover, the ontological and epistemological dualism which Plutarch detects in Parmenides' thought makes it possible to shed light on the "second half" of Parmenides' poem. In other words, Plutarch delivers an unexpectedly broad interpretation of Parmenides' philosophy, which turns out to provide us not only with an ontology, but also with a rigorous account of the sensible world.

Keywords: Plutarch, Parmenides, Plato, Tradition.

1. *Love and Aphrodite (DK 28 B13 = LM 19 D16)*[1]

An interesting example of Plutarch's exploitation of Parmenides' words is represented by *Amatorius* 756F. Here, the *persona loquens*, who is Plutarch himself, mentions Parmenides, along with Hesiod, both to substantiate the alleged chronological preeminence of Eros over the other gods and to clarify the relationship of the latter with Aphrodite. When quoting Parmenides' fragment DK 28 B13 (= LM 19 D16), the character offers a few remarkable comments on it. First of all, the (probable) title of the poem whence the line comes is stated: it is the *Cosmogony* (cf. ἐν τῇ Κοσμογονίᾳ).[2] Second, the subject of the verb of the line, μητίσατο,[3] is immediately identified with Aphrodite:[4] as we will see,

[1] Unless stated otherwise, the translations of the texts quoted are my own.
[2] According to H. Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia XIII, Part 1* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976) 254 note *b*, this should be deemed as the title of the *second part* of the poem.
[3] On the semantics of this term, see G. Cerri, *Parmenide, Poema sulla natura* (Milano: Fabbri, 1999) 273.
[4] Note that Simplicius (*in Ph*. 39.18) identifies the subject of the verb with the *daimon* referred to in DK 28 B12.3 (= LM 19 D14b.3). Exegetically speaking, Plutarch's choice is defended by M. Untersteiner, *Parmenide, Testi-*

this piece of exegesis will turn out to be original, compared to Plutarch's (presumed) models.[5] So, as a result of this identification and of Eros' logical role as the object of the verb, Plutarch paraphrases the content of the fragment as follows: "among Aphrodite's works" (τῶν Ἀφροδίτης ἔργων), Eros comes across as "the most ancient" (πρεσβύτατον). Soon after, the character expands on the first quotation with a couple of lines by Hesiod,[6] who is described as "more scientific" (φυσικώτερον) in his account than Parmenides was. According to Plutarch, in light of this new piece of evidence, Eros is proved to be "the firstborn of them all" (πάντων προγενέστατον). Besides, Hesiod's aim (cf. ἵνα) in arguing for this primacy was, as Plutarch himself points out, to make the "generation" (γένεσις) of all things be brought about by Eros. Now, apart from the exegetical unreliableness of the second paraphrase,[7] what is worth scrutinizing here in relation to the quotation of Parmenides is the extent to which Plutarch depends on his models – and, conversely, the possibility for him to have had a direct and autonomous acquaintance with Parmenides' work. Thus, one would also be given the opportunity to appreciate his originality.

There are at least two texts[8] that Plutarch is very likely to have had in mind when composing this passage: Plato's *Symposium*[9] and Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.[10] With the former, Plutarch's elaboration bears some resemblances: 1) Both Plato and Plutarch quote Parmenides together with Hesiod; 2) both of them quote Parmenides in order to prove Eros' chronological primacy; 3)

monianze e frammenti, 2nd ed. (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1967) 161–162; see also A.H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, rev. ed. (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2009) 373. In Plu. *Fac. lun.* 926Fff. this identification occurs again; see H. Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia XII* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957) 84–85 n.*c*, who argues that this passage bears several resemblances with that from the *Amat*., as both of them are somehow dependent on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (984b23ff.: see *infra*); cf. P. Donini, *Plutarco, Il volto della luna* (Napoli: D'Auria, 2011) 279–280 n.126, who would rule out the possibility that Plutarch directly drew upon Aristotle's text.

[5] See H. Martin, "*Amatorius*, 756E–F: Plutarch's citation of Parmenides and Hesiod," *AJPh* 90 (1969) 183–200, 189 ff.

[6] See Hes. *Th.* 116–122.

[7] If one considers the context of Hesiod's lines alluded to by Plutarch, it is rather easy to see that there is next to nothing there that could substantiate Plutarch's paraphrase. In Hesiod's text, Eros is not credited with any absolute primacy in either chronological or causal or even generative terms: see Martin, "*Amatorius* 756E–F," 188. On Plutarch's probable debt to Aristotle in all this, see *infra*.

[8] See Martin, "*Amatorius*, 756E–F," for an accurate analysis of the relationship between these texts.

[9] See Pl. *Smp.* 178b: "Parmenides also says of the origin of Love, 'First of all gods was fashioned Love'" (transl. M.C. Howatson & F.C.C. Sheffield, *Plato: 'The Symposium'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 9. Γένεσις is probably to be taken here as the subject of Parmenides' line, and it is to be considered as the personification of 'becoming'; for λέγειν + an accusative personal object, which is also the subject of the following quotation, see Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides,* 372.

[10] Arist. *Metaph*. 1.4 984b23–30.

both of them manipulate – or, at the very least, misunderstand – Hesiod's lines. However, one cannot help but point out some remarkable differences as well: 1) Plutarch omits Acusilaus, who is quoted, along with Parmenides and Hesiod, by Plato; 2) Plutarch specifies the title of Parmenides' line; 3) Plutarch alters the order between Parmenides and Hesiod – on the face of it, giving priority to the former; 4) Plutarch supplies what he takes to be the subject of the main verb, namely, Aphrodite – in contrast to Plato, who seems to simply neglect the matter; 5) the degree of Eros' primacy, which is inferred from Parmenides and Hesiod's testimonies, proves different: in Plato's text, Phaedrus wants to argue for Eros's absolute primacy, thus turning him into the "oldest" thing of all,[11] whereas in Plutarch's account, Eros' primacy is restricted to Aphrodite's "works." As is evident, Plutarch does not follow Plato's model in a 'mechanical' manner at all; I would rather say that, at some points, he tends to react critically to the Platonic text.

On the other hand, as far as Aristotle is concerned, the following observations seem to be in order. 1) As in Plato and in Plutarch's texts, in Aristotle's too the couple Parmenides-Hesiod can be found (besides, they appear precisely in the same order as they do in Plutarch's text). 2) As in Plato, but unlike Plutarch, the question regarding the subject of μητίσατο is entirely neglected. 3) As in Plutarch, but unlike Plato, any reference to Acusilaus is missing. 4) Unlike both Plutarch and Plato, Aristotle seems to desperately misunderstand the meaning of Parmenides' line, as he takes it to credit Eros with a kind of efficient causality; on the contrary – and regardless of who is to be restored as the subject of μητίσατο – Eros cannot help but be the very *product* of the active force there at stake: hence, he cannot be identified with that same force. This makes it all the more likely that Aristotle depended on Plato in his quotation of Parmenides' line.[12] 5) Like Plutarch, Aristotle applies a sort of causal overinterpretation to Eros, since he turns him into a fully efficient cause. 6) Both Plutarch (756D) and Aristotle[13] quote Empedocles in the same "thematic unity," so to speak.[14] So, with regard to Aristotle's text as well, both similarities and divergences can be detected in Plutarch's elaboration. And,

[11] See Pl. *Smp.* 178c.

[12] Martin, "*Amatorius*, 756E–F," 195.

[13] See Arist. *Metaph.* 1.4 985a2–10.

[14] See Martin, "Plutarch's citation"; Martin, "*Amatorius*, 756E–F," 185–186. It should be considered that even with regard to Empedocles' text Plutarch overinterprets it. At 756D Wilamowitz supplied a καὶ after λέγεσθαι, but as Martin has shown, that addition is superfluous and misleading, given that Plutarch *is* identifying Empedocles' Φιλότης with Eros.

even though there is no piece of evidence which could definitely resolve the hotly debated question of Plutarch's acquaintance with Aristotle's works,[15] the analogies pointed out so far seem to be in favor of Plutarch's direct knowledge of Aristotle's passage discussed above.

To conclude, some reasonable consequences can be drawn from the previous examination. First, Plutarch's quotation of Parmenides proves surprisingly complete – unlike the models he probably drew upon. Plutarch is the first to clarify the very logical framework of the line he quotes, thus filling it with a proper subject. Since an incomplete quotation would have confused the reader due to its obscurity, Plutarch might have thought it better to tackle this difficulty by applying a widespread Middle-Platonic exegetical principle to it – namely, *ex eo quod scriptum sit ad id quod non sit scriptum pervenire* ("to proceed by inference from what is written to what is not written").[16] However, in order not to draw an arbitrary inference, Middle Platonists would rely on another exegetical principle: an obscure passage in a writing by an author should be clarified and explained on the basis of other passages from the writings of that very author.[17] In light of all this, Plutarch's strategy appears far more comprehensible. In face of the omission of the subject in the line he meant to quote, he must have scanned some text of Parmenides at his disposal; for he required an internal piece of information which could enable him to properly fill in the logical gap of DK 28 B13. As mere speculation, we might suppose that he took DK 28 B12 (=LM 19 D14b) as an adequate source for his purpose.

2. *Parmenides as a poet*

There are two passages of text where Plutarch makes reference to Parmenides as a poet: *De audiendis poetis* 16C–D (= LM 19 R2a) and *De recta ratione audiendi* 45B–C (=LM 19 R2b).[18] In the first, Parmenides' poem is mentioned as an

[15] See F.H. Sandbach, "Plutarch and Aristotle," *ICS* 7 (1982) 207–232; P. Donini, "Plutarco e Aristotele," in I. Gallo (ed.), *La biblioteca di Plutarco* (Napoli: D'Auria, 2004) 255–273.

[16] See Cic. *Inv.* 2.152 and Syrian. *in Metaph.* 11.11; cf. P. Donini, "Testi e commenti, manuali e insegnamento: la forma sistematica e i metodi della filosofia in età postellenistica," in M. Bonazzi (ed.), *Pierluigi Donini, Commentary and Tradition* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011) 267–268.

[17] Procl. *Theol.Plat.* 1.2 10.1–4. See F. Ferrari, "La letteratura filosofica di carattere esegetico in Plutarco," *Orpheus* 22 (2001) 77–108 and J. Mansfeld, *Prolegomena. Questions to be settled before the study of an author, or a text* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 148–176.

[18] On *Pyth.* 402F I will not elaborate here, as no clear comment is to be found there on Parmenides' poetry.

example of "prose" (λόγοι)[19] which is enriched by the "borrowing" (κιχράμενοι) of poetic elements, "in order to avoid plodding along in prose."[20] According to Plutarch, Parmenides gave "metre" (μέτρον) and a "lofty style" (ὄγκον) to his arguments simply to ennoble them and to put them on the "chariot" (ὄχημα) of poetry.[21] Besides, Empedocles' verses, Nicander's *Theriakà* and Theognis' maxims are charged with the same criticism. In other words, in these cases the poetic form, its remarkable "lofty style" (ὄγκον) and the versification, all come across as exterior elements, which are not efficaciously in tune with the content.[22] Nevertheless, despite what I have said so far, Plutarch's assessment on Parmenides' truth-value should be taken as undoubtedly positive. It is pedagogy that requires a balanced mixture of both what is pleasant but potentially deceptive, and what is true but presumably unattractive. Sure enough, poetry should represent such a mixture, if it is to be really educational.[23] So, when it comes to Parmenides, it is precisely because he is not really a poet that he can, in Plutarch's eyes, legitimately aspire to fully be a philosopher; but, because of his failing to be somehow attractive and even deceptive (as poets cannot help but be to some degree), he is unlikely to spark the interest of students. As a consequence, the lack of what poetry would peculiarly entail ends up depriving Parmenides of the persuasiveness of poetry, but this very characteristic grants him the possession of purely philosophical truth.

It is now time to scrutinize a rather difficult problem concerning Plutarch's dependence on Aristotle when it comes to his criticism of Parmenides' poetry. This hypothesis was first defended by Hermann Diels,[24] and later on by Augusto Rostagni,[25] Ernesto Valgiglio,[26] and Mario Untersteiner (in his edition of Parmenides),[27] mainly in light of a passage from Diogenes Laertius[28] and

[19] See E. Valgiglio, *Plutarco, De audiendis poetis* (Torino: Loescher, 1973) 91 on the meaning of this term.

[20] Transl. F.C. Babbitt, *Plutarch's Moralia I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927) 83–85.

[21] Cf. Strab. 1.18.23 and Plu. *Pyth.* 406E. According to Untersteiner, *Parmenide*, 44, the source of these two passages is Peripatetic; nonetheless, it should be pointed out that this image first occurs in Pindar, fr. 124a Snell, as Valgiglio, *Plutarco*, 91 correctly suggests.

[22] An analogous negative judgment on Parmenides as a poet is to be found in *De recta ratione audiendi* 45B–C.

[23] Cf. *De audiendis poetis* 15E–F. See Valgiglio, *Plutarco*, *De audiendis*, xv–xx.

[24] H. Diels, *Parmenides Lehrgedicht. Griechisch und deutsch* (Berlin: Reimer) 5–7.

[25] A. Rostagni, *Scritti minori, I: Aesthetica* (Torino: Bottega D'Erasmo, 1955) 308–309, who would trace Plutarch's arguments back to the *De poetis*.

[26] Valgiglio, *Plutarco*, *De audiendis*, 90–91.

[27] Untersteiner, *Parmenide*, 43 n. to DK 28 A15, who alludes to the testimony DK 21 A26 (= LM 8 R28) of Xenophanes; on this text, cf. M. Untersteiner, *Senofane, Testimonianze e frammenti* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1956) 30–32.

[28] See D.L. 8.2.57–58 = *De poetis*, fr. 1 Ross.

of another from Aristotle's *Poetics*.[29] Now, these texts, if accurately read, first turn out to say next to nothing about Parmenides: rather, it is Empedocles who happens to be considered in both of them. What's more, the account provided by them appears to be not coherent at all. In Diogenes' report, Empedocles is described as a skilled follower of Homer (Ὁμηρικός).[30] Rather differently, in the passage from Aristotle's *Poetics* alluded to by the scholars, Empedocles is said not to be a poet at all, should poetry be considered as "the imitation of people acting."[31] As a consequence, Empedocles and Homer end up sharing nothing but the metre – unlike, or rather contrary to, what Diogenes maintains. Hence, Empedocles is a physiologist, not a poet. But even if these two texts could be shown to be somehow coherent, the absence of any reference to Parmenides from those passages seems undisputable. Nonetheless, according to Hershbell, even though Aristotle does not mention Parmenides, his negative assessment on Empedocles' versification can be extended to cover Parmenides' as well.[32] Actually, this is not unlikely. Nevertheless, there are no compelling pieces of evidence which could definitely demonstrate Plutarch's dependence on Aristotle's passage from the *Poetics* or the *De poëtis* with regard to Parmenides.

Be all that as it may, chronologically speaking, the first passage where a negative assessment on Parmenides' poetry is provided, is represented by Cicero.[33] The mention of Parmenides there – along with that of Xenophanes – occurs in a speech delivered by Cicero himself in response to Lucullus' criticism of Academic skepticism; and, as two scholars have convincingly argued,[34] the New Academy defended by Cicero tended to hold an active engagement with the so-called Presocratics; so, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the criticism of Parmenides and Xenophanes' poetry was born in that context, and that it was later retrieved by Cicero. So, Plutarch (or his source) might have combined the Aristotelian condemnation of Empedocles with that (coming from elsewhere) of the Eleatics – and, additionally, with the criticism

[29] See Arist. *Po*. 1 1447a15–20.

[30] Nonetheless, Valgiglio, *Plutarco*, *De audiendis*, 90 maintains that the term is employed in the same sense with which it occurs in the *Poetics*; in this he follows Rostagni, *Scritti minori*, 272.

[31] See Arist. *Po*. 2 1448a1–5.

[32] See J.P. Hershbell, "Plutarch and Parmenides," *GRBS* 13 (1972) 193–208, 196; this idea is defended also by Valgiglio, *Plutarco*, *De audiendis*, 91.

[33] See Cic. *ac*. 2.23.

[34] See C. Brittain & J. Palmer, "The New Academy's Appeals to the Presocratics," *Phronesis* 46 (2001) 38–72, esp. 60–63.

of the other poets quoted above, which presumably belonged to an erudite tradition.[35]

Finally, as far as Plutarch's direct acquaintance with Parmenides' poem is concerned, I do not consider it cautious to take a position on the basis of the passages discussed so far. Sure enough, the authors who join Parmenides in the quotations above are frequently and extensively alluded to and dealt with by Plutarch in other writings,[36] so it would be reasonable to assume he was well acquainted with their works; nevertheless, nothing in those texts can definitely rule out the possibility that Plutarch relied on just handbooks or anthologies for his knowledge of Parmenides. I will come back to this issue at the very end of the paper.

3. *Parmenides as a legislator*

At the very end of the *Adversus Colotem*, Plutarch sets out to argue for the political engagement of the philosophers attacked by the Epicurean Colotes.[37] According to Plutarch, on the contrary, the charge of lack of political commitment should fall back onto Colotes himself (along with all of the Epicureans).[38] In those pages, Parmenides too is portrayed as a politician who was heavily committed to the public life of his *polis* Elea. To be precise, Parmenides is the one who "ordered (διεκόσμησε) his country with excellent laws, so that every year the citizens used to make the magistrates swear that they would have respected Parmenides' laws."[39] Before I compare this piece of biographical information to others, it is worth discussing the occurrence of the verb διεκόσμησε ("ordered"). As a matter of fact, a cognate noun (διάκοσμος, "ordering") happens to be used by Plutarch in order to describe Parmenides'

[35] It is perhaps interesting to consider that Proclus' negative assessment of Parmenides' poetic expertise (*in Prm.* 665.17 = DK 28 A8 = LM 19 R4) is put in rather the same terms as Plutarch's; and, what's more, Proclus too refers to Parmenides as Plato's forerunner as far as his dualistic philosophy is concerned.

[36] This argument is exploited by Hershbell, "Plutarch"; *contra*, A. Fairbanks, "On Plutarch's quotations from the Early Greek Philosophers," *TAPhA* 28 (1897) 75–87, 82.

[37] See *Adv. Col.* 1126A–1127E.

[38] Political commitment was taken to be a crucial element in the Academic and Platonic tradition: see M. Isnardi Parente, *Studi sull'Accademia platonica antica* (Firenze: Olschki, 1979) 235–250.

[39] There is a fluctuation in the rendering of τὰς ἀρχὰς καθ' ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτὸν ἐξορκοῦν τοὺς πολίτας: see Untersteiner, *Parmenide*, 43, who takes the magistrates to be the subject of ἐξορκοῦν (he alludes to Plu. *Sol.* 25 for an analogous oath, but there *the magistrates* are said to swear); and B. Einarson & P.H. De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967) 303, who consider τοὺς πολίτας as the subject of ἐξορκοῦν.

theoretical reconstruction, or rather settlement, of the whole reality (and, besides, this is a Parmenidean word).[40] Now, it is impossible to trace the political meaning of διάκοσμος back to Parmenides' poem; in my opinion, Plutarch might well have been the first to use two cognate terms precisely in order to convey the idea of a sort of continuity – if not an interrelation – between Parmenides' philosophical reflection, along with its ontological and epistemological implications, and his political activity. If this is a deliberate echoing on Plutarch's part, one could even venture to assume the existence of a kind of correspondence, in his eyes, between the different onto-epistemological levels of reality and the social classes of Elea's society. In particular, the gap which separates the philosopher's full, stable and noble possession of the truth and the cognitively poor abilities of the laymen might have seemed to Plutarch to be mirrored into Parmenides' political organization.

It is now time to consider some *loci paralleli* and the problem of Plutarch's sources. Passages from Diogenes Laertius and Strabo each describe Parmenides' activity as a legislator. Diogenes' testimony appears rather generic, but it provides us with an interesting piece of information about his source – namely, Speusippus' *On philosophers*.[41] The importance of this element will be clear soon. Strabo's text is more detailed,[42] but according to some scholars it might be polemical.[43] In any case, Elea's εὐνομία is at stake there, and the author is likely to express his own position on the matter (cf. δοκεῖ δέ μοι): if Elea had been well-ruled by Parmenides thanks to his laws, and also by his pupil Zeno, this fact was not to be thought of as anything new in Elea's history (cf. καὶ ἔτι πρότερον). Hence, Parmenides' role ends up being significantly reduced by Strabo – rather contrary to what Plutarch does. Moreover, nothing is said of Strabo's source. So, of the three testimonies at our disposal, only Diogenes specifies the work, and even the author, he draws upon. At this point, a reasonable, though not demonstrable, proposal might be put forward. One could take Plutarch too to depend on Speusippus – and, in this very regard, it should be pointed out that Plutarch's knowledge of both Xenocrates and Speusippus is likely to have been not superficial at all. As for Strabo, he may have

[40] See Plu. *Adv. Col.* 1114B, where διάκοσμον echoes DK 28 B8.60, as noted by Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 231 note *b*.

[41] See D.L. 9.23.

[42] See Strab. 6.1.1.

[43] R. Westman, *Plutarch gegen Kolotes* (Helsinki: Societas Philosophica, 1955) 235; Hershbell, "Plutarch," 193–194 is more cautious on this matter.

relied on either Timaeus from Tauromenium, as Burnet seems to suppose,[44] or Antiochus from Syracuse, as Untersteiner maintained.[45] Even in this case, however, the matter seems impossible to decide once and for all.

4. *Parmenides as a dualist*

Philosophically speaking, the most outstanding and elaborated account of Parmenides' philosophy is provided by Plutarch in the *Adversus Colotem*. As the title itself suggests, this is a polemical treatise, where the author sets out to reply to an analogously polemical writing by the Epicurean Colotes.[46] The philosophers criticized by the latter included Parmenides.[47] As Margherita Isnardi Parente has correctly pointed out,[48] in every philosophy other than Epicureanism Colotes had detected a recursive characteristic, which ended up turning that philosophy into a theory impossible to put into practice – a theory in accordance with which it was impossible even to live.[49] This philosophical characteristic reveals, for Colotes, the lack of an adequate theoretical elaboration of the perceptual sphere (or with a negative evaluation of it). In other words, to refute or to depreciate senses and perceptions would inevitably result, in Colotes' opinion, in the impossibility of living one's everyday life. As is evident, the peculiarity of Colotes' criticism of the other philosophers is its focus on the practical outcomes of each theoretical option considered.[50]

[44] J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (London: A & C Black, 1920) 141 n.10: "We can hardly doubt that this too comes from Timaios," after quoting Diogenes, Plutarch and Strabo's passages; but it is unclear whom "too" actually refers to; see Hershbell, "Plutarch," 195 n.11. Untersteiner, *Parmenide*, 40 takes Burnet to mean that both Strabo and Plutarch depend on Timaeus: I think he is right.

[45] See Untersteiner, "Parmenide", 40; Antiochus is mentioned immediately after our passage (cf. φησὶ δ' Ἀντίοχος).

[46] On Plutarch's relationship with Epicureanism, see E. Kechagia, "Plutarch and Epicureanism," in M. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch* (Chichester: Wiley, 2013) 104–120. For an analysis of the treatise and of Colotes' philosophy, see Westman, *Plutarch gegen Kolotes*; E. Kechagia, *Plutarch against Colotes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011); A. Corti, *L'*Adversus Colotem *di Plutarco* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014).

[47] On Parmenides' reception among the Epicureans, see C. Vassallo, "Parmenides and the 'First God': doxographical strategies in Philodemus' *On Piety*," in *Hyperboreus* 22 (2016) 29–57, and Westman, *Plutarch gegen Kolotes*, 55.

[48] M. Isnardi Parente, "Il Parmenide di Plutarco," *PP* 43 (1988) 225–226; see also M. Isnardi Parente, "Plutarco contro Colote," in I. Gallo (ed.), *Aspetti dello Stoicismo e dell'Epicureismo in Plutarco* (Ferrara: Giornale Filologico Ferrarese, 1988) 65–88.

[49] The title of his treatise was:Ὅτι κατὰ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων φιλοσόφων δόγματα οὐδὲ ζῆν ἔστιν; as Kechagia, *Plutarch*, 40 correctly observes, the right translation should be "On the fact that according to the doctrines of the other philosophers it is impossible *even* to live": that is to say, it is impossible *even* to live – let alone to live *well*.

[50] Actually, a depreciation of the senses was already imputed to Parmenides by Aristotle, who emphasized the merely theoretical perspective of Parmenides' account: for, in practical terms, his theory would boil down to a

The first philosopher to be refuted in Colotes' book was Democritus. From Plutarch we know that the second was Parmenides; nevertheless, in Plutarch's defence, there is an inversion in the sequence: Democritus' apology is soon after followed by that of Empedocles, which is followed in turn by that of Parmenides. The reason for this modification is declared by Plutarch himself: Colotes' criticism of Empedocles happens to be particularly coherent with that of Democritus.[51] As a matter of fact, it is the very content of Colotes' objections that requires a continuous defence of both Democritus and Empedocles. But this is not the whole story: there is also another inversion in the sequence of the defended philosophers. Soon after the defence of Parmenides,[52] Plutarch deals with Plato, and not with Socrates, as the order of Colotes' book would have required him to do.

Now, if the sequence thus determined (Parmenides, Plato, Socrates, Arcesilaus) is to be given any particular significance, one might venture to maintain – and more than one scholar has actually done so – that Plutarch's aim is to provide a sort of genealogy of Platonism.[53] Were this to be the case, Parmenides would be proved to be the very founder of this philosophical tradition, whereas Plato would turn out to be his most brilliant heir. What's more, even the sceptical Arcesilaus would turn out to play a role in this reshaped history of the Platonic and Academic philosophy.[54] Plutarch would, on this reading, be suggesting a highly inclusive and philosophically "generous" conception of Platonism, which could comprehend even Academic scepticism. Indeed, later in the treatise,[55] Plutarch defends Arcesilaus' ideological appropriation of some earlier philosophers (Socrates, Plato, *Parmenides* and Heraclitus)[56] precisely

form of madness; see Arist. *GC* 1.8 325a2–23 (= LM 19 R44) and *Ph*. 8.3 253a32–b2 (= LM 19 R45). There are some analogies between the passage mentioned above and Colotes' criticism; but it would be incautious to argue for a direct dependance of Colotes on Aristotle.

[51] See Plu. *Adv. Col.* 1113E–F.

[52] See Plu. *Adv. Col.* 1114F.

[53] See M. Bonazzi, "Parmenide e Platone (e Aristotele) nel *Contro Colote* di Plutarco," *Aitia* 3 (2013): https://journals.openedition.org/aitia/591.

[54] On this highly inclusive approach, see P. Donini, "Platone e Aristotele nella tradizione pitagorica secondo Plutarco", in Bonazzi (ed.), *Pierluigi Donini, Commentary and Tradition*, 359–373; Donini, "L'eredità accademica"; J. Opsomer, "The Place of Plutarch in the History of Platonism," in P. Volpe Cacciatore & F. Ferrari (eds.), *Plutarco e la cultura della sua età* (Napoli: M. D'Auria, 2007) 281–309; more on this point later.

[55] See Plu. *Adv. Col.* 1121F–1122A.

[56] On the identity of the "sophists" mentioned by Plutarch as his accusers, see P. Donini, "L'eredità accademica e i fondamenti del platonismo in Plutarco," in Bonazzi (ed.), *Pierluigi Donini, Commentary and tradition*, 397 n.90, who reviews the *status quaestionis* and identifies them Stoics. On the Presocratics, see Brittain & Palmer, "The New Academy's," 45–50 and 60–63.

because that testifies to the antiquity (cf. ἄνωθεν) of the "Academic style of thought" (τὸν Ἀκαδημαϊκὸν λόγον).[57]

But what are the philosophical assumptions that Parmenides handed down to Plato? To answer to this question, a detailed analysis of Plutarch's text is required. From a theoretical point of view, Colotes would impute to Parmenides the acceptance of a rigorous monism: according to the latter, "everything is one" (τὸ δὲ πᾶν ἕν).[58] Following a doxographical simplification to be found already in the fourth century BC,[59] and which is likely to have been accepted in the context of the sceptical Academy as well,[60] Colotes reduces Parmenides' theoretically complex elaboration to a mere and simple slogan: "everything is one"; and this perspective implies, in Colotes' eyes, the impossibility of living (however, Plutarch thinks the charge of monism should actually fall back onto Epicureanism).[61] So, monism is a theoretical mistake, and, at least on this point, both Colotes and Plutarch seem in agreement – even though significant differences arise between the two when it comes to establishing the *positive* theory with which to side. On the contrary, dualism is a philosophically rich and promising perspective – and its very originator was, according to Plutarch, Parmenides himself, soon after followed by Plato. Hence, the Eleatic should

[57] On the importance of this linguistic choice – λόγος instead of, e.g., δόγμα– see Donini, "L'eredità accademica," 397–398. As for ἄνωθεν, a different and fascinating reading of this adverb is provided by M. Bonazzi, "Plutarch on the Difference between Academics and Pyrrhonists," *OSAPh* 43 (2012) 271–298, 286, who takes it to allude to the *transcendent* dimension of the intelligible.

[58] See Plu. *Adv. Col*. 1113F.

[59] Already Plato, Aristotle and Isocrates would take Parmenides as arguing for a sort of monism: see the discussion by Untersteiner, *Parmenide*, xxxiv–l. This is not to say that Colotes had a superficial knowledge of Parmenides' thought: see Westman, *Plutarch gegen Kolotes*, 53 and 234.

[60] What makes me think so is the following reason: if Colotes' book was mainly addressed against Arcesilaus, and the other philosophers were criticized precisely because they happened to be referred to by Arcesilaus, then Colotes' Parmenides is very likely to be a caricature of Arcesilaus'. But, if the reason why the Academic philosopher mentioned Parmenides as an ally had depended exclusively on the latter's denial of reliability to senses, it would have been bizarre for Colotes not to mock that philosophical tenet but the alleged monism; and that would have been all the more odd in light of the emphasis Colotes himself generally lays on the refutation of sense perception when it comes to the other philosophers attacked in his book. Moreover, Seneca also alludes to Parmenides in the context of a sharp criticism against any kind of scepticism (*Ep*. 88.43–46). According to Seneca, Parmenides' philosophy consisted in the unity of reality (*nihil est praeter unum*) and in the denial of the existence of the perceptible objects (*ex his quae videntur nihil esse*). All this makes it highly likely that in the broad picture of scepticism Parmenides was taken to be a monist who would deny real being to the sensible objects.

[61] The reasons for arguing for an Epicurean monism are the following: 1) the Epicureans conceived of being as an organic and unitarian totality – like a big picture for a subsequent subdivision; 2) one of the two articulations of that unitarian reality, the void, is "really nothing," so that even the second level of the Epicurean ontology turns out to be a *de facto* unity. On the reliability of Plutarch's Epicurean accounts, see G. Roskam, "Plutarch as a source for Epicurean philosophy: another aspect of his *Nachleben*," *Ploutarchos* 4 (2006/2007) 67–81.

not be charged with monism,[62] since he is highly likely to be the very founder of a rigorous philosophical dualism.[63] In order to prove the arbitrariness of the slogan "everything is one", Plutarch maintains that Parmenides dealt with sensible objects as well. As a consequence, he cannot be described as having simply and absolutely abolished their existence: "But Parmenides for one has abolished neither 'fire' nor 'water',[64] neither 'a precipice' nor 'cities lying in Europe and Asia' in Colotes' words."[65] Actually, Parmenides "has much to say about earth, heaven, sun, moon,[66] and stars, and has recounted the genesis of man".[67] Hence, in Plutarch's opinion, it is not a form of monism that characterizes Parmenides' thought, since he has not simply "unhooked" the multiplicity of the sensible things from being. On the contrary, from Parmenides' verses – at least as Plutarch reads them – a complete διάκοσμος emerges: "he has actually made a cosmic order" (ὅς γε καὶ διάκοσμον πεποίηται).[68]

I have mentioned Plutarch's *reading* of Parmenides' poem because – as will become evident soon – what Plutarch traces back to Parmenides is based on the very *reading* of the lines (and the testimonies) he could rely on; and however disputable this interpretation might appear, the importance that the very words of a virtual ancestor (like Parmenides) might have had to Plutarch, should not be doubted.[69] In this sense, the echoing of specific terms and expressions which originally belonged to Parmenides' poem is revealing. The

[62] We know from Simplicius (*in Ph*. 115.14–116.1 = DK 19 A28) that Eudemus already denied Parmenides' monism. But see also Simp. *in Ph*. 115.11–14 (= LM 19 R27) for a different report.

[63] According to Corti, *L'Adversus Colotem*, 144–148 this onto-epistemological dualism – as Plutarch sees it – marks a real turning point in pre-Platonic philosophy; it is indeed dualism that marks the difference between Democritus and Empedocles on the one hand, and Parmenides on the other.

[64] Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 167 take these two words to be a reference to Parmenides' elements and to their products: fire is one of the two principles of the sensibles (cf. DK 28 A24, A25, A35), whereas water is the product of fire and earth (cf. DK 28 A35).

[65] Plu. *Adv. Col*. 1114B, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 231.

[66] Plutarch hands down two fragments on the moon: DK 28 B14 and B15 (= LM 19 D27 and D28). DK 28 B14 (quoted in Plu. *Adv. Col*. 1116A) appears to be rather generically exploited by Plutarch. The derivation of the moon's light from that of the sun boils down to a sign of a mere lack of identity between the two heavenly bodies. As a consequence, this non-identity is meant to show that the negation of identity does not entail a negation of being. DK 28 B15, however, is taken in Plu. *Aet. Gr.* 282B to imply the subordination of the moon to the sun in axiological terms (see Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, 374), and in *Fac. lun*. 929A the Academic character Lucius provides a reading of the verse whereby the condition of "minority" of the moon is demonstrated. This condition is then showed to be in desperate contrast with the perfect and incorruptible nature that Aristotle would have credited the moon with as a divine entity.

[67] Plu. *Adv. Col*. 1114C, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 231.

[68] Plu. *Adv. Col*. 1114C, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 231.

[69] Besides, the lack of an accurate and philologically correct approach to texts is what Plutarch imputes to Colotes: see *Suav.* 1086D.

descriptions of the heavenly bodies and of the generation of man quoted above correspond to extant Parmenidean fragments or testimonies: 1) Plutarch's remark that Parmenides "has much to say about earth, heaven, sun, moon, and stars" may be compared with DK 28 B11 and B10 (= LM 19 D11 and D12); 2) the recounting of "the genesis of man" alludes to what is dealt with abundantly in DK 28 A1, A51–54, B17–18 and DK 28 A13 (= LM 19 D40–49 collectively); and 3) the claim that Parmenides "has actually made a cosmic order" recalls DK 28 B8.59 (= LM 19 D8.65).

As far as the very constitution of the phenomenological dimension is concerned, Plutarch's Parmenides would maintain that the generation of "what appears" depends on the different "mixing"[70] of two elements, viz. "what is bright" and "what is obscure": "and by blending as elements the light and the dark [he] produces out of them and by their operation the whole world of sense".[71] As is evident, this reading of Parmenides' cosmology results from a certain interpretation of the last lines of fragment DK 28 B8 (= LM 19 D8), especially 8.49–58.[72]

That is how Parmenides could theoretically deal with a conspicuous number of physical issues. So, here Plutarch reads the so-called "second part" of the poem as if it contained a cosmological proposal shared by Parmenides himself – exactly as happens in the *De animae procreatione in Timaeo*: "[…] it is for the sum of things rational life and concord and reason guiding necessity that has been tempered with persuasion and which by most people is called destiny, by Empedocles love together with strife, […] by Parmenides light and darkness."[73] Here the pair of opposites coming from Parmenides' poem is considered as an earlier example of what Plato would later call "necessity" (*Ti.* 48a1). Hence, in this case there isn't any high-level form of dualism at stake, but "the obscure" and "the bright" are the intrinsically *phenomenal* principles of (Plutarch's) Parmenides' own cosmology.[74] So, according to Plutarch, Par-

[70] The term comes from DK 28 B12 (= LM 19 D14b).

[71] Plu. *Adv. Col.* 1114B, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 231. According to Isnardi Parente, "Il Parmenide," 232 (also 235), Plutarch took these two elements as "projections," on the phenomenal level, of the two Academic principles of the One and the Dyad, which were identified by Plutarch with "le due forme noetiche dell'*eon* e dell'*ouk eon*." But, as J.A. Palmer, *Plato's Reception of Parmenides* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 86 n.49, correctly points out, there is not even a trace in Plutarch's text of this phenomenal projection of being and not-being, taken as principles.

[72] Cf. also DK 28 B9 (= LM 19 D13).

[73] Plu. *An. procr.* 1026B, transl. H. Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia XIII, Part 1*, 253–255.

[74] See Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia XIII, Part 1*, 254–255 n.*b*. It should be noted that also Arist. *Metaph.* 1.5 986b31–34, would consider the second part of Parmenides' poem as expressing the author's own cosmology. It is

menides was a student of nature in all its complexity; he didn't simply do away with the sensible multiplicity, as he proved really and deeply interested in it.[75] He was, thus, both a physiologist and a metaphysical philosopher, since his interests covered both the ultimate structure of reality – along with its ontologically fundamental dimensions – and the empirical phenomena.[76]

It is now time to consider the theoretical framework of Parmenides' alleged onto-epistemological dualism in all its complexity. As a result of the inversions in the order of the philosophers defended, Parmenides is followed soon after by Plato: this is likely to convey the idea of their philosophical continuity.[77] And, as I have already said, in the end Parmenides turns out to be virtually tied up not only with Plato, but also with Socrates and Arcesilaus. For Parmenides has been made the originator of the dualistic tradition that was to be inherited (and variously adapted) by precisely Plato, Socrates and even Arcesilaus – although Plato is said to have played a far more crucial role in order to better determine the nature of the intelligible. But what does this dualism consist in? According to Plutarch, Parmenides should be taken as the "father" of the polarization of *physis* into what is intelligible and what is opinable;[78] this is the very heart of his dualism: "But […] even before Plato and Socrates he saw that nature has in it something that we apprehend by opinion, and again something that we apprehend by the intellect (ἔχει τι δοξαστὸν ἡ φύσις, ἔχει δὲ καὶ νοητόν)".[79] As a consequence, the continuity between him and Plato entails *ipso facto* a modest innovation on the part of the latter, who thus turns out to have done nothing but highlight, by means of the Forms, the (already known) difference between the intelligible and the sensible.[80] What is to be observed here – as it is likely to be essential for grasping the very meaning of the sequence Parmenides-Plato-Socrates-Arcesilaus – is that Plutarch

impossible to demonstrate a direct dependence of Plutarch on this Aristotelian passage; he might have simply read a piece of Peripatetic doxography displaying the same Aristotelian interpretation.

[75] On the possibility that Parmenides was really interested in nature and in all its phenomena, see N.-L. Cordero, "Aristote, créateur du Parménide *dikranos* que nous héritons aujourd'hui," *Anais de filosofia clássica* 10 (2016) 1–25; L. Rossetti, "Mondo vero e mondo falso in Parmenide," in M. Pulpito & P. Spangenberg (eds.), *ὁδοὶ νοῆσαι, Ways to Think: Essays in honour of Néstor-Luis Cordero* (Bologna: Diogene, 2018) 143–153.

[76] This aspect has been properly emphasized by Isnardi Parente, "Il Parmenide," 227; see also Bonazzi, "Parmenide e Platone," § 6.

[77] Bonazzi, "Parmenide e Platone," § 4.

[78] This same view was later held by Proclus and Simplicius: see Procl. *in Ti.* 1.344.28–345.14 (= LM 19 R14), Simpl. *in Ph.* 39.10–12 (= LM 19 R17).

[79] Plu. *Adv. Col.* 1114C, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 231.

[80] In a certain sense, Plutarch portrays Plato as the culmination of a glorious and authoritative philosophical tradition: cf. Bonazzi, "Parmenide e Platone," § 11.

himself really agrees with this dualistic assumption regarding the structure of nature; it is sufficient to read this statement from the *Generation of the soul in the Timaeus*: "for nature, possessing intellectuality, possessed the opiniative faculty also" (τὸ γὰρ νοερὸν ἡ φύσις ἔχουσα καὶ τὸ δοξαστικὸν εἶχεν).[81]

Now, generically speaking, with regard to the historiographical reliability of Plutarch's account of Parmenides' dualism, it is hardly possible to ignore that the conceptual opposition between what is δοξαστόν ("opinable") and what is νοητόν ("intelligible") is eminently Platonic, not Parmenidean. If one thinks e.g. of the similitude of the Divided Line from Plato's *Republic*, the similarity with Plutarch's piece of interpretation will appear undeniable.[82] The terms δοξαστόν ("opinable") and νοητόν ("intelligible") themselves cannot be traced back to Parmenides' poem. But it is precisely this Platonic overtone which grants Plutarch's Parmenides a high degree of originality and peculiarity.[83] So, his being a Platonic philosopher results in the acceptance of a rigorous onto-epistemological dualism, which turns him into the founder of the noblest and truest philosophical tradition. And in all this, as I have mentioned, one should not forget that the retrospective projection of a highly dualistic reading of Plato's philosophy onto Parmenides' thought is not disinterested: it is Plutarch himself who, as a Platonic philosopher, ends up strengthening his own position in light of this authoritative philosophical genealogy.

Let's now examine the descriptions of the δοξαστόν ("opinable") and the νοητόν ("intelligible") in more detail, starting with the former: "what belongs to the world of opinion is inconstant and passes through a wide range of accidents and changes, since for sensation it grows and decays and differs for different persons and is not, even for the same person, always the same."[84] I find it useful to consider the sources and the "ancestry," so to speak, of the terms and expressions employed in this description, as this is likely to shed light on Plutarch's reading of Parmenides' ontology – particularly of the sensible realm. As will soon become evident, Plutarch refers to Parmenides' poem with a fully Platonic terminology, and he himself frequently exploits this very terminology with regard to his own ontology. As a consequence, he ends up unifying

[81] Plu. *An. procr.* 1024A, transl. H. Cherniss, *Plutarch's Moralia XIII, Part 1*, 229. See also F. Ferrari, "La teoria delle idee in Plutarco," *Elenchos* 17 (1996) 121–142 for a deeper discussion of this issue.

[82] See Isnardi Parente, "Il Parmenide," 231.

[83] See Westman, *Plutarch gegen Kolotes*, 235.

[84] Plu. *Adv. Col.* 1114C, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 231.

the philosophical tradition starting with Parmenides even in merely linguistic terms. 1) ἀβέβαιον ("unstable") is presumably inspired by Plato, as it does not occur in what remains of Parmenides' poem; in the *Timaeus* (49e), rather, we are told by Timaeus that the elements should not be credited with some sort of "stability," for a full ontological "stability" is what the sensible desperately lacks. Moreover, this adjective is employed by Plutarch himself in other passages to describe the ontological condition typical of the sensible.[85] 2) When it comes to πλανητόν ("erratic"), it can be easily traced back to Plato. In the *Republic*, when Socrates tries to identify the ontological realm corresponding to what is "opinable," he takes that to be "what wanders in the middle."[86] What's more, it should be noted that, in other passages, Plutarch himself exploits this very term to describe the sensible realm.[87] 3) That the δοξαστόν ("opinable") undergoes both πάθη ("affections") and μεταβολαί ("transformations") can again be drawn from Plato's dialogues; according to the *Statesman*, for example, this is an outcome that directly depends on the participation in the body.[88] But – what is most relevant – Plutarch himself exploits this very pair of terms to describe what he takes to be the δοξαστόν ("opinable").[89] 4) When it comes to φθίνειν ("diminish") καὶ αὔξεσθαι ("grow"), in the *Symposium* these verbs are said to be intrinsically inappropriate to the Forms;[90] on the contrary, they represent a sort of distinguishing feature of the sensible dimension. 5) Finally, that the δοξαστόν ("opinable") appears to vary, as far as its properties are concerned, from one subject to another, and even to the same subject at different times, is easily inferable from Plato's *Theaetetus*.[91]

As this analysis has shown, Plutarch's description of Parmenides' δοξαστόν ("opinable") is highly reminiscent of Plato's texts. Now, in my opinion, this is likely to depend on the impossibility of Plutarch drawing directly upon Parmenides' own words in order to substantiate his platonizing reading of the perceptible dimension. The reasons for this impossibility might be, at the very least, two: either he did not have great familiarity with that "part" of the poem, or he simply recognized that there was nothing in it, not even from a linguistic point of view, that could legitimize such a highly Platonic reading of it.

[85] E.g. Plu. *Suav.* 1090B, 1091A, 1092D.
[86] See Pl. *R.* 479d7–9.
[87] See Plu. *Quaest. Conviv.* 718D, 719E, and also *An. procr.* 1024A.
[88] See Pl. *Plt.* 269d7–e2.
[89] See Plu. *An. procr.* 1015E and *Adv. Col.* 1115E.
[90] See Pl. *Smp.* 211a.
[91] See esp. Pl. *Tht.* 154a6–8.

Rather differently, the description of the νοητόν ("intelligible") is characterized by different textual reminiscences – sure enough, Parmenides' poem turns out to be the primary source in this case: "what belongs to the world of the intellect is another kind of thing, for it is 'entire, unmoving, and unborn' to quote his own words, and is like itself and enduring in what it is."[92] The expressions ὅμοιον ἑαυτῷ ("like itself") and μόνιμον ἐν τῷ εἶναι ("enduring in what it is") derive (as does the verse quoted, DK 28 B8.4 [= LM 19 D8.9]: [ἔστι γὰρ][93] οὐλομελές τε καὶ ἀτρεμὲς ἠδ' ἀγένητον)[94] directly from Parmenides: ὅμοιον ἑαυτῷ recalls DK 28 B8.22 (= LM 19 D8.27), while μόνιμον ἐν τῷ εἶναι is taken from the same fragment, as B8.29–30 demonstrate.

So, Plutarch is confident to have extensively demonstrated that Parmenides never meant to banish perceptual multiplicity from the realm of being; on the contrary, he set out to order reality and to put all of its pieces in their right place, without neglecting or doing away with any of them: "Parmenides however abolishes neither the one world nor the other. He gives each its due (ἑκατέρᾳ δ' ἀποδιδοὺς τὸ προσῆκον)."[95] On this very basis, Plutarch identifies Parmenides' original distinction between the "way that is" and the (typically human) confusion of being and non-being with the (typically Platonic) "theory of the two worlds."[96] Thus, the ἐόν ("what is") comes to coincide with the νοητόν ("intelligible"), whereas the mixture of being and non-being, which is peculiar to the "double-headed mortals" (cf. DK 28 B6.5 = LM 19 D7.5), turns out to be identical to Plato's intermediate doxastic region.

So, the general framework of Parmenides' onto-epistemology – as Plutarch reconstructs it – consists, on the one hand, of the "heading of one and being" (τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ ὄντος ἰδέα),[97] with which Parmenides would associate the νοητόν ("intelligible"). Besides, it is to be pointed out that Plutarch's reference here to "one" and "being" might allude also to the slogan of Colotes, who "says that Parmenides makes a clean sweep (cf. ἁπλῶς) of all things by

[92] Plu. *Adv. Col*. 1114C–D, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 233.

[93] According to Westman, *Plutarch gegen Kolotes*, 237, these words form part of the line; on ἀγένητον, see again Westman, *Plutarch gegen Kolotes*, 239.

[94] On Plutarch's (and Proclus') reading ἔστι γὰρ οὐλομελές and on the other (οὖλον μουνογενές τε), see D. O'Brien, "Problèmes d'établissement du texte," in P. Aubenque (ed.), Études sur Parménide, II: *Problèmes d'interprétation* (Paris: Vrin, 1987) 314–350.

[95] Plu. *Adv. Col*. 1114D, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 233. See C. Kurfess, "The Truth About Parmenides' *Doxa*," *AncPhil* 36 (2016) 13–45, 34–37 for a different estimate of what "giving each its due" amounts to.

[96] See Bonazzi, "Parmenide e Platone," § 7.

[97] Note that this identification of the real being with the one is defended by Ammonius in Plutarch's *De E apud Delphos* (303Aff.).

laying down one as being."[98] Now: Plutarch himself provides a precise explanation of this equation between the νοητόν ("intelligible") and the τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ ὄντος ἰδέα ("heading of one and being"): Parmenides got to the point where he would call the intelligible both "being" and "one" in light of the very *ontological properties* of the intelligible. "Calling it 'being' because it is eternal and imperishable, and 'one' because it is uniform with itself and admits of no variation."[99] Thus, the unity which is attributed to Parmenides' intelligible is to be interpreted, at least in Plutarch's eyes, in an eminently ontological sense: it is the perfect self-identity – along with the absence of any kind of differences – that grants the νοητόν ("intelligible") a condition of perfect unity. All this – needless to say – falls short of what Colotes meant by his slogan "everything is one" (ἕν πᾶν): in that case, it was an integral suppression of the empirical multiplicity that made reality collapse into an undifferentiated unity.

Be all that as it may, unlike the νοητόν ("intelligible"), the sensible is assigned to the "form of disordered motion" (ἰδέα ἄτακτος καὶ φερομένη).[100] At this point, some problems emerge. First of all, among the extant Parmenidean verses, there is not even a trace of an ἰδέα ἄτακτος καὶ φερομένη ("form of disordered motion"), whereas something like the couple ἄτακτος καὶ φερομένη ("disordered motion") is to be found for the first time in Plato's *Timaeus*.[101] But the assumption that there has always been some sort of movement and that this movement was disorderly, is peculiar to Plutarch's own cosmology: the allusion is to the notorious precosmic psychical principle, which tends to be, in Plutarch's writings, evil and undoubtedly irrational.[102] So, also in this case, we are faced with Plutarch's attempt to project both Plato's and his own assumptions onto Parmenides.

Now, given that Plato's dualism is not only ontological but also cognitive, Plutarch has to look for some epistemological principles which could repre-

[98] Plu. *Adv. Col.* 1114 D, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 233. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 168 observe that the formulation with ὑποτίθεσθαι is Platonic: see Pl. *Prm.* 142d3–4.

[99] Plu. *Adv. Col.* 1114D, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 233.

[100] I depart here from Einarson-De Lacy, who translate ἰδέα as "heading". The term might allude to something similar to Plato's forms; were that to be the case, once more Plutarch would be suggesting a sense of continuity between Parmenides and Plato.

[101] Pl. *Ti.* 30a3–6. As for ἰδέα ἄτακτος καὶ φερομένη, Topher Kurfess suggests *per litteras* that it is strange to say, as I do, that "there is not even a trace" of this ἰδέα in the poem, for "one is immediately put in mind of the proem, where φέρω is used repeatedly and disorder seems a fair characterization of the journey with which the poem begins." This is true, but in Parmenides' lines there is no reference at all to a "disorderly and moving form", as Plutarch seems to assume.

[102] See Plu. *An. Procr.* 1014D. See also *An. Procr.* 1014E, 1015E, 1017B.

sent the two extremes of a cognitive polarity. As a result, he explicitly states that, according to Parmenides, each and every dimension of being is to be known by means of its peculiar "criterion": "Of these we may further observe the criteria (κριτήριον)".[103] The intelligible, which happens to be characterized here by two typically Platonic expressions ("what is intelligible and forever unalterably the same [κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχοντος ὡσαύτως]"[104]), "is in contact with" what Plutarch refers to as the "unerring heart of most persuasive Truth" (ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος[105] ἀτρεκὲς ἦτορ) – an originally Parmenidean line (DK 28 B1.29 = LM 19 D4.29). The Platonic overtone of this description emerges with the expressions κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχοντος ὡσαύτως ("forever unalterably the same") and τοῦ νοητοῦ ("the intelligible"), and it is frankly undeniable.

Sure enough, the δοξαστόν ("opinable") is credited with a lower form of knowledge, i.e. δόξα ("opinion"). In this case as well, Plutarch substantiates his own account by means of a quote taken directly from Parmenides: "[…] man's beliefs, that lack all true persuasion" (ἠδὲ βροτῶν δόξας αἷς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής, DK 28 B1.30 = LM 19 D4.30); these beliefs "are in a tight relationship" with "objects admitting all manner of changes, accidents, and irregularities".[106] In this case too, it is to be highlighted that the presence of παντοδαπὰς ἀνομοιότητας ("all manner of irregularities") in the sensible πράγμασι ("objects") is already stated in Plato's *Statesman*.[107]

Moreover, Parmenides' being is referred to as "what really is,"[108] since it alone can be credited with persistence in being and, hence, with self-identity: "what truly is (τῷ μὲν ὄντως ὄντι) should persevere in being."[109] On the contrary, those objects that our sense perception makes us take both to be and not to be, and to appear and to disappear, cannot bear the predicate of "being":

[103] Plu. *Adv. Col*. 1114D, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 233.

[104] Ibid.

[105] On this reading, see O'Brien, "Problèmes," 315–318. W. Lapini, *Testi frammentari e critica del testo. Problemi di filologia filosofica greca* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2013) 80–83 has recently discussed this matter. The main problem that defenders of εὐκυκλέος must tackle is, according to that scholar, the very origin of the reading εὐπειθέος in four different authors; at least three possibilities are admitted by the *Textkritik*: 1) this is a case of polygenesis, so that the same mistake has been independently made more than once; 2) a horizontal contamination has affected all of the four authors; 3) all of them depend on the same corrupted branch of the manuscript tradition. But also the semantics of εὐπειθέος should be studied, according to the scholar, as it might be proved to be employed in an "illuminating sense". See also C. Kurfess, "Verity's Intrepid Heart: The Variants in Parmenides, DK B 1.29 (and 8.4)," *Apeiron* 47 (2016) 81–93.

[106] Plu. *Adv. Col*. 1114E, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 233–235.

[107] See e.g. Pl. *Plt*. 285b3.

[108] Such an expression belongs to Plato: see e.g. Pl. *Sph*. 240b3.

[109] Plu. *Adv. Col*. 1114E, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 235.

"these things, that meet the eye, now are, and now are not,[110] forever abandoning their nature and taking on another,[111] they required, so it seemed to him, a designation differing from that which is applied to the first, which always is."[112] As the passages mentioned in footnotes 73–74 show, from a merely linguistic point of view, it is possible to detect a conspicuous debt to both Parmenides and Plato in all this – a proof that the description of Parmenides' alleged νοητόν ("intelligible"), unlike that of the δοξαστόν ("opinable"), is reminiscent of both the very words of the poem and of Plato's dialogues.

5. *Conclusions*

As the analysis has shown so far, there is no compelling evidence that Plutarch had a direct acquaintance with Parmenides' whole poem; more likely, he could rely on some anthologies of lines belonging to the poem. He would take Parmenides to be the father of the dualism that was later to be elaborated by both Plato and Plutarch himself. According to that theoretical framework, reality is intrinsically twofold, as it has both something intelligible and something sensible. As is evident, Parmenides' philosophy is read through the lens of Plato's own philosophy; but – what is actually surprising – Parmenides was equally interested in both of the sides of reality, according to Plutarch. That is why he would consider Parmenides' naturalistic research to be worth examining. So, Plutarch's Parmenides is both intrinsically consistent and "ideologically reshaped," so to speak. Sure enough, he is portrayed as a turning point in the history of Platonism.

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[110] Cf. DK 28 B8.38–40 (= LM 19 D8.43–45) and Pl. *R*. 478e1–5.

[111] Cf. DK 28 B8.41 (= LM 19 D8.46) and Pl. *Ti*. 50b5–8.

[112] Plu. *Adv. Col*. 1114E, transl. Einarson & De Lacy, *Plutarch's Moralia XIV*, 235. Cf. Pl. *Ti*. 37e4–38a2. On the importance of langauge and terminology in Parmenides' descriprion of truth and opinions, see P. Berrettoni, "Dal καλεῖν orfico all'ὀνομάζειν parmenideo," in S.E. Conti & M. Farina (eds.), *Comparing Ancient Grammars. The Greek, Syriac and Arabic Traditions* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2013) 65–96.

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4.
Clement of Alexandria and the Eleatization of Xenophanes

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Abstract: Clement of Alexandria preserved four important fragments of Xenophanes, three of them in a section of the *Stromata* devoted to Greek borrowing of Jewish ideas that also included a passage from Parmenides. Against the backdrop of intellectual structures that tend to make this pedigree unthinkable—one that configures Xenophanes as a pantheist, the other that separates him from Parmenides—this paper reconsiders the merits of Clement's position.

Keywords: Clement of Alexandria, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Eleatization.

"The connexion between Xenophanes and Parmenides obviously depends on the superficial similarity between the motionless one deity of the former and the motionless sphere of Being in the latter."[1] In fact, the connection between Xenophanes and Parmenides depends, and does so far more obviously, on the unanimous testimony of our ancient sources. Although Kirk and Raven naturally made no attempt to conceal the fact that Plato, Aristotle, and Theophrastus testify to this connection, they did attempt to historicize their unanimity as a misunderstanding originating with a curious remark made by the Eleatic Stranger in Plato's *Sophist*,[2] and a certain sleight of hand was required for them to claim or even suggest on this interpretive basis that "the superficial similarity" *they* describe was what had subsequently led these notable sources astray.[3] I intend to revisit this similarity under the rubric of

[1] G.S. Kirk & J.E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957) 165.

[2] On Plat. *Sph.* 242d4–7 they write: "this remark was not necessarily intended as a serious historical judgment" (Kirk & Raven, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 165) thus suggesting in the aggregate that Aristotle ("Aristotle's judgment possibly arises from Plato's remark") and then Theophrastus misconstrued as "a serious historical judgment" what Plato had "not necessarily intended" to be a serious claim. Cf. W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers: The Gifford Lectures, 1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947) 215 n.65.

[3] For a more respectful approach to those sources, see M. Di Marco, *Sapienza Italica; Studi su Senofane, Empedocle, Ippone* (Rome: Studium, 1998) 9–31, esp. 13 n.8 (on Plato) and 16–17 (on Theophrastus).

"the Eleatization of Xenophanes" in a way that preserves the tradition that Parmenides was Xenophanes' student without reading the kind of post-Parmenidean Eleaticism we encounter in Pseudo-Aristotle, *On Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias*,[4] into Xenophanes himself.

Kirk and Raven spoke neither the first nor the last word in an ongoing attempt to uncouple Xenophanes from Parmenides in an historical sense.[5] But what has now made the question more pressing is that Glenn Most and André Laks have recently attempted to complete this De-Eleatization in their influential *Early Greek Philosophy*.[6] "Xenophanes was born in Colophon, a Greek city of Ionia."[7] These opening words seem innocuous enough, and of course Xenophanes was by birth an Ionian.[8] What makes them significant is that aside from a number of insinuations, Xenophanes' birth is the principal justification Laks and Most offer for considering him in volume III ("Early Ionian Thinkers, Part 2") rather than alongside Parmenides in volume V ("Western Greek Thinkers, Part 2"). As an example of what I am calling "insinuations," Xenophanes appears in the "Philosophical Lineages" section of the Parmenides chapter only under the heading "Xenophanes or Anaximander?"[9] What makes this even less appropriate is that Anaximander is more reliably said to have been the teacher of Xenophanes in the section of the chapter on "Teachers,"[10] and that Parmenides is not mentioned in a section on "Students"—indeed there is none—but only appears as a subsection of "Xenophanes in Western Greece," entitled "Xenophanes and Parmenides" which is promptly balanced or relativized not only with "Xenophanes and Empedocles" but by "Xenophanes and Hieron" and "Sold as a Slave?"[11] While "insinu-

[4] See especially *MXG* 3 977a13–b19. On the *MXG*, see B. Cassin, *Si Parménide: Le traité anonyme* De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia. *Edition critique et commentaire* (Lille: Presses Universitaires, 1980) and, more accessibly, J. Mansfeld, *Studies in the Historiography of Greek Philosophy* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990) 200–237.

[5] For the origins of this development, sympathetically described in Jaeger, *Theology*, 40 and 51–54, see K. Reinhardt, *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* (Bonn: Friedrich Cohen, 1916), 91–106, esp. 100: "Die Überlieferung zwingt dazu, an Stelle des Mystikers Xenophanes den Dialektiker zu setzen." For more balanced comment on Reinhardt's influence, see Di Marco, *Sapienza Italica*, 9–12.

[6] A. Laks & G.W. Most (eds.), *Early Greek Philosophy*, 9 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[7] Laks & Most, *Early Greek Philosophy, III*, 3.

[8] Cf. Jaeger, *Theology*, 38: "the mere fact that Italy was the region of their chief activity [sc. Xenophanes, Pythagoras, and Parmenides] tells us nothing about their real intellectual antecedence, which was determined far more by their ancestral background."

[9] Laks & Most, *Early Greek Philosophy, V*, 18–21. This "or" is misleading since the sources that mention Anaximander do so only in addition to Xenophanes, hence "or also" would have been appropriate.

[10] Laks & Most, *Early Greek Philosophy, III*, 12–15.

[11] Laks & Most, *Early Greek Philosophy, III*, 14–17.

ation" is perhaps too strong a word, it is impossible to miss that Laks and Most are doing their best to accomplish the De-Eleatization of Xenophanes, and this is why the neologism "Eleatization," [12] appears in the important section devoted to "the Eleatization of Xenophanes."

The insinuation, of course, is that Xenophanes has been inappropriately "Eleaticized," as the following passage from the chapter's introduction suggests:

> Aristotle's negative judgment of him (R12) certainly had lasting repercussions upon the reception of his thought: if it was true that he was legitimated philosophically by a construction that turned him into Parmenides' teacher and the ancestor of the Eleatic line of descent (R1–R3), the presentation of his doctrine also suffered from a massive Eleatization, which, even if it was prompted by Xenophanes' view of divinity as one, nonetheless greatly distorted it (R5–R11).[13]

The important thing here is that the term "Eleatization" admits of two meanings, one of them merely implied, in this already somewhat confusing passage. To begin with the confusion, since Aristotle contributed to the so-called "construction that turned him into Parmenides' teacher," it is difficult to see how Xenophanes could possibly have been "legitimated" by that same "construction" in the face of the "negative judgment of him" that Aristotle himself had expressed. But the important matter is the scope of what Laks and Most call "a massive Eleatization." Although they appear to be referring only to "the presentation of his doctrine" as detailed in LM 8 R5–R11 (including *MXG* 3 977a13–b19 as R6), their use of the word "construction" points to the merely insinuated truth: the "construction that turned him into Parmenides' teacher" *is the original source* of the "massive Eleatization" that has, as a result, distorted "his doctrine." In other words, Xenophanes has been improperly "Eleatized" twice: first in a biographical or historical sense, then in a doctrinal or interpretive sense. My claim is that only one of these two "Eleatizations" is improper, and that a defense of the other—the one that respects the ancient evidence for connecting Xenophanes and Parmenides—is an overlooked basis for rejecting it.

For Kirk and Raven, it was on the basis of Xenophanes' theology that "the superficial similarity" on which the historical or biographical connection between Xenophanes and Parmenides "obviously depends," and it should be pos-

[12] Laks & Most, *Early Greek Philosophy*, *III*, 76–89. The passage from *MXG* cited above appears there as R6. Cf. "Eleaticization" in M.C. Stokes, *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 1971) 84.

[13] Laks & Most, *Early Greek Philosophy*, *III*, 3.

sible to hear their influence when Laks and Most write: "even if it was prompted by Xenophanes' view of divinity as one." But the difference is important. According to Kirk and Raven, what Laks and Most call "Xenophanes' view of divinity" provides the *true* basis or origin for the subsequent biographical misunderstanding, originating in Plato's *Sophist*, that, in the words of Laks and Most, "turned him [sc. Xenophanes] into Parmenides' teacher." Laks and Most, by contrast, are not speculating about the *intentions* of those who made Xenophanes the teacher of Parmenides; their rejection of the biographical connection is embedded in the structure of *Early Greek Philosophy*, and their only explicit rejection of "the Eleatization of Xenophanes" is doctrinal. My claim is that a more basic rejection of Eleatization is implicit in the loaded word "construction." For Laks and Most, the doctrinal "Eleatization" that will eventually turn Xenophanes into an Eleatic monist is unjustifiable "*even if* it was prompted by Xenophanes' view of divinity as one," and the words "even if" insinuate a more radical possibility: reliance on "Xenophanes' view of divinity as one" is itself a product of Xenophanes' Eleatization in a biographical or historical sense. For Kirk and Raven, this view—creating the basis for "the superficial similarity"—remained interpretive bedrock, and had been used to legitimize or rather explain subsequent distortions. For Laks and Most, by contrast, it would not legitimize those distortions *even if* it were "Xenophanes' view," because for them, "the construction" is the *Urquell* of distortion: it is no longer something they need to explain—as Kirk and Raven tried to do—but only to reject or rather ignore.

It is not clear that the similarities between Parmenides' Being and Xenophanes' God are as superficial as Kirk and Raven claimed but it can't be denied that their point of intersection has now become even more difficult to see. The clearest indication of that intersection is the testimony of Clement of Alexandria,[14] who has preserved some of the most telling theological fragments of Xenophanes in his *Stromata*. To begin with, Clement is clear on the merit of Eleaticizing Xenophanes in a biographical and historical sense: "Xenophanes of Colophon begins [κατάρχει] the Eleatic school [ἀγωγή]."[15] He is its origin or ἀρχή and thus shows the direction or ἀγωγή to which it leads

[14] See S. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) and more recently (and sympathetically), K. Gibbons, "Moses, Statesman and Philosopher: The Philosophical Background of the Ideal of Assimilating to God and the Methodology of Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* 1," *VChr* 69 (2015) 157–185.

[15] Clem.Al. *Strom.* 1.14.64.2; see Kirk & Raven, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 163.

(ἄγειν); hence Xenophanes *both leads and initiates* the school. What makes this emphasis on his originating role so remarkable is that Clement has preserved some of his most important fragments in a chapter of the *Stromata* devoted to "Greek Plagiarism from the Hebrews."[16] According to Clement, the originality of Xenophanes is therefore a strictly relative phenomenon: a pioneer among the Greeks,[17] his most distinctive insights are entirely dependent on the Jews. This hypothesis deserves consideration because it suggests that by Re-Eleaticizing Xenophanes historically, we can De-Eleaticize him more effectively in a doctrinal sense, for now the meaning of "Eleatization" will have moved away from monism in the direction of a theism that separates God from the cosmos. And despite any academic respectability it may have acquired in the last century, the intention to preserve Greek antiquity as untouched by Jewish influence finally deserves reconsideration, and thanks to Clement, Xenophanes is the natural place to begin that process.

It is not difficult to imagine Xenophanes as the link between "Athens and Jerusalem," and his famous fragments about mankind's misguided proclivity to imagine the gods in their own image would seem to be a characteristically Greek response to the Mosaic prohibition in the Decalogue on making "graven images." But without the further development of the Eleatic ἀγωγή in Parmenides, the full force of Jewish influence on Greek thought remains comparatively superficial. The notion that God alone is what God is (and always will be) necessarily supplies a basis—at once logical and theological—that is anything but superficial for Xenophanes' revolutionary critique of a heretofore unquestioned and perhaps unquestionable Greek religious practice embodied in a culture-wide worship of images. Although Xenophanes' theology is not exclusively critical and negative, he is nevertheless more interested in drawing a firm line between human ignorance and divine wisdom; Parmenides, by contrast, is more comfortable with the language of revelation, and when we allow him to be placed in contact with the distant rumors of G-d as mediated by Xenophanes of Colophon, the Eleatic School can be recognized as accomplishing "a massive Eleatization" of Greek thought—albeit

[16] Clem.Al. *Strom.* 5, chapter 14.

[17] Cf. Jaeger, *Theology*, 41: "Xenophanes was an intellectual revolutionary." But what made him so, according to Jaeger, was "Ionian philosophy" (42) and naturally not Judaism. Cf. A. Kim, "An Antique Echo: Plato and the Nazis," in H. Roche & K. Demetriou (eds.), *Brill's Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2018) 205–237, 213: "Already in the late 1920s, Jaeger claimed that Greek culture had a special 'originary encounter [*Urbegegnung*]' with 'the German race.'"

not in any monistic sense—that culminates with the distinction between Being and Becoming in Plato.

Of course it could be said to culminate in Clement of Alexandria. As a Christian, Clement naturally thinks that Xenophanes, who regards God as one and bodiless, speaks well,[18] and has no need to conceal or deny the possibility or rather the reality of Jewish influence. But is it necessary to claim that he manufactured it?[19] Pending the academic equivalent of a successful book burning, the indisputable fact is that Clement has contributed greatly to the better understanding of Xenophanes, for without him, we would lack several important fragments. Moreover, it is not difficult to see that those particular fragments—whatever the merits of the other evidence he finds in his sources or on his own—offer compelling or at least plausible evidence for Jewish influence on Greek Philosophy. In short, if any Greek had caught wind of Israel's God, it was Xenophanes. Given the unique and radical nature of his critique of idolatry, why should the possibility of this influence have become unthinkable? Is it merely a question of a lack of historical evidence? I have already begun to suggest that it is not, for the overwhelming preponderance of historical evidence makes Parmenides the student of Xenophanes, and the truth of that evidence has been denied. So what is really at stake here? Without having rejected the valuable information Clement has preserved, an important current in the modern reception of Xenophanes has committed itself to subordinating that information in a way that is completely inconsistent with the intention that led Clement to preserve those fragments in the first place, and we should wonder why.

The relevant chapter of Clement's *Stromata* is responsible for the preservation of three fragments of Xenophanes. All three relate to "The Gods" (LM 8 D7–D21), and Laks and Most place two of them in the negative subsection relating to "Mistaken Beliefs about the Gods" (D7–D15), itself divided into "Mistaken Beliefs about the Gods Propagated by the Ancient Greek Poets" (D7–D11) and "Mistaken Beliefs about the Gods Deriving from Self-Projections" (D12–D14). Fragments D12 (= DK 21 B14) and D14 (= DK 21 B15), both from *Stromata* 5.14.109.2 appear with another fragment preserved by Clement, D13 (= DK 21 B16), from *Stromata* 7.4.22; in short, the whole of the subsection on "self-projections" derives from Clement. The problem is that these

[18] Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.14.109.1. Note that DK 21 B23 abbreviates this, eliminating "well" (εὖ).

[19] Cf. M.J. Edwards, "Xenophanes Christianus?," *GRBS* 32 (1991) 219–228, who posits the editors of a "Christian or Jewish florilegium" as the manufacturers on 224.

fragments are not really concerned with what Laks and Most call "the Gods" but only with the false or so-called "gods" that men make in their own image. This is not the way θεοί is used in fragments D8 (= DK 21 B11) and D9 (= DK 21 B12), both from Sextus Empiricus;[20] there, we are dealing with a dispute between Xenophanes and Homer about "the gods" as if there were such beings. In D12–D14, by contrast, "the gods" in question are not realities but merely the conceptions of mortals in general (D12), Ethiopians and Thracians in particular (D13), and then horses, oxen, and lions (D14). Only in a polemical sense do these fragments belong in a section devoted to "the Gods."

The third fragment from *Stromata* 5.14.109 is found in the positive subsection: "Correct Beliefs about the Gods" (LM 8 D16–D20). Here the use of the plural, already out of place when applied to the fragments of Clement in "Mistaken Beliefs about the Gods Deriving from Self-Projections," is even more indefensible. In fragments preserved by Sextus Empiricus (D17 = DK 21 B24) and Simplicius (D18–D19 = DK 21 B25–26)— summarized by Diogenes Laertius in D20—Xenophanes uses singular verbs to say what God does and does not do. In other words, the "correct belief" about "the gods" is that there are no "gods" but only God. Not surprisingly, it is Clement who draws the contrast most clearly in D16 (= DK 21 B23):

> Xenophanes of Colophon, who teaches that god is one and bodiless, does well when he asserts: 'One god [εἷς θεός] among both gods and humans the greatest / Neither in bodily frame similar to mortals nor in thought.'[21]

This is the passage that stands first in Clement's *Stromata* 5.14.109, followed by D12 (= DK 21 B14) and D14 (= DK 21 B15). And this order makes good sense: in a chapter devoted to the influence of Hebrew conceptions on Greek thinkers, Clement would naturally place Xenophanes' *positive* claim about εἷς θεός ("one God") first—where it belongs—for it must have been evident to him that G-d was ultimately responsible for making Xenophanes' merely negative claims possible, no matter how humorously and pointedly he was able to express them.

Even in the absence of a subsection that might have indicated Clement's view—e.g., "Influenced by the Hebrews?"—there is no justification for the decision of Laks and Most to place the critique of projection *before* the positive

[20] The other fragments in the "Mistaken Beliefs about the Gods Propagated by Ancient Greek Poets" subsection (D7, D10, and D11) refer to Xenophanes as a critic of Homer and none of them mention "the gods."

[21] Laks and Most, *Early Greek Philosophy*, *III*, 33.

claim of God's unity or uniqueness: this ordering obscures the logical basis for Xenophanes' theology. This is particularly misleading because Laks and Most are using "the Gods" as the umbrella concept: Xenophanes is not disagreeing with Homer *about* "the gods," he is rather taking the reality of εἷς θεός ("one God") seriously,[22] and using it—with characteristically Greek humor—to unmask the illusions that govern the production of "the gods," whether by men or by horses. Of course horses don't have gods, and that's Xenophanes' point: neither do men. What we call "the Gods" are not—they don't exist—for only the one God *is*.

It should therefore surprise nobody that Parmenides also makes an appearance in Clement's *Stromata* 5.14:

> And Parmenides the Great (as Plato says in *Sophist*) writes concerning the god [ὁ θεός] something like this: 'Very much, since being unborn and indestructible he is [ἐστιν], / Whole, only-begotten, and immoveable, and unoriginated.'[23]

Brought together by Clement, here is what Kirk and Raven called "the superficial similarity between the motionless one deity of the former and the motionless sphere of Being in the latter," and the same tradition that has obscured Clement's motive for preserving Xenophanes D12, D13, D14, and D16 (= DK 21 B14, B16, B15, and B23) will naturally reject the view that Parmenides is here describing ὁ θεός and that it is ὁ θεός that is all the things ἐστιν is here said to be. But the best evidence that Clement is right about Jewish influence on Xenophanes is not the possibility that first he and then Parmenides had caught wind of G-d but rather the well-attested claims that Parmenides was Xenophanes' student.

In an article called "Xenophanes Christianus?," M. J. Edwards has argued for the inauthenticity of the fragments preserved by Clement,[24] and it is easy

[22] Cf. J.H. Lesher, *Xenophanes of Colophon: Fragments* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 96 n.1 on DK 21 B23 (= LM 8 D16): "εἷς θεός (*heis theos*): It is notoriously uncertain whether fragment 23 contains three predicates (one, greatest, not like) or only two, with 'one' functioning as attribute (as above: 'one god is greatest among gods and men.' It is correspondingly uncertain whether Xenophanes is here (1) merely *mentioning* the one god who is the greatest, not at all like, etc.; or (2) asserting (by means of an assumed ἐστί) something about this god—i.e., (a) that such a god exists, or (b) that only such a god exists, or (c) that such a god is the greatest, or (d) that one god is the greatest; or (3) neither mentioning nor asserting anything about the existence, singularity, or greatness of god in so far as εἷς … νόημα may have formed part of some larger sentence asserting something else (e.g., as in fragment 25, that this god 'shakes all things'). I have opted for (d)." If Xenophanes was inspired by the Mosaic revolution, however, (b) is the better choice.

[23] Clem. Al. *Strom.* 5.14.112.2, transl. modified from that in W. Wilson, *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria, Vol. II* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869) 287. The verses quoted are DK 28 8.3–4.

[24] See Edwards, "Xenophanes Christianus?," 227–228.

to see the merits of this view quite apart from the observations Edwards makes about Clement and his sources. It is precisely these fragments that create the most compelling basis for a radical reconsideration of the relationship between "Athens and Jerusalem," and Edwards's approach to severing that connection is refreshingly crude and also something like necessary. After all, if *Xenophanes* had said what Clement has just quoted Parmenides as saying—and in D19 (= DK 21 B26) he says something similar—it would be natural to take ὁ θεός as the subject of ἐστιν. The fragments preserved by Clement, thanks to a critique of man-made images not otherwise attested,[25] indicate Xenophanes' proximity to the Decalogue, but it is Parmenides' ongoing emphasis on "it is"—thanks to the Tetragrammaton—that brings *him* even closer to the G-d. And it is that proximity that justifies rejecting the "massive Eleatization" *in a doctrinal and monistic sense* that Laks and Most are rightly determined to reject. On the level of doctrine, a thoroughly monistic or pantheistic Xenophanes is incompatible with the hypothesis of Jewish influence, for it is God alone (εἷς θεός) who shakes "all things" (πάντα).[26] Synthesized under the influence of Clement, an Eleatic Xenophanes—appropriately Eleaticized in a biographical sense—paradoxically provides the best anodyne to the Xenophanes who has been inappropriately Eleaticized doctrinally as a monist.

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[25] Cf. Edwards, "Xenophanes Christianus?," 223–224: "The intent [in D14 (= DK 21 B15)] is to proscribe the use of images, a practice that philosophers of the archaic and classical periods were not accustomed to condemn. . . . it seems that no one in the archaic and classical periods denounced the civic images because they claimed to depict the physiognomy of gods." Note that Edwards regards this as evidence for his thesis (227): "It is plausible to conclude that, if Clement differs from other sources on Xenophanes, it is because he is not a true source."

[26] LM 8 D18 (= DK 21 B25).

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5.
Parmenides' Philosophy through Plato's *Parmenides* in Origen of Alexandria

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Abstract: I shall explore the reception of Parmenides' thinking under two forms: the heritage of critical reasoning and the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Plato's *Parmenides* in one of the main exponents of patristic philosophy, Origen. He was, along with Plotinus, the disciple of the so-called Socrates of Neoplatonism, Ammonius Saccas. Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism and Origen's younger contemporary, attributes his own characterisation of the Nous–Demiurge–Secondary One qua One-Many, as opposed to the Primary One qua Absolutely One, to Plato's *Parmenides*, a dialogue that was central to Neoplatonism and played an important role in Origen's protology as well. As I shall argue, Origen's idea of God-Father as "absolutely One" and the Son-Wisdom-Demiurge as "One- Many" is very similar to Plotinus' conception, based on the *Parmenides*. Origen knew Plato's *Parmenides* and Clement's notion of the Son-Logos as One-Many (One as All) and God the Father as absolutely One and, in this respect, parallels Plotinus' protology.

Keywords: Parmenides, Critical Reasoning, Plato, the dialogue *Parmenides*, reception of Parmenides in Christian Platonism, Clement of Alexandria, Origen of Alexandria, Anonymous Commentary on the *Parmenides*, Primary One, Secondary One, One-Many, Nous, Plotinus

1. *Parmenides and His Heritage of Critical Reason*

Michel Fattal and Arnold Hermann pointed out that the critical use of reason is a heritage from Parmenides: in Fattal's view, Parmenides is the first philosopher who recommends the use of "critical personal reason" in order to establish a "crisis" (*krisis*) amongst opinions and values, and distinguish opinions from the truth, "what is / exists" (*to eon*). The importance assigned by Parmenides to "critical reason" and to the concept of "crisis" determines the activity and "method" of the philosopher.[1] I think that this heritage was

[1] A. Hermann, *To Think Like a God: Pythagoras and Parmenides—The Origins of Philosophy* (Las Vegas: Parmenides, 2004); M. Fattal, "Raison critique et crise chez Parménide d'Élée," in M. Pulpito & P. Spangenberg (eds.),

developed by Plato with his dialectic strategy, as well as by the heirs of Plato, who included both Neoplatonists in the "pagan" tradition and Christian (Neo) platonists such as Origen of Alexandria. Among Christian philosophers, Origen probably made the most of Plato's dialectics and "zetetic" philosophical strategy, which puts at the centre the crisis or discernment of ideas, theories, and arguments. Origen, indeed, appropriated this methodology and put it at the core of his philosophical theology.

2. *Parmenides according to Plato and the Reception of the One and One-Many in Plotinus and Christian Platonism*

Besides the dialectical method, Plato transmitted a representation of Parmenides' thought that clearly reflects his own interpretation. Plato, according to Livio Rossetti, mistakenly projected on Parmenides himself the "philosophy of being" that was rather offered by Melissus.[2] Taking into account the fact that Plato's interpretation is obviously a re-elaboration of Parmenides' ideas and not a doxographic or "neutral" (were such possible) report, I shall explore the complex problem of the reception of Plato's *Parmenides* (a dialogue that would become central in Neoplatonism) in one of the main exponents of patristic philosophy, Origen of Alexandria. He was the disciple of the so-called Socrates of Neoplatonism, Ammonius Saccas, along with Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism and Origen's younger contemporary.

Plotinus attributes to Plato's *Parmenides* his own characterisation of the Nous – Demiurge[3] – Secondary One as "One-Many," as opposed to the Primary One as "absolutely One".[4] Being – which is not at the level of the One

όδοὶ νοῆσαι, Ways to Think: FS Néstor-Luis Cordero (Bologna: Diogene, 2018) 113–120. Fattal even thinks, unlike the general view of critics, that Parmenides criticises the validity of the truth asserted by the Goddess, who represents the authority by excellence. For the opposition between Opinion and Truth see also P.K. Curd, "Deception and Belief in Parmenides' Doxa," *Apeiron*, 25 (1992) 109–33, P. Thanassas, *Parmenides, Cosmos, and Being: A Philosophical Interpretation* (Milwaukee: Marquette, 2007), J.A. Palmer, *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and A.P.D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Las Vegas: Parmenides, 2008). For the arrangement of the parts of Parmenides' poem, see N.L. Cordero, "The '*Opinion* of Parmenides' Dismantled," *Ancient Philosophy* 30.2 (2010) 231–246, and C. Kurfess, *Restoring Parmenides' Poem: Essays Toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based upon a Reassessment of the Original Sources*, University of Pittsburgh, 2012 (dissertation).

[2] L. Rossetti, *Un altro Parmenide, I* (Bologna: Diogene, 2017) 93–118.

[3] The *Nous* is identified with Plato's Demiurge in Plot. 2.3.18.15; 4.4.10.1–4.

[4] Plot. 5.1.8.23–27. On the *Parmenides* in Plotinus, see G. Gurtler, "Plotinus and the Platonic *Parmenides*," *IPQ* 34 (1992) 443–457; L.P. Gerson, "The 'Neoplatonic' Interpretation of Plato's Parmenides," *IJPT* 10 (2016) 65–94.

but at that of Nous, which is One-Many – is, as Plotinus affirms, a "one-many" in turn.[5] Now, Plato's *Parmenides* likely played an important role in the protology of Plotinus' fellow-disciple of Ammonius as well: Origen. The latter conceived of God-Father as "absolutely One" and of the Son-Logos-Wisdom as "One-Many."

This distinction is very similar to that postulated by Clement in Christian Platonism between the Father and the Son and that posited by Plotinus between the One and the Nous – although the Neoplatonic Triad is far more hierarchical than Origen's Trinity. Plato's *Parmenides* seems to have influenced the theories of Clement, Origen, and Plotinus in this respect. Origen's Christ-Wisdom-Logos parallels Plotinus' Nous qua One-Many, both divisible and indivisible into parts.[6] Origen knew both Plato's *Parmenides* and, as I suspect, Plotinus' protology, besides being surely familiar with Clement's notion of God the Father as absolutely One and the Son-Logos as One-Many ("One as All").[7] According to Origen, while God the Father is "simply and absolutely One" (πάντη ἓν καὶ ἁπλοῦν), Christ-Logos-Wisdom is "One–Many", or even "All" (πολλά, πάντα), comprising the paradigmatic principles of all creatures.[8]

The notion of the Logos as "All" or "all realities as One" in Clement must be considered against the backdrop of so-called Middle Platonism, with the Logos as the seat of the Ideas, which it unifies. In Middle Platonism, indeed, Plato's Ideas were regarded as thoughts of God and therefore located in God's mind. The Logos' unifying function of the Ideas is clear, for instance, in a passage of Moderatus, reported by Simplicius.[9] According to Clement, qua Christian Middle Platonist, God's Logos is Christ; Christ-Logos is the place of all Ideas and unifies them. Clement was inspired also by Philo, who was close to Middle Platonism. According to Philo, the Logos, which is one, includes the totality of *dynameis* or Ideas/Forms, the intelligible paradigms of sense-perceptible realities. Like an architect who forms the paradigm of a city in his

[5] See L.P. Gerson, "Why the Intelligibles are not Outside the Intellect," in J. Finamore (ed.), *Platonism and its Legacy* (Sydney: Prometheus Trust, 2019) 1–13.

[6] Plot. 5.9.8.20–22; 5.1.5.1.

[7] On which see my "The Logos/Nous One-Many between 'Pagan' and Christian Platonism," in N. Baker Brian, J. Lössl, M. Vinzent (eds.), *Studia Patristica* CII: Including Papers Presented at the Seventh British Patristics Conference, Cardiff, 5–7 September 2018, (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 1–34.

[8] Or. *C.Io.* 1.20.119; 1.31.219; 1.19.114–115; *Princ.* 1.2.2; 1.4.5, all commented on by I.L.E. Ramelli, "The Logos/Nous One-Many."

[9] Simp. *in Ph.* 230–231 = fr. 8 Lakmann.

mind, so is God's Logos the seat of "the cosmos composed by the Ideas."[10] Philo's Logos plays a core role in the creation of the world. Shortly after Philo, the Johannine Prologue also assigned this role to the Logos, which it identified with Christ. Philo depicts the Logos as God's shadow;[11] the Logos is for him – just as for Clement, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa – the Image of God. The human being is in the image of the Logos, which is the image of God; in this way, God is only a paradigm, the Logos is both a copy and a paradigm, and the human being is only a copy.[12] The Logos is both an instrumental and an exemplary cause in the constitution of the world.[13] Indeed, the Logos, in Philo's view, also has the paradigms of all creatures in itself; thus, it is a real intermediary between God and the world, and between unity and multiplicity.[14] The latter respect is precisely that which is most developed by Clement, also on the basis of the *Parmenides*.

In Clement's view, the Logos is the seat of the Ideas in *Strom*. 4.25.156. This passage seems to me to have deeply influenced Origen's doctrine of the divine Logos as being "all things as One," as opposed to the Father as "absolutely One." The philosophical backdrop of *Strom*. 4.25.155.2–157.2 lies in the *Parmenides* (and Philo): it is influenced by the dialectical argumentation of the *Parmenides*' first hypothesis, on the basis of which it constructs the couple constituted by (1) the One as absolutely simple, transcending all existence and knowledge, and (2) the One present in the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, One-Many as the complex unity which contains all in itself.[15] The same notions in Origen, God-One and God-Logos-Wisdom as "One-Many," are influenced by both the *Parmenides* and Clement's present passage; the couple One + Nous as One-Many in Plotinus, pointed out above, also derives from the *Parmenides*.

[10] Ph. *Opif*. 17–20.

[11] Ph. *LA* 3.96.

[12] See my "Creation (Double)," in P.J.J. van Geest et al. (eds.), *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming in print): online 2019: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589-7993_EECO_SIM_00000793.

[13] See D.T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 174.

[14] Ph. *LA* 3.150; *Legat*. 55.

[15] On the first, absolute One coming from the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* see E. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957) 27. S. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 205–206 deems Clement influenced by a Neo-Pythagorean interpretation of the *Parmenides*, which later influenced Plotinus in formulating his doctrine of Νοῦς (Intellect). I think this may also have been known to Origen, whose doctrine of Nous has many points in common with that of Plotinus. The same line is maintained by L. Rizzerio, "L'accès à la transcendance divine selon Clément d'Alexandrie: dialectique platonicienne ou expérience de l'union chrétienne?," *REAug* 44 (1998) 159–179, 167: Clement's absolutely simple One vs the derivative One of the second hypothesis.

In Clement's argument, the part that more closely depends on Plato's *Parmenides* is *Strom*. 4.25.156.1, which comes after a discussion of Nous that includes references to the *Sophist* and the *Theaetetus*.[16] Here, Clement describes the Son-Logos as Wisdom, Science, and Truth, which in Philo were attributes of the Logos and in Origen will be *epinoiai* or conceptualisations (or 'names') of Christ. These belong to the gnoseological area, related to the function of Christ-Logos as teacher and pedagogue: these epistemic concepts show the Son-Logos as knowable and transmitter of knowledge, thanks to the noetic cosmos it contains, in opposition to the Father, who reflects the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* and its transcendent One. The Son, instead, is the *Parmenides*' One-Many, being the sum and unification of "all the powers of the spirit taken together, transformed into one single thing; they end up into the same being: the Son."[17] However, Christ-Logos is not simply the sum total of all these *dynameis*, but transcends them in a superior unity, being One-Many: not simply One – the absolute, transcendent, ineffable God – not simply Many, but One-Many: "The Son is not simply 'one' as one thing; nor is he 'many things' as parts of a sum, but is One as All things," ὡς πάντα ἕν.[18] The Logos is not absolutely One as is the Father, nor Many/All as are the creatures and their Ideas, but All in One and One as All, the unity of multiplicity that transcends the many and makes them one,[19] "hence also all things, for the Son is the circle that *embraces all the powers*, which are encircled and *unified into one*."[20]

Being the noetic cosmos and the Mind of God that unifies all Ideas, the Logos, One-Many, is the main agent of creation. "For this reason, the Logos is said to be the Alpha and the Omega,[21] because only in his case *does the end coincide with the beginning*; the Logos ends with the first principle, without admitting of any interruption at any point."[22] Being God, the Logos has no duality, or multiplicity, or interruption or division, but unifies multiplicity. Since the Logos is the transcendent unity of all, therefore "to believe *in* Christ and *through* Christ means to become unified and simple, being unified in

[16] Plato's *Parmenides* is never cited by Clement, but he definitely seems to have used it.
[17] Clem. *Strom*. 4.25.156.1.
[18] Clem. *Strom*. 4.25.156.2.
[19] See my "Harmony between *arkhē* and *telos* in Patristic Platonism," *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 7 (2013) 1–49.
[20] Clem. *Strom*. 4.25.156.2.
[21] Rev 1:8; 22:13.
[22] Clem. *Strom*. 4.25.157.1.

the Logos continually, without distractions, whereas not to believe means to be in disagreement, separated, and divided."[23] Evagrius will elaborate on this concept.[24]

Origen took over Clement's conception of Christ-Logos as the transcendent unity of all Ideas, and was also influenced by Plato's *Parmenides.* In *C.Io.* 1.20.119, Origen builds on Clement's notion of the Logos as One-All, remarking, with the *Parmenides'* first and second hypotheses, that God the Father is One and "absolutely simply One," πάντη καὶ ἁπλοῦν, while Christ the Logos is "One through All," διὰ τὰ πολλά, and "One as All." Christ is "the first and the last" in Rev. 22:13 – which confirms that Origen remembered Clement's passage examined beforehand, likewise referring to Rev. 22:13 – being the first, the last, and all that is in between, since Christ-Logos is "all things."[25] Origen, indeed, applies to Christ the concept of God as "all in all" in the eschatological scenario.[26]

The dialectic between unity and multiplicity is manifest in this initial part of the *Commentary on John*, where Origen describes Christ as one with many *epinoiai* or conceptualisations, which he lists and discusses: Christ-Logos-Wisdom is one, yet "a multitude of goods." To clarify such dialectic in the Logos and the relation between the Logos and the Ideas-Logoi-paradigms of all creatures, Origen employs the metaphor of the project in the mind of the architect (already used by Philo):

> A house or a ship are built according to architectonic models; thus, one can say that the principle of the house or of the ship consists in the *paradigms and logoi* that are found in the craftsman. In the same way, I think, all the things were made according to the *logoi* of the future realities that God had already manifested beforehand in Wisdom. It is necessary to maintain that God founded, so to say, a living Wisdom, and handed it the task of transmitting the structure [πλάσις] and the forms [εἴδη], and, in my opinion, also the substances [οὐσίαι], from the archetypes contained in it to all beings and matter.[27]

[23] Clem. *Strom*. 4.25.157.2.

[24] He took over much of Clement's thought, including his notion of prayer: see my *Evagrius' Kephalaia Gnostika* (Leiden-Atlanta: Brill-SBL, 2015) and, further, my "Gregory Nyssen's and Evagrius's Biographical and Theological Relations: Origen's Heritage and Neoplatonism," in I.L.E Ramelli (ed.), *Evagrius between Origen, the Cappadocians, and Neoplatonism* (Leuven: Peeters, 2017) 165–231.

[25] Or. *C.Io.* 1.31.219.

[26] Or. *C.Io.* 1 31.225. For the notion πάντα ἐν πᾶσι, 'all in all', in Christian Platonism, see my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). The fortune of this notion in later "pagan" Platonism is being studied in a systematic investigation of theories of apokatastasis in ancient to late antique philosophy.

[27] Or. *C.Io.* 1.19.114–115.

All the *logoi*, the paradigms of all creatures, are in Christ-Logos. This, albeit being one, the living Wisdom of God, consists in many concepts, objects of contemplation, or plans (θεωρήματα), which contain the *logoi* of all beings.[28] The *logoi* existed in God's Logos-Wisdom *ab aeterno*, before their creation as substances (οὐσίαι, the same word used in *C.Io.* 1.19.115):

> We do not affirm that creatures are uncreated or coeternal with God, nor, on the other side, do we maintain that God first did nothing good and then turned towards action, if the Scriptural saying is true that "You did all in Wisdom."[29] Now, if all beings have been created in Wisdom, since Wisdom has always existed, the creatures have always existed in Wisdom in a paradigmatic form, before creation (*secundum praefigurationem et praeformationem semper erant in Sapientia*), and then, at a certain point, they were also created as substances / οὐσίαι (*quae protinus etiam substantialiter facta sunt*).[30]

The eternal presence of the paradigms of all things in Christ-Logos-Wisdom is a middle way between the coeternity of creatures with God and a naïve conception of demiurgic creation, before which God was "idle." The Son-Logos-Wisdom contained in itself the "principles, Logoi, and Forms/Ideas" (*initia*, *rationes*, *species*) of the entire creation.[31] These are the Forms/Ideas in which every creature participates, according to the Platonic category of 'participation' (*methexis*). Christ-Logos, for instance, is the Idea/Form of Justice, and every being is just insofar as it participates in it: "Our Saviour does not participate in Justice, but, being Justice itself, is participated in by the just."[32] This function of Christ-Logos, given the eternity of the Ideas, depends on the Son's coeternity with the Father, which Origen defended against "pre-Arian" tendencies, according to which "there was a time when (the Son) did not exist."[33]

[28] Or. *C.Io.* 1.34.243.

[29] Psalm 102: 24.

[30] Or. *Princ.* 1.4.5.

[31] Or. *Princ.* 1.2.2. The underlying Greek is probably ἀρχαί, λόγοι, εἴδη.

[32] Or. *Cels.* 6.64.

[33] See my "The Trinitarian Theology of Gregory of Nyssa in his *In Illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*: His Polemic against 'Arian' Subordinationism and Apokatastasis," in V.H. Drecoll & M. Berghaus (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 445–478; I.L.E. Ramelli, "Origen's Anti-Subordinationism and Its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line," *VChr* 65 (2011) 21–49, in which I argue that Origen was the inspirer of the Cappadocians' Trinitarian theology, especially of Nyssen, and their anti-"Arianism"; argument accepted, e.g., by "Origen's Interpretation of Romans," in S. Cartwright (ed.), *A Companion to St. Paul in the Middle Ages*," (Leiden: Brill, 2012) 27; S.J. Wright, *Dogmatic Aesthetics* (Augsburg: Fortress, 2014) 187; R. Fowler, *Imperial Plato: Albinus, Maximus, Apuleius* (Las Vegas: Parmenides, 2016) 307; T. Allin, *Christ Triumphant, annotated edition* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2015) 117, 164; A. Djakovac, "Apocatastasis and Predestination," *Bogoslovska smotra* 86.4 (2016) 813–826: 819; M.S.A. Mikhail, *The Legacy of Demetrius of Alexandria 189–232 CE* (London: Routledge , 2016) 37; M.K.W. Suh, "Τὸ πνεῦμα in 1 Corinthians 5:5: A Reconsideration of Patristic Exegesis," *VChr* 72 (2018) 121–141: 133; A. Djakovac, "Apokatastasis and Predestination:

Origen, indeed, was the first who 'imported' the formula "there was no time/state in which X was not" (οὐκ ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν) from imperial philosophy (cosmology) to Christian Trinitarian debates.[34]

3. *The* Commentary on the Parmenides *and Christian Platonism*

Thus, Origen was inspired by the *Parmenides* in the characterisation of God-One – both coinciding and transcending Being and Nous[35] – and God's Logos as "One-Many." Plotinus was likely aware of Origen's theory, but posited the One firmly beyond Being and Nous, and the Nous as "One-Many" at an inferior level, as seen above. It is uncertain whether the anonymous *Commentary on the Parmenides* is pre-Plotinian or post-Plotinian, and therefore whether its author knew Plotinus' theory. It was by Porphyry according to Pierre Hadot and others,[36] or another post-Plotinian thinker, or a pre-Plotinian thinker according to Kevin Corrigan, Gerald Bechtle, and others.[37]

Ontological Assumptions of Origen's and Augustine's Soteriologies," in B. Sijakovic (ed.), *Ad orientem: Essays from Serbian Theology Today* (Belgrade: Faculty of Theology - Los Angeles: Sebastian, 2019) 103–115: 109; G. Maspero, *Dio Trino perché vivo* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2018) 33, 365, passim; G. Maspero, "A Trinitarian Ontology: the Relational Approach," lecture, Conference *New Trinitarian Ontologies*, Cambridge, 13.IX.2019, forthcoming.

[34] As argued by I.L.E. Ramelli, "Alexander of Aphrodisias: A Source of Origen's Philosophy?," *Philosophie Antique* 14 (2014) 237–290, argument received by G. Karamanolis, "Early Christian Philosophers on Aristotle," in A. Falcon (ed.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Aristotle in Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) ch. 23; R. Chiaradonna, "Porphyry and the Aristotelian Tradition," ibidem, 321–340: 334–335, 340; V. Limone, "Origen's Explicit References to Aristotle and the Peripateticians," *VChr* 72 (2018) 390–404; M. Edwards, *Aristotle and Early Christian Thought* (London: Routledge, 2019) 209 and *passim;* A. Falcon, review of Edwards, *Sehepunkte* 19.9 (2019), n. 2.

[35] This ambiguity and its reasons are studied in a work on Origen in preparation. For a study of the Pauline concept of Nous in Origen, which dovetails with the Platonic notion of Nous, see my "The Reception of Paul's Nous in the Christian Platonism of Origen and Evagrius," in J. Frey and M. Nägele (eds.), *Der νοῦς bei Paulus im Horizont griechischer und hellenistisch-jüdischer Anthropologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021) 279–316.

[36] P. Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: Traités théologiques sur la Trinité* (Paris: Cerf, 1960) 107–57; *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Institute des Études Augustiniennes, 1968) 2:64–113, followed by many scholars.

[37] K. Corrigan, "Platonism and Gnosticism: The Anonymous *Commentary on the Parmenides*," in J.D. Turner and R. Majercik (eds.), *Gnosticism and Later Platonism* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000) 141–78: hypothesis received by J.D. Turner, "The Setting of the Platonising Sethian Treatises in Middle Platonism," in Turner & Majercik, *Gnosticism and Later Platonism*, 179–224, part. 209; J.D. Turner, "The Platonizing Sethian Treatises," in J.D. Turner & K. Corrigan (eds.), *The Platonizing Sethian Treatises,"* in J.D. Turner & K. Corrigan (eds.), *Plato's Parmenides and Its Heritage*, 1 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010) 1:131–72, who thinks that the *Parmenides Commentary* stems from Sethian Platonizing milieux in the second century; T. Rasimus, "Plotinus and the Gnostics," Turner & Corrigan (eds.), *Plato's Parmenides and Its Heritage*, 2, 81–110; T. Rasimus, "Johannine Background of the Being-Life-Mind Triad," in K. Corrigan & T. Rasimus (eds.), *Gnosticism, Platonism, and the Late Ancient World: Essays in Honour of John D. Turner* (Leiden: Brill, 2013) 369–410. Victorinus depended on this Commentary in *Adv.Ar.*1.49 (208); if the author was Origen, as Tarrant suggests, this would fit well with Victorinus' more general dependence on Origen (as argued in my *Apokatastasis*, 607–16). See below concerning Bechtle.

Harold Tarrant hypothesises that it was by Origen – either the "pagan" one or the Christian Platonist, in case the two should be identified – and highlights similarities between Proclus' account of Origen's metaphysics and that of our Commentary. But he expects the objection, why the *Commentary on the Parmenides* is never mentioned by Porphyry and other sources along with Origen's two treatises stemming from Ammonius' teaching: *On Daemons/Spirits* and *The King Is the Only Creator.*[38] One could surmise that the Commentary did not expound Ammonius' secret doctrines, or not only. Origen the Christian Platonist, who commented on Plato,[39] might even have composed the Commentary, although no certainty at all can be reached. The anonymous *Commentary on the Parmenides* is a running commentary, similar to Neoplatonist running commentaries,[40] as well as to Origen's commentaries.

Tarrant asks, "How is it that [pagan] Origenes … seems to have become a regular part of the exegetical tradition of the *Parmenides* when he normally did not write, and when the titles of the two known exceptions [i.e. the 'Ammonian' treatises] do not suggest any relation to that dialogue?" Tarrant surmises that the 'Ammonian' work *The King Is the Only Creator* reveals close connections to the anonymous *Parmenides Commentary*,[41] and that Origen may have composed the latter, as mentioned. I suspect that Origen became part and parcel of the exegetical tradition of the *Parmenides* since this Origen, if he is the same as the Christian Platonist, used the *Parmenides* and imported its hypotheses into his own definition of God in *First Principles* and elsewhere—and interpreted the *Parmenides* elsewhere as well.[42]

Like many other scholars,[43] Tarrant accepts as possible the identity of the

[38] Discussed in a work in preparation.

[39] See my "The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and its Reception in Platonism, 'Pagan' and Christian: Origen in Dialogue with the Stoics and Plato," *IJCT* 18 (2011) 335–371; "Origen and the Platonic Tradition," in J. Warren Smith (ed.), *Plato and Christ: Platonism in Early Christian Theology*, special topics issue of *Religions*, 2017, 8 (2), 21, 1–20; "Origen to Evagrius," in H. Tarrant, D.A. Layne, D. Baltzly & F. Renaud (eds.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plato in Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2018) 271–291; "Revelation for Christians and Pagans and their Philosophical Allegoresis : Intersections," in E.G. Simonetti & C. Hall (eds.). *Divination and Revelation in Later Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023) 49-72. In-depth analysis in a monograph in preparation.

[40] So rightly D. Clark, "The Anonymous *Commentary on the Parmenides*," in Tarrant, Layne, Baltzly & Renaud (eds.) *Reception of Plato*, 351–366, 354.

[41] H. Tarrant, "Plotinus, Origenes and Ammonius on the King," in A. Klostergaard Petersen & G. van Kooten (eds.), *Religio-Philosophical Discourses Within the Greco-Roman, Jewish and Early Christian World* (Leiden: Brill, 2017) 323–337.

[42] Investigation in a monograph in preparation.

[43] E.g. J. Bidez, H. Koch, R. Cadiou, F. Kettler, H. Crouzel, P.F. Beatrice, T, Böhm, P. Tzamalikos, E. DePalma Digeser, etc., discussed in "Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism: Re-Thinking the Christianisation of Hellenism," *VChr* 63 (2009) 217–263. and further in a work on Origen in preparation. After accepting without

two Origens: "this Origenes might perhaps have been identical with the Christian Origen, in spite of the usual consensus against it"[44]; "it is not certain that they are distinct."[45] Tarrant argues:

> The fact that the *c.Celsum* was a work for wide circulation, while hermeneutic works were principally an adjunct to teaching, removes one minor barrier to postulating the identity of the Christian Origen with the figure of that name who features in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* as having been a pupil, with Plotinus, of Ammonius Saccas (3.24–32)… If Origen's hermeneutic works were of a totally different order and were intended to be aids to the reading of scriptures within the school, then it is not surprising that Longinus, even if he had been aware of Origen's exegetical feats, should not have considered them evidence that he took writing for a wider audience and for posterity seriously.[46]

The One of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* is related by the Commentator to the One as God (θεός), which is the first principle, apophatically "beyond Being," *hyperousios*.[47] Nous, instead, is related to the One-Being of the second hypothesis, which unfolds from the One in three different acts (ἐνέργειαι); the Commentator insists that God-One and Nous are identical and not identical.[48] This framework fits Clement and especially Origen well, who regarded God both as One ("Monad and Henad," at the beginning of Περὶ Ἀρχῶν, likely from the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*) and as Nous-Being, both Being and beyond being (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας). This ambiguity is grounded both in Plato's *Parmenides*, with its own ambiguity concerning the

doubt the widespread two-Origens hypothesis ("Origene Neoplatonico," in V. Melchiorre (ed.), *Enciclopedia Filosofica* (Milano: Bompiani, 2006) vol. 8, 8195), I have left open the possibility of the identity of the two and explored it ("Origen, Patristic Philosophy," "Origen and the Platonic Tradition," and in a work in preparation), with E. Prinzivalli, Chr. Markschies, H. Tarrant, H. Crouzel, P.F. Beatrice, T. Böhm, P. Tzamalikos, E. DePalma Digeser, S. Clark, and many others. I do not enter this debate here.

[44] H. Tarrant, "Apuleian Evidence regarding Pre-Plotinian Interpretation of the Parmenides," IPS conference, Paris 2019.

[45] Tarrant, "Plotinus, Origenes and Ammonius," 324.

[46] Harold Tarrant in a work on *Contra Celsum*, in preparation, and in conversations in Oxford and Cambridge, January–April and September 2019, in Paris, July 2019, and *per litteras*. Discussion of this evidence in my "Origen, Patristic Philosophy" and a study on Origen in preparation.

[47] *C.Parm.* 2.4–27; cf. 12.22–25. Clark, "Commentary," 362, who notes a correspondence with Porphyry, who associated the first hypothesis with "the primal God" (Proclus *In Parm.* 6.1054); he does not note the correspondence with Origen, whose ideas Porphyry knew well: see my "Origen, Greek Philosophy, and the Birth of the Trinitarian Meaning of Hypostasis," *HThR* 105 (2012) 302–350; M.B. Simmons, *Universal Salvation in Late Antiquity: Porphyry of Tyre and the Pagan-Christian Debate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015); I.L.E. Ramelli, "Origen and Porphyry: Continuity and Polemics between Psychology and Eschatology: Preliminary Remarks," in M. Knežević (ed.), *Philosophos – Philotheos – Philoponos* (Belgrade: Gnomon Centre for the Humanities, 2021) 187–211.

[48] Ambivalence stressed by J. Turner, "Feminine Principles in Platonic and Gnostic Texts," in U. Tervahauta, I. Miroshnikov, O. Lehtipuu & I. Dunderberg (eds.), (eds.), *Women and Knowledge in Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2017) 291–324, part. 306.

One, namely the absolute One and the derivative One, and in Scripture, especially Ex 3:14, which identified God with Being. Moreover, Origen deemed God-One and the Son-Logos-Nous both identical, since both are God and are equally divine—while Plotinus was more hierarchical in his triad—and not identical, since they are different hypostases, according to Origen's innovative notion of hypostasis applied to the Trinity.[49]

At the beginning of his treatment of God in *First Principles*, Origen identifies God as One, Monad and Henad, and associates the One of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* with God (ὁ θεός). As Proclus notes, Porphyry associated the first hypothesis with "the Prime god" (*in Prm*. 6.1054). This is what Origen, whom he knew well, had done. Luc Brisson correctly emphasises the apophaticism of the *Parmenides Commentary*: the first God is unknowable as beyond Being.[50] The first God's essence was unknowable already for Origen,[51] who posited God as Being and Nous, but also beyond Being and Nous.

The *Commentary* is close to Chapter 8 of Plotinus' treatise 10, Περὶ τῶν τριῶν ἀρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων ("On the Three Hypostases That Are the First Principles").[52] This is remarkable, given the probable influence of Origen's three ἀρχικαὶ ὑποστάσεις (Hypostases that are the first principles) on Porphyry, who redacted and titled Treatise 10 of the *Enneads*.[53] The criticism of Numenius in the last columns of the *Commentary* is also found in Origen,[54] who was inspired by Numenius but also criticised his ideas, perhaps even in the treatise *The King Is the Only Creator* (if by him).[55] Plotinus relied on Numenius to the point of being charged with plagiarism. Bechtle ascribes the *Parmenides Commentary* to pre-Plotinian Platonism, Middle Platonism, and Sethian Gnosticism,[56] whose texts were read at the school of Plotinus.[57] Brisson

[49] Argument in my "Hypostasis."

[50] L. Brisson, "A Criticism of the *Chaldaean Oracles* and of the Gnostics in Columns IX and X of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*," in Turner & Corrigan, *Plato's Parmenides and Heritage* 1, 233–41.

[51] Argument in my "The Divine as Inaccessible Object of Knowledge in Ancient Platonism: A Common Philosophical Pattern across Religious Traditions," *JHI* 75 (2014) 167–188.

[52] Brisson, "Criticism," 241.

[53] I.L.E. Ramelli, "Hypostasis" and a study on Origen in preparation.

[54] Such criticism in the last part of the Commentary is pointed out (without comparisons with Origen) by L. Brisson, "A Criticism of Numenius in the Last Columns (XI–XIV) of the *Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides*," in Turner & Corrigan, *Plato's Parmenides and Its Heritage* 1, 275–282.

[55] See my "Origen, Patristic Philosophy"; further in a work in preparation.

[56] Especially the treatises known as *Zostrianos*, *Marsanes*, *The Three Steles of Seth*, and *Allogenes*.

[57] G. Bechtle (ed.), *The Anonymous Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (Bern: Haupt, 1999), esp. the introduction.

also compared the *Commentary* with the testimonies concerning Origen the "pagan," especially Proclus' critique of Origen's metaphysics.[58] This critique, which also echoes Plato's *Parmenides,* can be applied to both Origen and the *Commentary*, so close are they in their metaphysical tenets. Origen, according to Brisson, "middle-Platonically" identified God with the Good of the *Republic* and the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*, and the second principle, the Model, with the intelligible world (God's Ideas). I note that this is what Origen the Christian also thought: God-Good as God the Father and God's Son as Logos-Nous-noetic cosmos.[59] Brisson rightly concludes that Ammonius taught Origen and Plotinus to practice an in-depth analysis of the *Parmenides.*

This in-depth analysis of the *Parmenides* is what Origen the Christian Platonist practiced. The phrase ὁ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεός ("the God over all"), appears in the Commentary's first column; the *TLG* returns 140 examples,[60] almost all in Origen, scoring more than 100 occurrences, primarily in *Against Celsus* and commentaries, but even in homilies and in the *Philocalia* (besides others probably in his lost works), and in authors well acquainted with Origen (Porphyry, Eusebius, Nazianzen, and Synesius). Even some testimonies of earlier authors, such as Speusippus, Chrysippus, and Celsus, are reported, in the citer's terminology, by Origen and the *Parmenides Commentary*. Therefore, this phrase played a core role in the philosophical discourse between Christian and 'pagan' Platonists. Tarrant surmises that the phrase ὁ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεός ("the God over all") was typical of Celsus and taken up by Origen, which is possible. At any rate, it is important to remark the convergence between Origen and the *Parmenides Commentary,* all the more so in that it is attested almost exclusively in the Platonic tradition, in the Commentary and in Origen and followers of Origen.

There are other such convergences, for example the phrase ἄρρητον καὶ ἀκατονόμαστον ("ineffable and unnamable"), coming from the *Parmenides*, 142a3–5, which inspired also Apuleius.[61] Origen uses it in *Cels*. 7.42–43 and

[58] Procl. *Theol.Plat.* 2.4 (and *in Prm.* 6.1064–1066; 7.64.1–16 Cousin; 7.36.8–31 Cousin). Brisson, "The Reception of the *Parmenides* before Proclus," in Turner & Corrigan, *Plato's Parmenides and Its Heritage* 1, 54–7. Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 2.4 is thoroughly analysed in a monograph in preparation.

[59] This is because the two Origen(s) taught the same doctrine, or because they can be identified.

[60] Searched by Harold Tarrant. I am very grateful for this communication *per litteras* and the subsequent discussion in Oxford in spring 2019. On this expression, see also S. Cazelais, "L'expression HO EPI PASI THEOS de l'ancienne académie à Origène et dans le *Commentaire* anonyme sur le *Parménide*," *Science et Esprit* 57 (2005) 199–214.

[61] Apul. *Plat.* 1.5.190: *indictum innominabilem* ("ineffable and unnamable").

Princ. fr. 33, and our *Commentary* in I.3–4: ἀρρήτου γὰρ καὶ ἀκατονομάστου ("ineffable and unnamable"). The convergences between Origen and the *Parmenides Commentary* appear in *Against Celsus*,[62] but also elsewhere, and in some cases only in *other works* by Origen than *Against Celsus* (which suggests that they cannot come all from Celsus). As Tarrant remarks, e.g., "ὕπαρξις [existence], found six times in the [*Parmenides*] commentary, is certainly found a significant number of times in Origen, but is *not found* in *Celsum*. Again, the term ἐπίνοια [conceptualisation] that occurs six times in the [*Parmenides*] commentary occurs slightly less often in *Celsum* than in the rest of [Origen's] corpus." Also, the *Parmenides Commentary* observes that God, the One, cannot be denied knowledge,[63] whereas Plotinus' One does not know or think: these activities are at the level of the Nous. Instead, Origen's God does know, being both Nous (and *intellectualis natura simplex*) and beyond Nous and Being.[64] Here, too, the *Parmenides Commentary* is more similar to Origen than to Plotinus.

The *Parmenides* Commentator posits God as One and First Principle (ἀρχή) of all beings: "Adequately enough, this theory removes from God [θεός] all multiplicity, all composition, and all variety, suggesting the notion that, in a way, the One is simple, nothing is before It, and It is the First Principle [ἀρχή] of all other beings."[65] Now, Origen describes God as One (μονὰς καὶ ἑνάς) and ἀρχή of all beings.[66] The divine substance (οὐσία, consisting in three Hypostases, treated in the first chapters of *Princ.* 1) is "the ἀρχή of all beings" (*principium omnium*) and "the ἀρχή itself" (*ipsum principium*).[67] Origen depicts God as ἀρχή also in Greek works: "The principle [ἀρχή] of the Son is the Father; the principle [ἀρχή] of creatures is the Creator [δημιουργός]; in sum, the principle [ἀρχή] of beings is God."[68] "The doctrine concerning God" deals with "the knowledge of the Cause [ἀρχή] of all."[69] This comes from Plato's description of the Good (God, in Origen's view) as

[62] Tarrant (in private correspondence and in a work in preparation) hypothesizes its identification with the treatise *On Daemons*. If one assumes that Origen the Christian was the same as the Neoplatonist, this can be ascribed to the Christian.

[63] *C.Parm.* 4.34-35: God "is never unknowing"; 5.8–9: "who can know as God does?".

[64] Full treatment of this ambiguity in Origen, which goes back to Plato himself, in my study on νοῦς in Neoplatonism, in preparation.

[65] *C.Parm.* 1.6–10.

[66] See Ramelli, "Hypostasis."

[67] Or. *Princ*. 1.1.6.

[68] Or. *C.Io.* 1.102.

[69] Greg. *Paneg.* 13.

the ἀρχή of all.[70] Origen also identified the νοῦς (Nous, Intellect) with God, the first principle/ἀρχή.[71]

The first who identified νοῦς (Intellect) with the first cause[72] and God[73] was Alexander of Aphrodisias, with whose ideas Origen was probably acquainted.[74] The agent Intellect is impassible, being unmixed with matter, qua act and metaphysical Form.[75] Origen also deemed God totally unmixed with matter, perpetually active,[76] and therefore incorruptible, impassible, model of impassibility, metaphysical form[77] and first cause, as detailed above, and Nous (and beyond Nous as well). The *Commentary*'s idea in section 1, that without the One, nothing would be – an explication of its notion of the One-God as ἀρχή – corresponds to what Origen read in the Prologue of John, on which he commented (as Amelius did): without God-Logos, "nothing would have come to existence of what has come to existence."[78]

The *Parmenides Commentary* and Origen also share the use of τὰ περί and τὰ ὀπίσω, literally "the things that are around / what is around" and "the things that are behind / after" or "what is behind/after", within theological apophaticism. The Commentator ascribes to the One-God "an incommensurable pre-eminence in regard to all the rest":[79] we are nothing in comparison to God;[80] God is not nothingness, but appears nothingness to us, being "beyond understanding." Origen agreed with all these ideas, from apophaticism to creatures' nothingness in comparison with God. The Commentator refers to "the phrase, 'the things that are after Him'" (4.12), like τὰ ὀπίσω in Scripture, interpreted by Philo and then Origen in reference to divine apophaticism:[81] "The things that follow Him are beings that are out of Him and are nothing in relation to Him," since God "is the only true Being." Origen repeated the same: only God is Being par excellence, creatures are

[70] Pl. *R.* 533c8–d1.

[71] Or. *Princ.* 1.1.6, although, as noted above, in *Cels.* 7.38 Origen describes God as νοῦς but also ἐπέκεινα νοῦ. See above, n. 64.

[72] Al. Aphr. *An.* 89.9–19.

[73] Al. Aphr. *Int.* 109.23–110.3.

[74] See Ramelli, "Alexander."

[75] ἐνέργεια, εἶδος: Al. Aphr. *An.* 89.16–17.

[76] Or. *Princ.* 1.4.4; 1.1.6, etc.

[77] *Una sola deitatis species*, Or. *Princ.* 1.1.6.

[78] John 1:3.

[79] ἀσύμβλητον ὑπεροχήν: *C.Parm.* 3.3–9.

[80] *C.Parm.* 4.12–5.7.

[81] See my "Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and Its Legacy in Gregory of Nyssa," *Studia Philonica Annual* 20 (2008) 55–99; "The Divine as Inaccessible," 167–188.

contingent, qua created, and always suspended between Being (God-Good) and non-being (evil).[82] For rational creatures are Being if they participate in Good-Being; if they fall into evil, they become non-being, although morally rather than ontologically.[83] Origen and our *Commentary* converge also concerning τὰ περί ("the things around") in reference to apophaticism: the Commentator observes that we can know neither God nor the modality in which the things that exist thanks to God came into being, but "those who dare reveal how the things that relate to God are, endeavour to show this modality too, through the things that *are around* God."[84] That the Divinity is knowable only through what is "around it" (τὰ περί) was emphasised by Origen,[85] Plotinus,[86] and later Gregory Nyssen, a close follower of Origen and acquainted with Plotinus (and Iamblichus), and Dionysius, who was inspired by both Origen and Proclus.[87] Apophaticism in the *Parmenides Commentary* parallels that of Origen: we must not "attribute anything to [God–the One], but one may remain in a non-comprehensive comprehension, a conception that conceives nothing," and "turn away even from the thought [νόησις] of the beings that exist thanks to" the One. Thus, we shall arrive at the "ineffable pre-notion [προέννοια] of It, which delineates it through silence…an image of the inexpressible."[88] The Stoic theory that we can know the true nature of things discursively cannot be applied to God (10.11–35). This is what Origen and his follower Nyssen maintained.[89]

The *Parmenides* Commentator prioritises apophaticism: "those who give priority to what the Divinity is do not have a superior knowledge of It than

[82] I.L.E. Ramelli, "Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism," *VChr* 61 (2007) 313–356; I.L.E. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Cristical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (VCS 120; Leiden: Brill, 2013), the section on Origen.

[83] My *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the section on Origen. In Philo, instead, the annihilation may be not only moral, but also ontological: I.L.E. Ramelli, "Philo's Doctrine of Apokatastasis," *Studia Philonica Annual* 26 (2014) 29–55.

[84] *C.Parm.* 10.29–35.

[85] For instance, Or. *C.Io.* 13.21.124; *Cels.* 6.65.

[86] For instance, Plot. 5.3.13–14.

[87] Argument in my "Philosophical Allegoresis of Scripture in Philo and Its Legacy," 55–99; "The Divine as Inaccessible," 167–188; "Mysticism and Mystic Apophaticism in Middle and Neoplatonism across Judaism, 'Paganism' and Christianity," in A. Wilke (ed.), *Constructions of Mysticism as a Universal. Roots and Interactions Across the Border* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2021) 29–54.

[88] *C.Parm.* 2.14–27.

[89] See my "Silenzio apofatico in Gregorio di Nissa: un confronto con Plotino e un'indagine delle ascendenze origeniane," in *Silenzio e Parola* (Rome: Augustinianum, 2012) 367–388; further "*Epopteia* and *epoptics* in Platonism, 'pagan' and Christian," in H. Tarrant (ed.), *The language of inspiration or divine diction in the Platonic tradition* (Bream, UK: Prometheus Trust, 2020).

those who give priority to what It is not"; however, he deems it "excessive" (περιττόν) to abandon the traditional divine attributes.[90] Likewise, Origen, who also prioritised apophatic theology, maintained and interpreted all the Scriptural attributes of God and Christ, and in the *Commentary on John* commented on the *epinoiai* of Christ. The *Commentary* interestingly denies that an allegorical interpretation of the *Chaldean Oracles* can lead readers to know God.[91] Origen, qua *Christian* Platonist, agreed, while other Platonists surely did not, among the latter especially those who deemed the *Oracles* a "revelation" text.[92] The *Parmenides Commentary* posits One as an *epinoia* of God,[93] like Origen with Monas and Henad,[94] and declares that the One-God is conceptualised as One because of its "infinite power." Now, Origen also conceived God as having infinite power and greatness: "God's greatness has no limit [πέρας]" and God's providence runs "from the infinite [ἐξ ἀπείρου] to the infinite [ἐπ' ἄπειρον] and further" (*Sel.Ps.* 144). God is "from infinities to infinity," ἐξ ἀπείρων ἐπ' ἄπειρον (*Or.* 27.16). Origen, also in the *Commentary on Canticles*, anticipated Gregory Nyssen's concept of God's infinity as the basis of the unending striving towards God (*epektasis*).[95] In the *Parmenides Commentary*, immediately afterwards, we find a further parallel with Origen: God, the One, is "an inconceivable Hypostasis, without multiplicity… without any other *ennoia*, since this Hypostasis is and is conceived as superior to these things." Origen also deemed God, the One, primarily the Father, a Hypostasis, superior to all creatures and notions. Origen's concept of Hypostasis, which he applied to the Father, primary One, and the Son, secondary One (One-Many), and the Spirit, influenced not only subsequent Trinitarian theology, but even "pagan" Platonism, such as Porphyry and his

[90] *C.Parm*. 9.26–10.11.

[91] *C.Parm*. 9.1–10.11.

[92] I.L.E. Ramelli, 'Revelation' for Christians and Pagans and their Philosophical Allegoresis," in E.G. Simonetti & C. Hall (eds.). *Divination and Revelation in Later Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023) 49-72.

[93] *C.Parm*. 1.24–2.2.

[94] Or. *Princ*. 1.1.6.

[95] Arguments in my "Divine Power in Origen of Alexandria: Sources and Aftermath," in A. Marmodoro and I.F. Viltanioti (eds.), *Divine Powers in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2017) 177–198; "Apokatastasis and Epektasis in Hom. in Cant.: The Relation between Two Core Doctrines in Gregory and Roots in Origen," in G. Maspero, M. Brugarolas & I. Vigorelli (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: In Canticum Canticorum. Commentary and Supporting Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 312–39. The same line is now followed by D. Mrugalski, "The Notion of Divine Infinity and Unknowability: Philo, Clement and Origen in a Polemic with Greek Philosophy," paper at the international conference, *Hellenism, Judaism, and Early Christianity: Transmission and Transformation of Ideas*, Czech Academy of Sciences, 12–13 September 2019, forthcoming in Berlin.

possible attribution of Origen's pivotal, innovative notion of Hypostasis to Plotinus.[96]

The *Parmenides*, and especially the dialectical structure of its hypotheses,[97] like all the "zetetic" philosophical method and Platonic dialectics, was taken over by Origen in the "zetetic," heuristic, and dialectical structure of his philosophical theology.[98] We have seen at the beginning of this essay that this line of investigation, developed from Plato to Origen, seems to be itself a heritage of the philosopher Parmenides.

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[96] Full argument for this in Ramelli, "Hypostasis."

[97] Stressed by D. Gardner, "The Ambiguity of the 'One' in Plato's *Parmenides*," *Methexis*, 30 (2018) 36–59.

[98] See my "Origen the 'Zetetic' and the Tradition of Philosophical Enquiry," in preparation.

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6.
Platonism and Eleaticism

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Abstract: This paper explores the appropriation of Eleatic philosophy by Plato and the Platonic tradition focusing on two claims made by Parmenides and how these are interpreted and incorporated into the Platonic system by Plato and Plotinus. The two claims are: "the all is one" and "for thinking and being are identical." It is argued that these two claims are deeply connected and their "appropriation" by Plato and Platonists is essential to the systematic construct that is Platonism.

Keywords: Eleaticism, Plato, Platonic tradition, "the all is one", appropriation.

1. *Introduction*

In this paper, I explore the appropriation of Eleatic philosophy by Plato and the Platonic tradition. In particular, I shall focus on two claims made by Parmenides and how these are interpreted and incorporated into the Platonic system by Plato and Plotinus. The two claims are: τὸ πᾶν ἕν ("the all is one") and τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι ("for thinking and being are identical").[1] I am concerned primarily with how Platonists understand these rather cryptic statements and not with whether their understanding is correct or not. My argument will be that these two claims are deeply connected and their "appropriation" by Plato and Platonists is essential to the systematic construct that is Platonism. All this will require some explaining, needless to say.

[1] For τὸ πᾶν ἕν see Pl. *Prm.* 128a8–9, 137b3–4, c4. At Pl. *Sph.* 244b6, Parmenides' thesis is ἓν τὸ πᾶν. At Pl. *Tht.* 180e3, the thesis is ἓν τε πάντα ἐστί. For τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι see DK 28 B3 (= LM 19 D6) and cf. DK 28 B8.34 (= LM 19 D8.39): ταὐτὸν δ' ἐστὶ νοεῖν τε καὶ οὕνεκεν ἔστιν νόημα.

2. *"All is one"*

Let us begin by confronting the paradoxical sounding nature of this assertion. If there is an "all" (τὸ πᾶν), then the all presumably has parts of some sort. In that case, the all is *not* one. At least, it is not one in the sense in which each of its parts is one. So, we may suppose that the commitment to the truth of this assertion is, in order to avoid self-contradiction, going to have to admit to different senses of "one," at least the different senses in which the all is itself one and each of its parts is one. But it is extremely difficult to see how there can be different senses of "one" unless there are also different senses of "being."[2] Yet if there are different senses of "being," the uncompromising Eleatic dilemma "is or is not" seems to be compromised.[3]

In the face of this puzzling result, we may want to suppose that Plato's reading of the Parmenidean "road," the road of "is" as opposed to the road of "is and is not," is tendentious.[4] How do we get from "being is" (τὸ ἐὸν ἔμμεναι) to "all is one" (τὸ πᾶν ἕν)?[5] Plato explains in *Sophist*. The claim "being is" makes a claim *about* being, namely, that it is or exists. In order for such a claim to be true, "being" and "is" must be distinct in meaning. If this were not the case, then there would be no difference between asserting that "being is being" and asserting that "being is".[6] But if "being" means something different from what "is" means, then "being" and "is" name two "things" and being is not one. Why, though, should the assertion that "being is" be interpreted by Plato to indicate that Parmenides is actually unable to claim that being is? Why, in other words, is Parmenides being saddled with the position of the "late learners" to the effect that predicative judgments are unjustified?

[2] I will not pause here to develop this intuitive point. But consider this. Suppose that "to be" is stipulated to be predicated uniquely of everything of which it is predicated. But why can we not then still say that a whole is one in a sense different from the oneness of the parts of the whole? Well, either the whole is just the sum of the parts or it is not. If it is, then there is not a whole that is real over and above the parts. And in that case, the all *is not* one. If it is not, then the whole is more than the sum of its parts. In that case, it has, by definition, being different from the being of the parts. If this were not so, then to be a whole would be the same as to be one or another of its parts.

[3] This is precisely Aristotle's point at *Ph*. 1.2, when he argues against the crude Eleatic dichotomy especially for its implication that it fails to acknowledge that potencies are real, but not real in the way that actualities are real.

[4] See DK 28 B6 (= LM 19 D7).

[5] See DK 28 B6.1 (= LM 19 D7.1). Laks and Most translate the whole sentence χρὴ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμμεναι, "it is necessary to say and think that this is being." They offer as an alternative: "it is necessary to say and to think this: that being [i.e. that which is] is."

[6] See Pl. *Sph*. 251a–c where the Stranger ridicules the "late learners" who assert that many things cannot be one nor can one thing be many. An ordinary predicative judgment, A is B, would violate this rule. That is, A cannot be B where "B" names something different from what "A" names; if "B" does not name something different from what "A" names, then A also cannot be B.

Our original question was why Plato takes "being is" to be equivalent to "all is one." The reason for this is that if the first claim is not interpreted as the second, then Parmenides is not in a position to make *any* judgments, since all judgments are predicative. On the other hand, if "being is" is read as "all is one," this may well be importantly true, but its truth requires us to relinquish the claim to the identity of "being" or "all" and "one."[7] It requires us to concede that however we describe being – say, according to the "signposts" on the road Parmenides travels in his poem – we cannot say that being is one.[8]

This is a portentous claim, as evidenced by Aristotle's rejection of it. As he argues in *Metaphysics*, "there is no difference between that which is one and that which is."[9] Aristotle's claim, however, is not in defense of Parmenides against Plato. Aristotle thinks that "being" is said in many ways and that, therefore, predicative judgments are not impossible. That is, in saying that "A is B," one is not thereby denying that "A is A." Plotinus, however, thinks that Aristotle is missing the point of Plato's argument against Parmenides. For as he argues in *Ennead* 6.9, there is a difference between that which is one and that which is.[10] This difference is more than the difference in meaning that Aristotle allows for "being" and "one." Aristotle agrees that there is a conceptual distinction between "being" and "one." But this conceptual distinction, curiously enough, never entails a real distinction within whatever is said to be or said to be one. Aristotle thinks that it is enough to maintain that the being and oneness of anything are mutually entailing even if they are conceptually distinct.

Plotinus' reply to this point is as follows. Absolute simplicity or oneness is uniquely instantiable. That is, there cannot be two things that are absolutely simple. If there were, *per impossibile*, then each would have to have a property that differentiates it from the other. In that case, each of the two and its property would have to be distinct. Therefore, neither of the two would be absolutely simple.[11] Hence, either being is absolutely simple or else being is not.

[7] This is the force of the argument at Pl. *Sph*. 244b–d.

[8] See Plot. 5.1.8.22–23, who alludes to Plato's criticism of Parmenides, adding that Parmenides in Plato's dialogue of that name speaks more accurately since there he says that Being is one-many. See G. Stamatellos, *Plotinus and the Presocratics: A Philosophical Study of Presocratic Influences in Plotinus'* Enneads (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007) 30–33.

[9] See Arist. *Metaph*. 4.2 1003b31–32: οὐδὲν ἕτερον τὸ ἓν παρὰ τὸ ὄν. What this means is that "one man exists" does not indicate anything different from "man exists" or even from "man." See 4.2 1003b26–27.

[10] See Plot. 6.9.2.16–29.

[11] It should be noted that this is exactly the argument that Aristotle uses, *Metaph*. 12.8 1074a31–38. This is explicitly an argument that the heavens must be one. But the reason for this is that since there must be a prime mover for each supposed heaven, and the prime mover must be both one in account (λόγῳ) and in number (ἀριθμῷ), there

But if being is absolutely simple, then Plato's argument against Parmenides can be adduced to show that "being" and "is" cannot be different; indeed, no predicative judgments in regard to being are possible. So, being has to be complex or *not* absolutely simple. So, the oneness of being is really distinct from being itself. Moreover, if being is not absolutely simple but complex, then the oneness of being must be distinct both from the oneness of the whole complex and the oneness of each of its components.

Plotinus is, of course, not rejecting Aristotle's claim that there is a first principle of all. He is rejecting the claim that "being" is its name. Insofar as any name is appropriate for that which is absolutely simple, that name is "One" or, as Plato says, "Good." I must pause here to try to dispel a common error made by those trying to understand Plotinus' defense of Plato's interpretation and rejection of Parmenides. It is frequently supposed that if the One is "beyond being," then it is nothing and, therefore, hardly fit to be called the first principle of all. Plotinus, relying on Plato's arguments in *Republic* and *Parmenides*, claims that the being that Aristotle thinks is identical with oneness and that is the focal point of first philosophy is essence or substantiality (οὐσία).[12] After all, Aristotle himself asserts that the age-old question "what is being?" is just the question "what is substantiality?".[13] Plotinus' argument that the first principle of all is above being is in fact equivalent to the claim that the first principle of all is above substantiality. It is not the claim that the first principle of all does not exist or does not have being in any sense. It is the claim that in the first principle of all, owing to its absolute simplicity, what it is and that it is are not distinct. Its oneness and its being are identical, which is a claim radically different from the claim that the One is above being, taken to mean that the One is nothing.[14]

If being is not absolutely one, then it is many or complex. But it is, neverthe-

cannot in fact be more than one prime mover. Aristotle agrees that the first principle of all must be absolutely simple, *Metaph.* 12.7 1072a22–23. Plotinus denies that the identification of the first principle as thinking thinking of thinking can achieve absolute simplicity, since thinking has intentional objects distinct from it. They cannot be merely conceptually distinct from it, since thinking is an οὐσία and the existence of an οὐσία is really distinct from the οὐσία itself. If the existence and essence of the unmoved mover were merely conceptually distinct, then Aristotle's proof that an unmoved mover exists would in fact fail to tell us *what* it is that exists.

[12] See Pl. *R.* 509b; *Prm.* 142b–c.

[13] See Arist. *Metaph.* 7.1 1028b2–4.

[14] The Idea of the Good is the "happiest of that which is" (εὐδαιμονέστατον τοῦ ὄντος) (Pl. *R.* 526e4–5, referring to e2), the "brightest of that which is" (τοῦ ὄντος τὸ φανότατον) (*R.* 518c9), and the "best among things that are" (τὴν τοῦ ἀρίστου ἐν τοῖς οὖσι) (*R.* 532c6–7). All these passages make it abundantly clear that to be beyond οὐσία is not to be nothing.

less, one as a whole complex.[15] This result is, for Plato, extremely important. Plato has argued in *Republic* that philosophers are distinguished from lovers of sights and sounds by the subject matter that each pursues. Philosophers love being and lovers of sights and sounds love what is midway between being and nothing, that which "is and is not simultaneously." The lovers of being or of intelligible reality are lovers of Forms and, presumably, of the superordinate Idea of the Good. But lovers of being express their love as the search for knowledge of being. And as it turns out, knowledge of being is knowledge of the "association" (κοινωνία) of Forms.[16] This association or interconnection indicates clearly enough internal relatedness. If, for example, "five is odd" is true, this is because the Form of Five and the Form of Odd are internally related such that it is necessarily true that whatever is five is odd. Naturally, because the opposite is not true – whatever is odd is five – the internal relatedness is not extensional equivalence. This internal relatedness, however, is internal to being or, more accurately, "perfect" or "complete" (παντελῶς) being. But there is nothing against such a claim if we have already established that being is complex and that its oneness is owing to its participation in oneness and not its identity with oneness absolutely.

In the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*, the internal complexity of being, that is, its qualified oneness, is demonstrated by the distinction between unqualified and qualified oneness. The one of the first hypothesis is hypothesized to be absolutely one.[17] The hypothesis is "if that which is one is one, the one would not be many" (εἰ ἕν ἐστιν, ἄλλο τι οὐκ ἄν εἴη πολλὰ τὸ ἕν). I take "the one," the subject of the sentence, to be Parmenides' one, which appears in the predicate position in "all is one."[18] What is absolutely or unqualifiedly one has no being. At the beginning of the second hypothesis, we learn precisely what having no being means.[19] Since that which has being must participate in essence, it follows that that which has no being must not participate in es-

[15] See Pl. *Sph.* 245b–c.

[16] See Pl. *R.* 476a4–7: ἀλλήλων κοινωνίᾳ.

[17] Pl. *Prm.* 137c4–142a7.

[18] Following Pl. *Prm.* 137b3–4, περὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς αὐτοῦ ὑποθέμενος, εἴτε ἕν ἐστιν εἴτε μὴ ἕν ("hypothesizing regarding the one itself, whether it is one or not one"). The one, as subject, is equivalent to "the all" and the alternatives in the predicate position, one or not one, indicate the alternatives. But these alternatives are not contraries, for they all can be both one and not one, as we have seen.

[19] See Pl. *Prm.* 142b5–6: ἓν εἰ ἔστιν, ἆρα οἷόν τε αὐτὸ εἶναι μέν, οὐσίας δὲ μὴ μετέχειν ("if it is one, then is it possible for it to be and not to partake of being"); cf. *Prm.* 141e9 (for the one of the first hypothesis): οὐδαμῶς ἄρα τὸ ἓν οὐσίας μετέχει ("then the one does not at all partake of being").

sence. Or, in the words of *Republic*, it must be "above" (ἐπέκεινα) essence. The interpretation of the one of the first hypothesis of *Parmenides* as identical to the Idea of the Good in *Republic* is no doubt controversial. The controversy, though, seems to me to be not well motivated since the examination in the second part of the dialogue is an examination of Parmenides' own hypothesis "the all is one" or "the one is"; it is not an examination of Plato's Idea of the Good or even of the One that Aristotle tells us is what Plato identified the Good with.[20] Rather, it is an "exercise" (γυμνασία) that explores the various ways in which "one" can be instantiated. It is, indeed, an inference from "the Idea of the Good is above essence or being" to "the one of the first hypothesis is identical with the Idea of the Good because it is absolutely one and so above essence or being." But it seems to be a necessary inference once we realize that the first hypothesis is focusing only on what unqualified oneness is, not on its causal relations (if any) or on how it can exist without being (as does the Idea of the Good). Unqualified oneness is such that what "has" it cannot even be said to be one or to be at all.

In the second hypothesis, all the properties that are denied of the one of the first hypothesis follow for the one that is *not* absolutely one or simple.[21] This is what being is, a one-many, as Plotinus puts it. That is, being is one as a "whole" and many in all of its "parts." So, the Parmenidean hypothesis "all is one" is confirmed and disconfirmed at the same time. The all is one, but only if it is also many. This is not, however, a mere correction to or adumbration of the Eleatic hypothesis. For the analysis and criticism concludes that one is prior to being.[22] Stated otherwise, the being of that which is absolutely one is prior to the being of that which is really distinct from its essence and so, though one, *not* absolutely one.[23] That which is absolutely one cannot even

[20] See Arist. *Metaph.* 14.4 1091b13–15: τῶν δὲ τὰς ἀκινήτους οὐσίας εἶναι λεγόντων οἱ μέν φασιν αὐτὸ τὸ ἓν τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτὸ εἶναι· οὐσίαν μέντοι τὸ ἓν αὐτοῦ ᾧοντο εἶναι μάλιστα ("Among those who posit the existence of immovable substances, some say that the one itself is the good itself"). A bit further on, 1091b22–25, Aristotle contrasts this position with that of Plato's successor as head of the Academy, Speusippus, who, owing to problems with the identification of Good and One, abandoned this, claiming that good arises from the One; it is not identical with it. The contrast seems to support the surmise that Plato (among others) is the one who is referred to in this passage as holding the identity of Good and One. Cf. also Arist. *EE* 1.8 1218a15–32, which refers to those who hold that τὸ ἕν is αὐτὸ τἀγαθόν.

[21] Pl. *Prm.* 142b1–155e3.

[22] See Plot. 6.9.2.16–29.

[23] The argument at Pl. *Prm.*141e9–142a1 is as follows: the one does not at all partake of essence or being (because it is absolutely one); therefore, the one is not at all. The next conclusion is drawn thus: therefore, the one is not such that it is one. This is so because (γάρ) if it were, by that very fact (ἤδη), it would also partake of essence. But as things stand (ἀλλ' ὡς ἔοικεν), the one is neither one nor is it. What this argument carefully asserts is that the one is

be one, where "one" names a predicate really distinct from the subject of that predicate. Anything that has "one" predicated of it must do so as the result of participating in essence.[24] For example, a Form F is one owing to its participation in the nature that its name names. The nature that it has is one, but not absolutely one, since absolute oneness is uniquely instantiable. As we shall see presently, this claim must be made in a slightly more nuanced manner in order to avoid the self-predication that challenges the theory of Forms in the first part of *Parmenides*.

If being is one and many or a whole of parts, then we should expect that the being of each of the ones constituting the many or each of the parts constituting the whole is distinguishable from the one that is the whole. In other words, within being there is a further distinction between senses of "one." But there is also a distinction between existence and being, between the εἶναι and οὐσία of the whole that being and its parts are. In the passage in *Sophist* dealing with the "greatest kinds," this distinction is developed with a view to establishing the internal relatedness of the parts of being.[25] There are five greatest kinds: being (τὸ ὄν), identity (ἡ ταὐτότης), difference (ἡ ἑτερότης), motion (ἡ κίνησις), and stability (ἡ στάσις).[26] Any Form, or anything at all exists by participating in being. Since being is one among the five greatest kinds, it is more correct to translate it as "existence." Any kind exists insofar as it participates in this kind, including the kind existence itself.[27] There is, accordingly, a clear distinction between τὸ ὄν and τὸ παντελῶς ὄν, which is the "sum" of all the "parts" of the intelligible world.[28] It is "perfect" or "complete" being that is one-many or a whole of parts whereas τὸ ὄν is the kind existence in which everything that exists, both in the intelligible world and in the sensible world, participates.

not in a way that implies that it partakes of essence, for this would mean that it is not absolutely one. It leaves open the possibility that it should be or exist without participating in essence or in being understood as substantiality. As we have seen, Plato already in *Republic* explicitly states that the Good exists without participating in essence.

[24] It cannot participate directly in the absolutely simple one since that does not have an essence in which it can participate.

[25] See Pl. *Sph.* 254b–259d.

[26] We note that "one" is not a greatest kind, since oneness is derived from participation in an essence. Identity is not oneness, since something's identity can entail that it is not one or at least not only one whereas what is one qua one cannot be many. See Pl. *Sph.* 257a4–6 where τὸ ὄν is one because it is different from the other kinds. But it is different by participating in a nature or essence.

[27] See Pl. *Sph.* 256d11–e4 where all of the kinds exist insofar as they participate in τὸ ὄν. We can therefore infer that the kind existence exists by participating in τὸ ὄν.

[28] See Pl. *Sph.* 248e7.

The requirement that the intelligible world contains internal relations is clear. Without these, all the parts of being would each be unequivocally one.[29] In order to justify the internal relatedness of the really real eternal entities that are found in the intelligible world, it must be shown that being is a one-many, that is, that being is *not* unqualifiedly one. Parmenides must be contradicted. But in demonstrating that being is not unqualifiedly one, we demonstrate at the same time that the first principle of all is not being; it is beyond being. Its existence is beyond the existence of anything that has being via the participation in essence. What this absolutely simple existence could be, Plato does not tell us. Nor does he tell us why it is to be identified with the Idea of the Good. Aristotle agrees with Plato that the first principle of all must be absolutely simple.[30] But he denies that this principle can be beyond essence. If we allow that the age-old question "what is being?" is just the question "what is essence (or substantiality)?" we must forego the claim that the first principle is absolutely simple. If we insist on its absolute simplicity, then we cannot identify that principle with being understood as essence or substantiality.

One of the more remarkable episodes in the history of ancient philosophy occurred when Plotinus, endorsing everything said in the above paragraph, goes on to find in Aristotle himself the way to conceptualize an absolutely simple first principle of all. Plotinus follows Aristotle in identifying the Idea of the Good and the One, the first principle of all. The principal operational "property" of the One Plotinus draws on is that it is primary ἐνέργεια.[31] Ploti-

[29] In Pl. *Phd*. 78d5 and *Smp*. 211b1 the Forms are said each to be μονοειδές; in *Phlb*. 15b1 they are said each to be μονάδες. This of course does not invalidate the internal complexity of each.

[30] See Arist. *Metaph*. 12.6 1071b19–20; 12.7 1072a31; 12.8 1073a30, 1074a35–36; 13.1 1076a9–10.

[31] On Plotinus' use of the term ἐνέργεια for the One, see 5.4.2.28–39, especially 35, συνούσης ἐνεργείας ("its internal activity"); 5.1.6.38; 6.7.18.6: παρ' ἐκείνου [the Good] ἐνεργείας ("from the activity of [the Good]"); 6.8.20.9–15, especially 14–15: εἰ οὖν τελειότερον ἡ ἐνέργεια τῆς οὐσίας, τελειότατον δὲ τὸ πρῶτον, πρῶτον ἂν ἐνέργεια εἴη ("if then activity is more perfect than substantiality, the [the Good] would be perfect activity"); 6.8.12.22–37, especially 25, ὅτι μὴ ἕτερον ἐνέργεια καὶ αὐτός ("that it is not different from its activity") and 36, ἢ γὰρ ἐνέργεια μόνον ἢ οὐδ' ὅλως ἐνέργεια ("for [the Good] is activity alone, or it is not activity at all"); 6.8.13.5–9. At 6.8.16.16–17, the One is an ἐνέργημα ἑαυτοῦ, meaning that it is not an actualized result of any potency, but identical with its activity, as the next line indicates: [the One is] ὡς ἐνεργεῖ αὐτός ("[the One] is as it acts"). There are three passages where Plotinus qualifies ἐνέργεια with οἷον ('sort of', 'in a way'), his usual way to indicate that the noun is to be understood analogically, not literally. But in all three passages, 5.5.3.23; 6.8.7.47; and 8.16.24, Plotinus uses the word to indicate that the One's ἐνέργεια is not distinct from its being or existence or from any other putative property of it. In 6.8.7.49–50: ὅτι μᾶλλον κατὰ τὸ εἶναι ἡ ἐνέργεια ἢ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τὸ εἶναι Henry-Schwyzer, if Kirchhoff's emendation of ὅτι to οὔτι is necessary, as I would contend it is, then Plotinus is, with the use of κατά, clearly making the point that no compositeness resulting from predication is correct in reference to the One. That is, the One's activity is no more predicated of its being than is its being predicated of its activity. See Arist. *APr*. 1.1 24a17 and 29, for the canonical expression τι κατά τινος to indicate predication.

nus is here adopting Aristotle's argument that absolute simplicity is possible only for that which is pure activity, that which is without potency of any sort. According to Plotinus, whereas this is not possible for an intellect or for intellection, it is possible *tout court*, and indeed necessary that there be a first principle of all and that it be absolutely simple. Activity is not, strictly speaking, a property of the One or of the Idea of the Good; it is what the One is. If the One had *any* properties, it would, as a substance having that property, stand in a real relation to everything else. But the One is not really related to anything; things are really related to it.[32] Thus, Plotinus borrows an insight and argument from Aristotle to explicate a Platonic argument against Eleaticism. The all is one, but only in the sense that entails that it is many. For this reason, the first principle of all must be beyond the all or beyond being. Its oneness must be exempt from having the being of that which partakes of essence. From the first principle of all, everything flows. That is, the unqualified One is a metaphysical terminus. The other terminus is that which has no oneness or limit in itself, namely, matter. Between these two termini, everything that exists can be hierarchically arrayed. Moreover, against this hierarchical framework, everything can be arrayed normatively. The closer anything is to the integrated unity of its kind, the closer it is to the Good; the less of an integrated unity it is, again according to its own kind, the further it is from the Good.

The "parricide" of father Parmenides results from an analysis of "all is one" that leads to a necessary distinction between "being" and "one." But the truly remarkable result of making this distinction is the ontological priority of the latter to the former. And this in turn requires a further distinction between "being" and "exist." The "fullness" of being requires the absolute simplicity of existence itself. This is evidently the Thomistic *ipsum esse avant la lettre*, implicitly in Plato and explicitly in Plotinus. A further remarkable feature developed from reflecting on the Eleatic contribution to philosophy is that the only way that participation can be coherently expressed is if we understand the Form – the "one-over-many" – as one in a sense other than that of absolute simplicity. Although a Form is one, it is really distinct from the nature that its name names. And participation is in that nature. Thus, participation does not compromise the (relative) oneness that the Form has. And the nature of a Form can be participated in since its own peculiar sort of oneness (*esse essentiae*) is not in conflict with its having an ontological status both in the

[32] See Plot. 1.7.1.16–17; 6.8.8.12–18.

intelligible world and in its participants. In short, it is one but not in the sense in which oneness would preclude being multiply present in its instances. That is, there is nothing about largeness as such that precludes many things being large, that is, having largeness in them. In itself, it does not exist as one. Its oneness is that of the Form. But that is so for any nature and any Form. It is the identical Form that has the nature that the Form's name names. That Form is just Being. And the multiplicity of Being, the recognition of the *esse essentiae* of each Form, entails the oneness of Being, the necessary interconnectedness of all intelligible reality. As we shall see in the next section, this fact entails and is entailed by the identity of Being and the Intellect that is eternally cognitively identical with it.

3. *"For thinking and being are identical"*[33]

If all is one, it can hardly be supposed that thinking and being would be different. Why, though, must they be identical as opposed to being merely somehow similar? The answer to this question reveals much about how Plato and Platonists responded to the Eleatic challenge.

Suppose that being is, generally, the object of thinking. Either thinking consists in a representation of being or it is identical with being itself. It cannot be the former; therefore, it must be the latter. If thinking were an activity consisting in representing being, then thinking would have to represent the representations. In other words, "having" a representation would be the having of a representation of being, and not thinking of being directly. Stated

[33] This is the Platonic interpretation of DK 28 B3 (= LM 19 D6): τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἔστιν τε καὶ εἶναι. The fragment is frequently understood by contemporary scholars in an entirely anodyne sense according to which "what is there for thinking is there for being," that is, it exists. See, e.g., J. Palmer, *Plato's Reception of Parmenides* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 46; L. Tarán, *Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965) 41–44. Most relevant for my purposes is that Platonists do not interpret this phrase this way. I question, however, the claim that the Greek can be made to yield this anodyne sense. See also A.P.D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides*, rev. ed. (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2008) 75, n.4: "the same is there to be thought of and to be"; A.H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides*, rev. ed. (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2009) 58: "for the same thing is for conceiving as is for being". Coxon explains his translation at 296–297. In my opinion, G. Vlastos, "Parmenides' Theory of Being," in G. Vlastos, *Studies in Greek Philosophy,* vol. 1, ed. by D. Graham (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) 155, has the correct translation, "to think (*sc.* Being) and to be are the same thing)." I would only add that αὐτό should be translated as "identical" not "same" since that word always indicates what is one, not what are at least two. See Stamatellos, *Plotinus and the Presocratics,* 70–80, who has a good discussion of Plotinus' and Proclus' use of B3, although he seems inclined to take this as a misinterpretation of Parmenides.

otherwise, if thinking were representational, then there would be an external relation between thinking and being. But if being is the direct object of thinking, then the relation would have to be internal.

Two obvious objections immediately arise. First, there is much thinking that is obviously representational, for example, what we do when we think of a proposition, which is true or false depending on whether it represents being. Second, why should we suppose that we do in fact think being directly? Perhaps all we have access to are representations or, better, putative representations.

It is a natural conjecture that Parmenides himself identified thinking with being for approximately this reason. If being or the all is one, then either thinking is identical with being or thinking does not have being. But Parmenides does not answer the question – despite his "signposts" on the way of truth – "what is being?". For this reason, we cannot say why thinking is supposed to be identical with being. The Platonic answer to this question is that being is immaterial form. To be is to be form. That which is not purely form is being to a lesser extent. Form is what Being is primarily; derivatively, form is being. The really real is one-many. Representationalism is, accordingly, apt for what is not really real, whereas it is not apt for what is really real. It is of course possible to stipulate a symbol for something. We can say that "triangle" stands for a circle and "circle" stands for a triangle. The reason we find this pointless is that symbols in themselves are meaningless. They only represent when they are used by someone capable of language in order to indicate the real. The less we have contact with the real, the more our symbols are arbitrary and not really representational. For example, the symbols we use to stand for conjectured sub-atomic particulars are more or less arbitrary. But the symbols we use for the objects of our sense-experience become fixed as representations of what we can and do experience perceptually. But with the supposed representation of Being, we are doing something that is closer to the former case than it is to the latter. We can aim to represent Being with names like "Justice" and "Circularity." But this does not even begin to get us closer to cognition of Being or Forms. That is why if knowledge is possible it must be non-representational. What non-representational cognition of Being is is nothing but cognitive identity of the knower and Being itself.

Perhaps the easiest way to capture the insight first arrived at by Parmenides and then exploited by Plato and Platonists is to return to the complexity of Being. As we have seen, Being cannot be unqualifiedly one; there is complexity in the composition of whatever being is. This complexity is not just the fact

that, say, X-ness and Y-ness are really distinct. Despite their distinctness, they must nevertheless be one. That is, Being as a whole or one consists in whatever X-nesses and Y-nesses there are. How is this possible? It is possible only if Being is eternally thought by an intellect who sees the unity in diversity, who sees that what Being is is multiple. But this seeing is not a representation of Being for the fairly obvious reason that no such representation could convert Forms that are merely diverse into a unity. To see that the Morning Star is the Evening Star is to see that what is conceptually represented as two is in reality one. Astronomy must look to this unity, not the conceptual diversity. So, too, dialectic must look to the metaphysics, not the epistemology. An intellect sees what is one as diverse, but eternally so. And it does so not representationally since the diversity is as ontologically grounded as the unity. If this were not the case, among other things there would be no explanation for eternal and necessary truths. The unity-in-diversity must be a metaphysical fact, but it can only be that if the intellect is identical with what it eternally thinks.

Stated in other terms, the distinction between one "part" of being and another cannot be a conceptual distinction which is strictly on the epistemological side. It must be a real distinction, specifically a real minor distinction within Being, not amongst Beings. But the unity of those parts that are distinct according to a real minor distinction cannot be conceptual either. Such conceptualization is what occurs, for example, when we generalize, saying that we will consider A, B, and C as one or as belonging to a single class. But this clearly will not do, since the internal relatedness among Forms is not imposed arbitrarily. Nor is this internal relatedness that of concepts that are stipulated to be mutually entailing when embedded in the relevant propositions. The internal relatedness is *within* Being. The unity of Being is exactly the unity of one intellect that is identical with Being in all its complexity.

In Plato's dialogues, there appears to be a gradual awareness of the need to identify intellect with Being. In the so-called affinity argument in *Phaedo*, the soul is inferred to be like the eternal Forms just because it is capable of knowing them.[34] This knowing is a state (πάθημα) of the soul. It is a state that results from the only type of contact that the immaterial can have with the immaterial. This contact must be the presence of the Form in the soul. "Contact" is the way that Plato typically indicates a lack of intermediacy. Nevertheless, we can still insist that the contact may be represented both to oneself and to others in

[34] See Pl. *Phd.* 79d1–7.

logos. This contact may be termed "cognitive identity" as opposed to numerical identity to indicate that the identity does not eliminate the possibility of the Form's being identical with another intellect. But such cognitive identity is not the eternal identity of thinking and Being discussed above. The identity of intellect and Being is not episodic nor does it require representation either to itself or to others. This identity is indicated in the relation of the Demiurge to the "Living Animal" in *Timaeus*.[35] The Demiurge wanted to make the cosmos like himself and at the same time like the Living Animal. Here the Living Animal is the best "among intelligible things" (τῶν νοουμένων). A little later, the Demiurge himself is said to be the best "among eternal intelligible beings" (τῶν νοητῶν ἀεί τε ὄντων).[36] Since the Demiurge is just an intellect, it seems entirely legitimate to infer the cognitive identity of the Demiurge and the Living Animal.

These suggestive passages are fully realized in one of the most important texts in the dialogues for the entire Platonic understanding and appropriation of Eleaticism. In this passage in *Sophist*, the Eleatic Stranger asks rhetorically if we should leave perfect Being (τὸ παντελῶς ὄν) bereft of motion, life, soul, and thought (φρόνησις).[37] The answer is, of course, we should not. But the inclusion of motion, etc. within perfect Being cannot mean in the dialectical context within which this passage is set that these are simply to be included alongside the eternal and immutable Forms. The "friends of the Forms" who resist their inclusion do so because they maintain that perfect Being must be inactive because perfect Being is eternal and unchangeable. Their inclusion by the Eleatic Stranger does not mean that perfect Being is now to be understood not to be eternal and unchangeable, but rather that perfect Being is not bereft of activity. This is just the activity of thinking all that is thinkable, not representationally but rather by identity. If this were not the correct interpretation, then we would have to suppose that the friends of the Forms are denying something that they most certainly already accept, namely, that thinking, motion, soul, and so on are real, even though they are not really real. What they in fact want to maintain is that if the activity of thinking is allowed into

[35] See Pl. *Ti.* 29e1–3 with 30c2–d1.

[36] Pl. *Ti.* 37a1. A.E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928) 176, ad loc., says "it is a mistake to get some kind of modern 'idealism' out of this simple phrase." I would say we are here dealing with a very ancient "idealism."

[37] See Pl. *Sph.* 248e7–249a2. See my "The 'Holy Solemnity' of Forms and the Platonic Interpretation of the *Sophist*," *AncPhil* 26 (2006) 291–304, for an extensive analysis of this passage in the light of the later Platonic interpretation of it.

the realm of perfect Being, then the eternality and stability of Forms will be destroyed. The Stranger does not want to question this claim; rather, he insists that the inclusion of thinking does not have this result. But eternal thinking without change cannot be representational and it cannot be discursive. It is better to suppose that thinking does not dislodge perfect Being because thinking is identical with perfect Being. A putative representation of it by an eternal intellect would amount to eternal ignorance of what the representation supposedly represents. It would most certainly not be like a representation of one's own personal experience, such as occurs when we recount our experiences to others.

There are, as Plato recognized, modes of cognition other than the paradigmatic mode of thinking eternally. Grades of cognition correspond to grades of being, something that Parmenides implicitly concedes by distinguishing the way of truth from the way of seeming. The relation between the paradigmatic modes and other modes is as vexed as is the relation between perfect Being and its ontological images. Plato appears to countenance the possibility that an embodied intellect can attain to paradigmatic thinking. Presumably, as expressed in the divided line in *Republic*, this would require an "ascent" to the Idea of the Good. But this ascent and the subsequent descent moving through Forms indicates an irremovable discursivity. It seems more likely that Plato recognized that while, owing to recollection, we do have primary knowledge of Forms, and only with this can we have any other type of rational cognition, nevertheless, what we achieve while embodied is a derivative of the paradigm. This is because all embodied thinking is inextricably bound up with representations. Thus, the practice of collection and division is not and does not result in the cognitive identification with Forms, but rather with the natures of Forms as these are cognized universally. For example, in collecting and dividing types of pleasure as in *Philebus*, we are actually dividing concepts (νοήματα), which are the natures of Forms grasped by us universally. We do this with the aid of representations, both linguistic and non-linguistic. But the grasping of the natures of Forms universally arises from the sense-experience of that which "in a way is and is not simultaneously" as *Republic* expresses it.[38] The mode of cognition corresponding to the equivocal status of the sensible

[38] Pl. *R.* 478d5–6: οἷον ἅμα ὄν τε καὶ μὴ ὄν. The word οἷον does not qualify the simultaneity; rather, it qualifies the apparent contradiction. The ontological status of sensibles does not constitute a violation of the law of non-contradiction because "is and is not" indicates a *gradation* of being, midway between the really real and nothing.

world is *doxa*, which can never become that mode of cognition corresponding to Being, namely, *epistēmē*. I take it that the radical discontinuity between *epistēmē* and *doxa* is Plato's version of Parmenides' claim that the "way of *alētheia*" and the "way of *doxa*" are *different* ways.[39]

Plotinus has a more explicit rejection of the view that embodied cognition can aspire to what the disembodied paradigm does. Plotinus argues that our true intellects are undescended.[40] Our undescended intellects are eternally doing what Intellect does, namely, thinking all that is intelligible as one-many. This thinking is not directly available to us; rather, the separate Forms are as "laws" (νόμοι) written in us.[41] I interpret these "laws" rather broadly to indicate all necessary truths represented propositionally. These laws are what we invoke in any act of understanding. Accessing these laws is actually self-discovery since Being and thinking are identical and we are ideally intellects. Nevertheless, there is a real distinction between thinking and the objects of thinking.[42] Hence, self-discovery by thinking could not be union with the One, which does not think.

The identity, yet distinctness, of thinking and Being would not be possible if thinking were not immaterial. This is, for all Platonists, Parmenides' central insight. Even diminished, embodied thinking requires an immaterial intellect. Here is a sketch of the argument why this must be so.

All thinking is of form, that is, of what can be identified (and re-identified) and be recognized to be different from other forms. Here "form" is, roughly, equivalent to "that which is intelligible," available to an intellect as opposed to the senses. But form can be sensed, too. Indeed, the identical form that is sensed can be thought. If this were not so, then thinking would be radically cut off from the sensible world and though this is a conclusion that idealists would embrace, it is not Parmenides' conclusion nor is it the conclusion of any Platonist.

What differentiates the sensing of a form and the thinking of it is that the sensing is of the form as particularized, while the thinking is of the form

[39] See Palmer, *Plato's Reception of Parmenides*, chs. 3–4.

[40] See Plot. 3.4.3.24; 4.3.5.6; 4.3.12.3–4; 4.7.10.32–33; 4.7.13.1–3; 4.8.4.31–35; 4.8.8.8; 6.4.14.16–22; 6.7.5.26–29, 17.26–27; 6.8.6.41–43 for Plotinus' claim that our intellects are "undescended," a claim that most later Platonists rejected.

[41] See Plot. 5.3.4.2. Plotinus adds that there is another way that forms are available to us, when we are able to see Intellect as present to us. I take it, though, that seeing this does not amount to thinking as Intellect does of being as one-many.

[42] See Plot. 5.6.6.24–26.

universalized. This strict bifurcation of cognitive modalities is not optional or alterable. By our senses, we cognize form as particularized and by our intellects we cognize form as universalized. It is this fact that leads us to the immateriality of intellect. The form as particularized may arrive in whatever part of the body that one's theory demands. Let it be a brain where the particularized form is just a particular state of one part of the brain. But the form as universalized could not be a particular state of the brain or of anything else. Some defenders of the immateriality of the intellect conflate the form with an hypostasized universal. It is not completely wrong to do so, since we can of course express our cognizing of form universally in universal linguistic terms. But to leave it at that would be to miss the crucial point concerning the identity of thinking and Being. It would be to turn thinking into a representation of thinking thereby making it entirely opaque why thinking is identical with Being.

Thinking form universally must be self-thinking where all the particularity that a form can potentially acquire is set aside. For example, to think of circularity is to set aside any and all particular dimensions that circularity can manifest. To think of the form universally is to think the form radically non-particularized. But this is to think it non-representationally since all representations are as particular as any particularized form. This means that the presence of the form in the intellect, when grasped universally, is the grasping of the form that informs the intellect. And again, there can be no particularity here, else the grasping would be representational. The grasping has to be self-grasping or self-thinking, the awareness of the content the subject of which is identical with the subject that is aware.

4. *Platonism as Refined Eleaticism*

If we combine the Platonic reading of "all is one" and of "thinking and being are identical," we have a pretty good summary of Platonic metaphysics and epistemology. Being and thinking are situated within a metaphysical hierarchy the apex of which must be beyond Being owing to its absolute simplicity. Being is essentially one-many and identical with eternal intellect. Participation in Being is, therefore, necessarily participation in intellect. But cats, participating in the Form of Cat, do not have intellects any more than they have the Form of a Dog. Everything that has a form does indeed have Being and intellect present to it, but the presence is limited by the matter of that

which receives Being and intellect. Thus, cats have a certain type of body and because they have this body, they do not have the capacity to instantiate the body of a dog. For an analogous reason, they do not have the capacity to think.

Plato's remarkable encounter with Parmenides leads him to reflect on Parmenides' challenge to speak coherently about reality or truth. The Platonic response is to argue that being or what is is indeed one, but it cannot be unqualifiedly one. For what is unqualifiedly one cannot even be said to be one. So, what is one is intrinsically many or a multitude (πλῆθος). Not only does this remove being from the status of first principle; it makes being subordinate to the first principle of all, what Plato and Platonists call the Idea of the Good or the One. Once subordination is fixed, the first principle of all establishes a criterion for being: what is closer to the One has more being; what is further away from the One has less being. Since the oneness of everything other than the first is qualified, the criterion of proximity to the first is a criterion of integrative unity. More particularly, it is integrated unity according to kind. Thus, things with souls have more unity than things without souls, which do not possess the organizational power of a soul. Things with intellect have more unity than things with souls alone. This is because the integrative unity that is the cognitive identity of an intellect with its objects is greater than that of a soul. Thus, Plato says that the virtuous person "becomes one out of many."[43] But virtue alone "without philosophy" (ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας), as Plato points out, can only take one so far, and not nearly far enough to achieve lasting happiness.[44] The addition of philosophy is *transformational* because it leads one to identify with one's own intellect and therefore to identify (so much as we are able) with Being.

I speculate that Plato identified the first principle of all as One even before he came to see that the first principle of all must be the goal or *telos* of everything, and so the Good. It is a psychological truth that everyone seeks the real Good.[45] The real Good for anything will be the integrative unity of that kind of thing. If the measure of being is the measure of unity, that is because the One is that measure. That is, it is the ultimate source of the being of

[43] See Pl. *R.* 443e1. Cf. *R.* 423d3–6, applying both to the individual and to the city, and 462a2–b3, where something is made as good as possible by being made one. See Plot. 6.9.3; Procl. *in Prm.* 7.74.3ff. Klibansky. In both these extended accounts of ascent to the first principle we see the focus on intellectual activity as essential for the integrative unity of rational animals.

[44] See Pl. *R.* 619c6–d1.

[45] See Pl. *R.* 505d5–9. Also, Procl. *Theol.Plat.* 2.6 40.25–27.

everything, which is just what Plato says the Good is.[46] We desire the Good because it is from the Good that we have our being, both in the sense of our endowment and in the sense of our capacity for achieving "assimilation to the divine as much as possible" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν).[47] Parmenides' "way of truth" is, for Platonists, a way back to the source of truth.[48] In answer to a question Parmenides apparently never asks, namely, "What is at the end of the way of truth? Platonists answer, "the Idea of the Good."

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[46] See Pl. *R.* 516c1–2. The Idea of the Good is "in a certain sense the cause of all things" (ἐκείνων ὧν σφεῖς ἑώρων τρόπον τινὰ πάντων αἴτιος).

[47] See Pl. *Tht.* 176b1–2.

[48] See Pl. *R.* 508d10–e1; 517c2–3.

7.
Augustine and Eleatic Ontology

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Abstract: In this essay, I first show the almost total absence of references to the Eleatics in Augustine's works and the scarcity of information that his Latin sources could have provided him. Then I select some distinctive theses of the ontology of the Eleatics, as it emerges from the Diels-Kranz collection of their fragments. I then illustrate the general aspects and the essential contents of Augustinian ontology. Finally, I briefly compare Augustine's main ideas on being with the previously selected Eleatic theses.

Keywords: Augustine of Hippo, creation, Eleatic attributes of being, God, mutability

Although the critical literature on Augustine (354–430 AD) is very extensive, to my knowledge, it has never dealt thematically with his relationship with the philosophy of the Eleatics.[1] After all, there is no evidence that Augustine knew anything about the content of this philosophy; therefore, it is not possible to conclusively state that he consciously confronted it. However, this does not prevent us from establishing a theoretical comparison between Eleatic and Augustinian ontology, regardless of their actual historical relationship. We may limit ourselves to observing similarities and differences between the two, without explaining similarities in terms of influence/reception or differences in terms of reaction/rejection. Such a comparison is not only theoretically legitimate but also hermeneutically useful, in so far as it can highlight the peculiarities of Augustine's conception of being.

I will begin by showing the almost total absence of references to the Eleatics in Augustine's works and the scarcity of information that his Latin sources could have provided him. Next, I select some distinctive theses of the ontolo-

[1] The huge bibliographic database edited by the *Zentrum für Augustinus-Forschung* of the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, which I consulted on 23 October 2019 (https://www.augustinus.de/literatur/literaturdatenbank/recherche), included no titles containing the word 'Eleatic*', only two titles containing the name 'Parmenid*' but referring to Plato's *Parmenides*, and no titles containing the word 'Melissus.'

gy of the Eleatics, as it emerges from the Diels-Kranz collection of their fragments. The following two sections illustrate the general aspects and the essential contents of Augustinian ontology. Finally, I conclude by briefly comparing Augustine's main ideas on being with the previously selected Eleatic theses.

1. *The Scarcity of Augustine's Knowledge of the Eleatics*

There is only one instance in all Augustine's writings in which Eleatic philosophers are called by name: in the fourth book of the *Contra Iulianum*, dated 421 AD.[2] There, Augustine lists the names of the philosophers that the Pelagian bishop Julian of Eclanum (*ca*. 380–455 AD), who meant to reject the idea of carnal concupiscence as that evil by which original sin is transmitted to children, had cited in the *Ad Turbantium*. These philosophers are:

> Thales of Miletus, one of the seven wise men, then Anaximander, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Leucippus, Democritus, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Melissus, Plato, and the Pythagoreans.[3]

For each of these "natural philosophers" (*philosophi physici*), among whom we note the names of Parmenides and Melissus, Julian had mentioned their doctrine relating to natural things (*dogma de naturalibus rebus*), that is, their opinions on natural causes (*opiniones de naturalibus causis*). What in particular did Julian say about the theories of Parmenides and Melissus? We do not know. According to Augustine, Julian said nothing that had anything to do with the subject discussed there, namely lust. Perhaps, since these were *opinions* on the causes of physical phenomena, Julian had made special reference to the *opinative* part of the doctrine of Parmenides, which regards becoming and concerns fire and earth, the cosmic crowns, or perhaps the factor that determines the sex of the offspring; on this part, Julian (like Augustine) could have been informed at least in part by Cicero and possibly by Christian authors such as Lactantius.[4] We should not imagine that Julian provided a

[2] Cf. J. Anoz, "Cronología de la producción agustiniana," *Augustinus* 47 (2002) 229–312, 241.

[3] Aug.Hipp. *C.Iul*. 4.75, transl. *WSA* 1/24, 423. Unless otherwise specified, translations of Augustine's passages are taken from *The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press), abbreviated as *WSA*. The volume and pages are indicated in brackets. The abbreviations of the titles of Augustine's works are those of the *Augustinus-Lexikon*, available at https://www.augustinus.de/projekte-des-zaf/augustinus-lexikon/werkeliste (there are also specified the reference editions of the Latin text).

[4] Cf. Cic. *ac*. 2.118 = DK 28 A35; *ND*. 1.28 = DK 28 A37; Lact. *Op.dei* 12.12 = DK 28 A54.

great deal of information; on the contrary, it is probable that the information was reduced to very little, as in the following doxographic passage of Cicero's *Academica priora* (*Lucullus*), which can be seen as a watermark in the *Contra Iulianum*:

> At the head of the list Thales, the one of the Seven to whom the remaining six are stated to have unanimously yielded the first place, said that all things are made of water. But in this he did not carry conviction with his fellow-citizen and associate Anaximander; Anaximander said that there exists an infinity of substance from which the universe was engendered. Afterwards his pupil Anaximenes held that air is infinite, but the things that spring from it finite, and that earth, water and fire are engendered, and then the universe of things out of these. Anaxagoras held that matter is infinite, but that out of it have come minute particles entirely alike, which were at first in a state of medley but were afterwards reduced to order by a divine mind. Xenophanes at a somewhat earlier date said that the universe is one, and that this is unchanging, and is god, and that it never came into being but has existed for ever, of a spherical shape; Parmenides said that the primary element is fire, which imparts motion to the earth that receives from it its conformation; Leucippus's elements were solid matter and empty space; Democritus resembled him in this but was more expansive in the rest of his doctrines; Empedocles taught the four ordinary elements that we know; Heraclitus, fire; Melissus, that the present infinite and unchangeable universe has existed and will exist always. Plato holds the view that the world was made by god out of the all-containing substance, to last for ever. The Pythagoreans hold that the universe originates out of numbers and the first principles of the mathematicians.[5]

The list of philosophers here is exactly the same as that reported by Augustine. Let us suppose that Julian's source was this passage from Cicero, and let us suppose that Augustine had known this passage from the time he composed his first work left to us, the dialogue *Contra Academicos* (386 AD).[6] What would Augustine learn from Cicero about Eleatic ontology? Concerning Parmenides, Cicero only recalls his doctrine of the active role of fire and the passive role of earth. To Melissus, instead, Cicero attributes only the thesis of the perennial existence in the past and in the future of that which is infinite

[5] Cic. *ac*. 2.118, transl. H. Rackham, *Cicero in Twenty-Eight Volumes*, *XIX*: *De natura deorum, Academica* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933) 619.

[6] On Augustine's knowledge of Cicero's works, and especially of his *Academica*, see M. Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, 2 vols. (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1958), vol. 2, 132; H. Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 2 vols. (Stockholm: Alqvist & Wiksell, 1967), vol. 1, 52–70. For a long time it was thought that Augustine had known only the *Academica posteriora*: see in particular P. Drewniok, *De Augustini contra Academicos libris* III (Wrocław: Schlesische Volkszeitung, 1913); T.J. Hunt, *A Textual History of Cicero's* Academici Libri (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 23. Today, although it is believed more likely that Augustine used the second version, the possibility that he had access to the first is not excluded: see e.g. M. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* 2: *Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1985) 177–178; T. Fuhrer, *Augustin, Contra Academicos (vel De Academicis), Bücher 2 und 3*, Einleitung und Kommentar (Berlin & New York: W. de Gruyter, 1997) 38.

and immutable (*Melissus hoc quod esset infinitum et immutabile et fuisse semper et fore*). The link between this last thesis, properly ontological, and the thought of Parmenides is completely omitted by Cicero, also because Cicero makes no mention of the other part of Parmenides' philosophy, the one concerning truth.[7] Nothing in this passage of Cicero's *Academica* could lead Augustine to unite Melissus and Parmenides in the same philosophical school.

If anything, Augustine could see an affinity between the position of Melissus and that of Xenophanes, who posited the existence of something immutable, ungenerated and eternal: the One-Everything (*unum esse omnia*). However, we cannot say that Augustine ever made a connection between the two philosophers. He mentions Melissus only in this passage of the *Contra Iulianum*. Xenophanes, besides here, is mentioned only in two passages of the *City of God*: one (7.17) in which Augustine declares, "as Xenophanes of Colophon writes," to expose what he thinks, not what he claims; the other (18.25) in which Xenophanes is mentioned, together with Anaximander and Anaximenes, among the naturalists (*physici*) who became famous in the same period during which the Jewish people were in captivity in Babylon.

It is important that, when in Book 8 of the *City of God* Augustine describes Greek philosophers by dividing them into two genres (i.e., the Italic and the Ionic), he does not mention Xenophanes, Parmenides or Melissus (to say nothing of Zeno of Elea, whom Augustine never mentions at all in his works), whereas he pauses to expose the doctrines of Pythagoras, Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Diogenes (of Apollonia), Archelaus, Socrates and especially Plato.[8] Not only Parmenides and Melissus are omitted; even Xenophanes finds no place in the reviews of ancient philosophers that Augustine carries out in the *Contra Academicos* and in his Letter 118.[9] It is as if, for him, the essential lines of the history of ancient philosophy could be redrawn without referring to the Eleatics!

The historical and theoretical importance of Parmenides' thoughts on being seem to have completely escaped Augustine's attention, most probably because he knew little or nothing about them. Moreover, the sources he had at his disposal could not teach him much about this, as far as we know. We have

[7] On the two parts of Parmenides' philosophy (κατὰ ἀλήθειαν and κατὰ δόξαν), see DK 28 A1.

[8] Cf. Aug.Hipp. *Civ.* 8.2–4.

[9] Cf. Aug.Hipp. *C.Acad.* 3.37–42; *Ep.* 118.14–33. On Augustine as a historian of philosophy, see G. Piaia, "*Vestigia philosophorum*." *Il medioevo e la storiografia filosofica* (Rimini: Maggioli Editore, 1983) 21–30; I. Bochet, "Le statut de l'histoire de la philosophie selon la *Lettre* 118 d'Augustin à Dioscore," *RÉAug* 44 (1998) 49–76.

seen what Cicero reports about Parmenides in the *Lucullus*; in that work, the Arpinates adds that Parmenides and Zeno, from whom the Eleatic philosophers take their name, followed the philosophy of Xenophanes (*eum secuti*), but Cicero does not specify in what sense.[10] Seneca, in his *Letter* 88, attributes to Parmenides the thesis that nothing exists of all these things that seem to exist, except the universe alone (*uno excepto universo*), and to Zeno the denial even of this one exception.[11] Apuleius, in the *De Platone et eius dogmate*, recognizes Plato's debt to Parmenides and Zeno and says that Plato deepened their discoveries (*inventa*) with greater passion (but Apuleius does not specify which discoveries).[12] Plotinus, in his tenth treatise – which Augustine mentions in the *City of God*,[13] so he knew of it in some form – is more precise in tracing a connection between Parmenides and Plato from a Neoplatonic perspective. According to Plotinus, Parmenides identified Being with Intellect, placing Being not among sensitive but among intelligible things and affirming its immobility, thus anticipating an important point in Plato's doctrine. Plato, however, in the *Parmenides*, will more carefully distinguish the One-Many which is Being/Intellect from the One in the proper sense and from the third One, the One-and-Many, which is the Soul.[14] If Augustine actually read this treatise of Plotinus in a version containing the reference to Parmenides,[15] he seems nevertheless to have disregarded this reference. As for the information that Augustine could have found in the doxographic sources that he certainly used but that are lost to us,[16] we are not able to construct any valid hypothesis.

In short, there is nothing to suggest that Augustine was fully aware of the existence, in the ancient philosophical panorama, of an Eleatic ontology typical of Parmenides, Zeno (of Elea) and Melissus, which was anticipated in certain aspects by Xenophanes and was so relevant as to influence philosophers

[10] Cic. *ac*. 2.129.

[11] Sen. *Ep*. 88.44.

[12] Ap. *Plat*. 1.3.

[13] Aug.Hipp. *Civ*. 10.23.

[14] Plot. 5.1.8.

[15] It is extremely unlikely that Augustine read Plotinus' treatise in Greek. In all probability, if he read it at all, he used a Latin translation which, according to the most economical hypothesis, was the same translation of the "books of the Platonists" made by Marius Victorinus of which Augustine speaks in his *Confessions* (7.13; 8.3). We do not know what kind of translation it was (it is possible that it was selective and/or paraphrastic), nor do we know to what extent or in what form the "books of the Platonists" contained texts of Plotinus. See M. Erler, "Platonicorum libri," in Dodaro, Mayer, & Müller, *Augustinus-Lexikon* 4, fasc. 5.6 (Basel: Schwabe, 2016) 762–764; A. Smith, "Plotinus," in Dodaro, Mayer, & Müller (eds.), *Augustinus-Lexikon* 4, fasc. 5.6, 772–774.

[16] See A. Solignac, "Doxographies et manuels dans la formation philosophique de saint Augustin," *RecAug* 1 (1958) 113–148.

highly esteemed by Augustine, such as Plato and Plotinus. To evaluate the relationship between Augustine's thoughts and the ontology of the Eleatics, it is necessary to set the comparison on a purely theoretical level, as I will try to do in the following sections.

2. *The main tenets of Eleatic ontology*

As all scholars of ancient philosophy know well, interpreting the content of Eleatic ontology –meaning the doctrine of being of Parmenides, Zeno of Elea and Melissus – is a complex operation, given the fragmentary state of the works of these authors and given the poetic form chosen by the founder of this school of thought, Parmenides, to express his views. For the purposes of the comparison that I intend to make with Augustinian ontology, it is nevertheless necessary to try to enunciate some theses in which the salient points of the ontological conception of the Eleatics can be concentrated, as this conception is documented by the fragments collected by Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz.[17] For the sake of convenience, Eleatic ontology can be summarised by indicating the attributes that, according to it, belong to being. Among the many attributes that the Eleatics attribute to being, the following can be distinguished:

- *Oneness*: Being (τὸ ὄν) is one.[18]
- *Ungenerability and incorruptibility*: No being is generated or corrupted;[19] being is ungenerated[20] and imperishable.[21]
- *Univocity*: 'Being' is said in only one sense;[22] 'being' and 'one' have only one meaning.[23]
- *Necessity*: All things are out of necessity;[24] "it is," and it is not possible that it is not.[25]

[17] Citations of DK below refer to the sixth edition of the fragments, H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6. verbesserte Aufl. hrsg. von W. Kranz, 3 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951–1952).
[18] DK 28 A24; DK 28 A28; DK 28 B8.6; DK 29 A21; DK 30 A5; DK 30 A8; DK 30 B5.
[19] DK 28 A25.
[20] DK 28 B7–8; DK 30 B1.
[21] DK 28 B8.3.
[22] DK 28 A28; DK 28 B2.
[23] DK 29 A14.
[24] DK 28 A32.
[25] DK 28 B2.

- *Identity with thinking*: To think (νοεῖν) and to be (εἶναι) is one and the same thing.[26]
- *Existence*: Being (εἶναι) is.[27]
- *Wholeness*: Being (ἐόν) is a whole.[28]
- *Immobility*: Being is immobile.[29]
- *Beginninglessness and endlessness*: Being has no beginning and no end.[30]
- *Presentness*: Being was not once nor will it be; it is now altogether.[31]
- *Indivisibility*: Being is indivisible.[32]
- *Fullness*: There is not somewhat more here and somewhat less there, but all is full of being;[33] being is full.[34]
- *Continuity*: Being is continuous.[35]
- *Sameness*: Being, remaining the same and in the same, lies by itself.[36]
- *Completeness*: Being is complete from every side.[37]
- *Equality*: Being is like the mass of a well-rounded sphere, equal from the middle everywhere;[38] what exists is entirely equal;[39] being is all equal.[40]
- *Eternity*: If something exists, it is eternal.[41]
- *Infinity* (according to Melissus): What exists is infinite;[42] being is infinite.[43]
- *Absence of suffering and pain*: Being neither feels pain nor suffers[44]

[26] DK 28 B3; DK 28 B8.34. The meaning of this identity is not clear.
[27] DK 28 B6.
[28] DK 28 B8.4 (οὐλομελές, literally 'with whole limbs', according to the variant attested by Plutarch and Proclus). Simplicius' reading οὖλον μουνογενές is preferred by Tarán and Graham, who translate 'whole, unique' and 'a whole of one kind' respectively. See L. Tarán, *Parmenides*, *A Text with Translation, Commentary, and Critical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965) 82 and 85; D.W. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy. The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics* 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 216–217.
[29] DK 28 B8.4 and 26; DK 29 A15; DK 30 A8; DK 30 B7.
[30] DK 28 B8.27; DK 30 B2.
[31] DK 28 B8.5.
[32] DK 28 B8.22; DK 30 B10.
[33] DK 28 B8.23–24.
[34] DK 30 B7.
[35] DK 28 B8.25.
[36] DK 28 B8.29.
[37] DK 28 B8.42–43.
[38] DK 28 B8.43–44.
[39] DK 30 A5.
[40] DK 30 B7.
[41] DK 30 A5.
[42] DK 30 A5.
[43] DK 30 A8; DK 30 A11; DK 30 B2.
[44] DK 30 A5; DK 30 B7.

– *Indiminishability and unincreasability*: Being cannot lose something nor become bigger.[45]
– *Intransformability*: Being cannot change shape.[46]

Among these multiple attributes, it is possible to select the most important, relying on the main fragments of Parmenides (DK 28 B8) and Melissus (DK 30 B1–10) reported by Simplicius in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. For Parmenides, the main attributes seem to be ungenerability,[47] fullness,[48] immobility,[49] identity with thinking,[50] and equality;[51] for Melissus, they are ungenerability,[52] infinity,[53] oneness,[54] fullness,[55] and immobility.[56]

The sources, moreover, seem to treat the Eleatic Being as synonymous with other terms: the whole, God and the divine, the intelligible, the cosmos, the one. In fact, many of the same attributes that the Eleatics attribute to being are also attributed to these things. The whole (τὸ πᾶν), for example, is said to be eternal,[57] one,[58] ungenerated,[59] spherical,[60] immobile,[61] equal,[62] infinite,[63] unalterable[64] and full.[65] God, who is said to have no past and no future[66] and to be spherical[67] and immobile,[68] is explicitly made to coincide with the one[69] and with the whole.[70] The intelligible (τὸ νοητόν) is also said to be one, eternal and

[45] DK 30 B7.
[46] DK 30 B7.
[47] DK 28 B8.1–21.
[48] DK 28 B8.22–25.
[49] DK 28 B8.26–33.
[50] DK 28 B8.34–41.
[51] DK 28 B8.42–49.
[52] DK 30 B1.
[53] DK 30 B2–4.
[54] DK 30 B5–6.
[55] DK 30 B7.
[56] DK 30 B7.
[57] DK 28 A7; DK 28 A22–23.
[58] DK 28 A7; DK 28 A8; DK 28 A22–23; DK 28 A25; DK 30 A1; DK 30 A12; DK 30 A14.
[59] DK 28 A7–8; DK 28 A22–23.
[60] DK 28 A7; DK 28 A23.
[61] DK 28 A8; DK 28 A22–23; DK 28 A25; DK 28 A29; DK 30 A1; DK 30 A8.
[62] DK 28 A23; DK 30 A1.
[63] DK 30 A1; DK 30 A9.
[64] DK 30 A1.
[65] DK 30 A1.
[66] DK 28 A30.
[67] DK 28 A31.
[68] DK 28 A31.
[69] DK 29 A30; DK 30 A14.
[70] DK 29 A30; DK 30 A13.

incorruptible.[71] Even the cosmos (κόσμος) is called eternal, ungenerated and incorruptible.[72] The one (τὸ ἕν), finally, is said to be motionless,[73] and it alone is eternal and infinite.[74]

Finally, there are other theses that do not concern being or its synonyms; rather, they concern its opposite: non-being and becoming:

- Becoming (γένεσις) is among the things that seem to be according to a false opinion.[75]
- Non-being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) does not exist at all.[76]
- What is not cannot be known.[77]
- Movement (κίνησις) does not exist.[78]
- Nothing can arise from nothing (ἐκ μηδενός).[79]

For the purposes of this study, I define Eleatic ontology as the sum of the following three theoretical positions: the attribution to being of the predicates outlined above, with a special emphasis on ungenerability, fullness and immobility; the identification of being with the whole and the one, as well as the identification of these with God; and the denial of existence and knowability to movement, becoming (including the derivation of being from nothing) and non-being in general.

3. *General aspects of Augustine's ontology*

Before comparing Augustine's ontology with Eleatic ontology as I have defined it in the previous section, it is good to remember some general aspects of Augustine's conception of being, namely its purpose, its method, its sources of inspiration, and its textual basis.

In reference to purpose, we can say that Augustine did not develop an ontology as an end in itself, but he elaborated ideas about being in order to better know what for him were the two main objects of philosophical research, name-

[71] DK 28 A34.
[72] DK 28 A36.
[73] DK 30 A5.
[74] DK 29 A30; DK 30 A13.
[75] DK 28 A22; cf. DK 28 B1.
[76] DK 28 A22; DK 28 A24; cf. DK 28 B6.
[77] DK 28 B2; cf. DK 28 A8.
[78] DK 29 B4; DK 30 A1.
[79] DK 30 A5.

ly God and the soul.[80] Most of his statements concerning being are found in theological contexts, in which Augustine's attention is not focused on being as being, but on the being proper to God and its difference and superiority with respect to the being of creatures. Therefore, Augustine's ontology qualifies as a "theological ontology," to use an expression of Dominique Dubarle.[81] A minority, but not a negligible part, of Augustine's ontological affirmations are found in contexts that focus on the human soul and its relationship with God and with other creatures. In these other contexts, Augustine is moved by the intention not only to describe the specific being of the soul but also to show how the soul is subject to variations depending on whether it behaves in one way or another with respect to God and creatures. In these cases, Augustine's ontology can be defined as a "spiritual ontology,"[82] not only in the sense that it has as its object the specific being of the human spirit but also in the sense that it aims to give moral indications that are useful to the inner life of the soul, to its spirituality.

Second, as far as the method is concerned, we must not forget that Augustine theorised and consistently practiced the union of faith and reason, of *auctoritas* and *ratio*. To reach the knowledge of God and of the soul as closely as possible, he considered it practical to make use of the initial adherence to an authority worthy of trust and then to proceed through rational investigation toward the intellectual understanding of things. It is typical of Augustine's way of thinking, especially in his more mature works, to rely on something believed (for good reasons) and try to understand it, that is, to make it evident or at least reasonably plausible.

Thirdly, this peculiarity of Augustine's philosophical method – which refers to a conception of philosophy different from that to which we are accustomed today and not yet clearly distinct from theology[83] – explains why one of the main sources of inspiration for Augustinian ontology is the sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Catholic Church. In fact, the Bible and

[80] Aug.Hipp. *Ord*. 2.47: "The investigation (*quaestio*) of philosophy is twofold: one concerns the soul, the other God" (my transl.). On this passage, see G. Catapano, *Il concetto di filosofia nei primi scritti di Agostino. Analisi dei passi metafilosofici dal* Contra Academicos *al* De vera religione (Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2001) 242–248.

[81] D. Dubarle, "Essai sur l'ontologie théologale de saint Augustin," *RecAug* 16 (1981) 197–288; repr. in D. Dubarle, *Dieu avec l'Être : De Parménide à Saint Thomas. Essai d'ontologie théologale*, présentation de J. Greisch (Paris: Beauchesne, 1986) 167–258.

[82] É. Zum Brunn, "Le dilemme de l'être et du néant chez saint Augustin. Des premiers dialogues aux *Confessions*," *RecAug* 6 (1969) 3–102, 98.

[83] On Augustine's idea of philosophy, see G. Catapano, "Philosophia," in Dodaro, Mayer, & Müller (eds.), *Augustinus-Lexikon* 4, fasc. 5.6, 719–742.

the ecclesiastical magisterium contain "the authority of Christ" (*auctoritas Christi*), which Augustine had recognised as the most valid authority to which to entrust himself since the first work composed after his conversion, the dialogue *Contra Academicos*.[84] The biblical verses that Augustine most often mentions in the ontological ambit are Exodus 3.14 ("I am who I am") and Psalms 102(101).27–28 ("They will perish, you remain; they all wear out like a garment, you will change them like clothes and they will disappear. But you are always the same and your years have no end"). In the same dialogue, *Contra Academicos*, Augustine also declares himself confident of finding rational instruments compatible with the Christian faith among the Platonists.[85] Among the ancient philosophical schools, Platonism is undoubtedly the one that most influenced Augustine's conception of being. Augustine himself acknowledges this in the *Confessions*, when he says that he finally managed to see, after reading "certain books of Platonists," the incommutable light of God as a transcendent and eternal Truth and the fact that all other things "are" (in that they receive being from God) and "are not" (in that they do not possess the incommutable being of God).[86] Christianity and Platonism are not two alternative sources of inspiration for Augustine's ontology; on the contrary, in accordance with his theorisation of the collaboration between faith and reason, they cooperate together, in the sense that Augustine refers to the Christian faith to found and confirm his own ontological theses and derives from Platonic thought terms, concepts and schemes to enunciate and structure in rational form a Christian vision of being. Augustinian ontology is neither a biblical ontology nor a Platonising ontology but a *Christian ontology*, which is Christian thanks to Scripture and an ontology thanks to Platonism.

Fourth, the texts documenting Augustine's ontological thought are short, numerous and heterogeneous. Augustine never wrote a whole work of ontology or even a section of a work, such as a book or a substantial part of a book. Augustine's ontological texts are short, usually a paragraph, and at most two consecutive paragraphs, according to the subdivision into paragraphs introduced in the Maurine edition of the *opera omnia* (Paris, 1679–1700).[87] These texts are also numerous. So far, several dozen have been identified in the critical liter-

[84] See Aug.Hipp. *C.Acad*. 3.43.

[85] See again Aug.Hipp. *C.Acad*. 3.43.

[86] Aug.Hipp. *Conf*. 7.13–17. On the *Platonicorum libri*, see the footnote 15 above.

[87] As is well known, the Maurine edition provided the basis for Migne's edition of Augustine's works in the *Patrologia Latina* (vols. 32–47, Paris, 1845–1849).

ature.[88] The works with the highest number of attestations found by scholars are the *De immortalitate animae* (387 AD), the *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum* (388–389), the *De vera religione* (390), the *Confessiones* (397–403), the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (391–*post* 422), the *De natura boni* (*ca*. 400–405), the *De trinitate* (400–*post* 420), the *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* (406–420) and the *De civitate dei* (412–426). These works differ in chronology, genre, subject and purpose, which makes the textual dossier of Augustinian ontology very heterogeneous. Despite this, the fundamental ideas of Augustine's ontology are easily recognisable because they are repeated with few variations in different contexts. In the next section, I will set out the main ideas, citing some particularly significant texts in which they are contained.

4. *Essential content of Augustine's ontology*

The essential content of Augustine's ontological doctrine can be summarised in relatively few propositions, which can be divided into four groups:

[88] In particular, I have consulted the following studies: F.-J. Thonnard, "Caractères platoniciens de l'ontologie augustinienne," in *Augustinus Magister: Congrès International Augustinien. Paris, 21–24 septembre 1954*, vol. 1 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954) 317–327; T.M. Bartolomei, "Il problema dell'essere e del divenire dai presocratici a s. Tommaso d'Aquino," *Divus Thomas. Commentarium de philosophia et theologia* 61 (1958) 407–444; J.F. Anderson, *St. Augustine and Being: A Metaphysical Essay* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1965); É. Zum Brunn, "L'exégèse augustinienne de 'Ego sum qui sum' et la 'métaphysique de l'Exode'," in *Dieu et l'être: Exégèses d'Exode 3.14 et de Coran 20.11–24* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978) 141–164; A. Trapè, "S. Agostino: Dal mutabile all'immutabile o la filosofia dell'"*ipsum esse*'," in *Cinquant'anni di Magistero Teologico: Scritti in onore di Mons. Antonio Piolanti nel 50.mo del suo sacerdozio* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1985) 46–58; C. Stead, "Augustine's Philosophy of Being," in G. Vesey (ed.), *The Philosophy in Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 71–84; W. Beierwaltes, "La dottrina agostiniana dell'Essere nell'interpretazione di 'Ego sum qui sum' (*Esodo* 3.14) e alcune precedenti concezioni," in W. Beierwaltes, *Agostino e il neoplatonismo cristiano* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1995) 91–119; L. Ayres, "Being (*esse*/*essentia*)," in A.D. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999) 96–98; R.M. García, "*Magis esse* y *minus esse* en San Agustín y una posible influencia neoplatónica," *Revista agustiniana* 41 (2000) 625–636; G. Madec, "Ego sum qui sum," in C. Mayer (ed.), *Augustinus-Lexikon* 2 (Basel: Schwabe, 1996–2002) 738–741; C. Pietsch, "Esse, essentia," in C. Mayer (ed.), *Augustinus-Lexikon* 2, 1120–1133; J.-L. Marion, "*Idipsum*: The Name of God according to Augustine," in G. Demacopoulos & A. Papanikolaou (eds.), *Orthodox Readings of Augustine* (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008) 167–189; D. Doucet, "Enquête pour une étude d'"idipsum' et de ses enjeux dans l'œuvre d'Augustin," in M. Caron (ed.), *Saint Augustin* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 2009) 159–187; M. Caron, "Être, Principe et Trinité," in Caron, *Saint Augustin* 591–636; E. Bermon, "Grammar and Metaphysics: About the Forms *essendi*, *essendo*, *essendum*, and *essens* in Augustine's *Ars grammatica breviata* (4.31 Weber)," in M. Vinzent (ed.), *Studia Patristica 70: Papers presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011, vol. 18* (Leuven et al.: Peeters, 2013) 241–250; D. Doucet, "*Idipsum* chez Augustin jusqu'en 390," in D. Doucet & I. Koch (eds.), *Autos, idipsum: Aspects de l'identité d'Homère à Augustin* (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2014) 129–147.

A. Propositions concerning the use of the verb 'to be';
B. Propositions concerning the being of God;
C. Propositions concerning the being of creatures;
D. Propositions concerning the being of that particular creature that is the rational soul.

To illustrate each of the propositions set out below, I quote short passages from Augustine's works.

A.1) Being is preached par excellence of that which remains without being able to change.

> For to be means to remain. Therefore, that which is said to be in the highest and greatest way is said to be such by remaining in itself.[89]

> What truly is remains unchangeably, for whatever has undergone change was something other than it presently is and will be different from what it now is.[90]

> What is Being-Itself? That which always exists unchangingly, which is not now one thing, now another. What is Being-Itself, Absolute Being, the Self-same? That Which Is. What is That Which Is? The eternal, for anything that is constantly changing does not truly exist, because it does not abide –not that it is entirely nonexistent, but it does not exist in the highest sense.[91]

> Anything that changes does not keep its being, and anything that can change even though it does not, is able to not be what it was; and thus only that which not only does not but also absolutely cannot change deserves without qualification to be said really and truly to be.[92]

> Let him tell the heart what being *is*, let him say it within, let him speak within; let the inner self listen, let the mind grasp what true being *is*: always being in the same manner. Anything, in fact, anything at all […], no matter how distinguished or excellent, if it is changeable, truly *is* not. After all, no real, true being is found where nonbeing is also found. Whatever can change, in fact, once changed, is not what it was; if it is not what is was, a kind of death has taken place; something that was there has been destroyed, and *is* not. […] Anything that changes and is what it was not, I see there a kind of life in what it is, and a kind of death in what it was.[93]

> 'Is' is a name for the unchanging. Everything that changes ceases to be what it was and begins to be what it was not. 'Is' is. True 'is', genuine 'is', real 'is', belongs only to one who does not change.[94]

[89] Aug.Hipp. *Mor.* 2.8, transl. *WSA* 1/19, 72.
[90] Aug.Hipp. *F. et symb.* 7, transl. *WSA* 1/8, 160–161, modified.
[91] Aug.Hipp. *En.Ps.* 121.5, transl. *WSA* 3/20, 18.
[92] Aug.Hipp. *Trin.* 5.3, transl. *WSA* 1/5, 190.
[93] Aug.Hipp. *Io.ev.tr.* 38.10, transl. *WSA* 3/12, 582–583, modified.
[94] Aug.Hipp. *S.* 7.7, transl. *WSA* 3/1, 237.

A.2) Everything that is said to have 'been' (in the sense that it is no longer) and everything that 'will be' (in the sense that it is not yet) is changeable.

> Everything that changes and fluctuates, and does not cease at any time at all to alter, was and will be; you can never catch hold of *is* in it. But God doesn't have any *was* and *will be*. What was, no longer is; what will be, isn't yet; and what is coming in such a way that it will pass, will be in such a way that it never is.[95]

> So if you say of a thing that it was, it isn't any longer; if you say of a thing that it will be, it isn't yet.[96]

B.1) Only God is absolutely immutable and always remains identical to Himself.

> He is the Selfsame, and to him another psalm sings, *You will discard them, and they will be changed, but you are the Selfsame, and your years will not fail*. If, then, he is the Selfsame, incapable of any change, we who participate in his divinity shall ourselves be immortal and shaped for eternal life.[97]

> God however is what he is, which is why he kept as his own name *I am who I am*. In line with this, the Son says, *Unless you believe that I am*; also related is: *Who are you? The beginning.*[98]

B.2) Being is truly attributable only to God (as a results of A.1 and B.1); that is, being is attributed to God in the greatest, first and highest way.

> After all, that should be said to exist most of all, which is always in the same way, which is in every respect like itself, which can in no respect be corrupted and changed, which is not subject to time, and which cannot now be otherwise than it was before. For that is what is said to exist more truly. Now, under this expression there falls what is meant by the nature of that which remains in itself and exists immutably.[99]

> For he is the one who supremely and primordially is, being absolutely unchanging; and so he was able to say in the fullest possible sense, *I am who I am*; and *You shall say, He who is has sent me to you*.[100]

> Our God, therefore, said in a magnificent and divine manner to his servant, *I am who I am*, and, *You shall say to the children of Israel, He who is sent me to you*. For he truly is because he is immutable. Every change, after all, makes that which was not to be. He who is immutable, then, truly is.[101]

> He is, he truly is, and, because he is true being, he has no beginning and no end.[102]

[95] Aug.Hipp. *S.* 223/A.5, transl. *WSA* 3/6, 208.
[96] Aug.Hipp. *S.* 293/E.2, transl. *WSA* 3/8, 178.
[97] Aug.Hipp. *En.Ps.* 146.11, transl. *WSA* 3/20, 430.
[98] Aug.Hipp. *Io. ev. tr.* 39.8, transl. *WSA* 3/12, 592.
[99] Aug.Hipp. *Mor.* 2.1, transl. *WSA* 1/19, 69.
[100] Aug.Hipp. *Doctr.chr.* 1.35, transl. *WSA* 1/11, 121.
[101] Aug.Hipp. *Nat.b.* 19, transl. *WSA* 1/19, 329.
[102] Aug.Hipp. *En.Ps.* 134.6, transl. *WSA* 3/20, 196.

Now other things that we call beings or substances admit of modifications, by which they are modified and changed to a great or small extent. But God cannot be modified in any way, and therefore the substance or being which is God is alone unchangeable, and therefore it pertains to it most truly and supremely to be, from which comes the name 'being'.[103]

He alone truly is, because he is unchanging, and he gave this as his name to his servant Moses when he said *I am who I am*, and, *You will say to them, He who is sent me to you*.[104]

In the beginning was the Word; it is the same, ever in the same way; as it is, so it always is; it cannot change; that is what *is* means. That is the name he declared to his servant Moses: *I am who I am*; and *He who is sent me*.[105]

O God, o Lord of ours, what are you called? "I am called He-is," he said. What does it mean, I am called He-is? "That I abide for ever, that I cannot change." Things which change are not, because they do not last. What is, abides. But whatever changes, was something and will be something; yet you cannot say it is, because it is changeable. So the unchangeableness of God was prepared to suggest itself by this phrase, *I am who I am*.[106]

He alone has true being to whom it is said, *You will change them and they shall be changed, but you are the selfsame*. What is "I am who I am" if not "I am eternal"? What is "I am who I am" if not "who cannot change?[107]

When it says 'is', it's a true 'is', a genuine 'is', that can never and nowhere be changed. This is what God is, what the Son of God is, what the Holy Spirit is.[108]

B.3) God is described properly only in terms of the 'is,' not the 'was' (in the sense of 'is no longer') or the 'will be' (in the sense of 'is not yet') (as it results from A.2 and B.1). He is eternal.

It is, of course, by an observation of the mind that I eliminate every kind of change from eternity and perceive no intervals of time in eternity itself, because intervals of time go with the past and future movements of things. But there is nothing past in the eternal and nothing future, because what is past has ceased to be, and what is future has not begun to be. Eternity, however, simply is, nor ever was as though it is not any longer, nor ever will be as though it is not yet.[109]

But in God's nature there will not be anything which does not yet exist, or anything that was, which is not now; there is only that which is, and that is eternity itself.[110]

[103] Aug.Hipp. *Trin*. 5.3, transl. *WSA* 1/5, 190.
[104] Aug.Hipp. *Trin*. 7.10, transl. *WSA* 1/5, 228.
[105] Aug.Hipp. *Io.ev.tr.* 2.2, transl. *WSA* 3/12, 56.
[106] Aug.Hipp. *S*. 6.4, transl. *WSA* 3/1, 229.
[107] Aug.Hipp. *S*. 7.7, transl. *WSA* 3/1, 237, modified.
[108] Aug.Hipp. *S*. 293/E.2, transl. *WSA* 3/8, 178.
[109] Aug.Hipp. *Vera rel*. 97, transl. *WSA* 1/8, 94–95.
[110] Aug.Hipp. *En.Ps*. 9.11, transl. *WSA* 3/15, 147.

God's substance is in every respect unchangeable. There is no 'was' or 'will be' in God, but only 'is'.[111]

God's years are not something different from God himself. God's years are God's eternity, and eternity is the very substance of God, in which there is no possibility of change. In him nothing is past, as though it no longer existed, and nothing is future, as though it had not yet come to be. There is nothing in God's eternity except 'is'. There is no 'was', no 'will be', because anything that 'was' has ceased to be, and anything that 'will be' does not yet exist. Whatever 'is' in God simply *is*. With good reason did God dispatch his servant Moses in these terms.[112]

Debate the way things change, you will find 'was' and 'will be'; think about God, you will find 'is', where there can be no 'was' and 'will be'.[113]

But in the case of what is eternal, without beginning and without end, in whatever tense the verb is put, whether in the past, or present, or future, there is no falsehood thereby implied. For although to that immutable and ineffable nature, there is no proper application of Was and Will be, but only Is: for that nature alone *is* in truth, because incapable of change; and to it therefore was it exclusively suited to say, "I Am That I Am," and "Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, He Who Is hath sent me unto you:" yet on account of the changeableness of the times amid which our mortal and changeable life is spent, there is nothing false in our saying, both it was, and will be, and is. It was in past, it is in present, it will be in future ages. It was, because it never was wanting; it will be, because it will never be wanting; it is, because it always is. For it has not, like one who no longer survives, died with the past; nor, like one who abideth not, is it gliding away with the present; nor, as one who had no previous existence, will it rise up with the future.[114]

God doesn't have any *was* and *will be*.[115]

B.4) God has no contrary, because that which is in the highest degree is contrary to that which is in the lowest degree, i.e., that which is not.

If no independent reality has a contrary, insofar as it is an independent reality, much less does that first reality which is called truth have a contrary insofar as it is an independent reality. Now the first proposition is true. For every reality is a reality for no other reason than that it exists. Now, the only contrary which being has is non-being. Therefore the contrary to reality is nothing. In no way, then, can anything be contrary to that reality which exists in the greatest and most fundamental way.[116]

[111] Aug.Hipp. *En.Ps*. 89.3, transl. *WSA* 3/18, 304–305.
[112] Aug.Hipp. *En. Ps*. 101/2.10, transl. *WSA* 3/19, 71.
[113] Aug.Hipp. *Io.ev.tr.* 38.10, transl. *WSA* 3/12, 583.
[114] Aug.Hipp. *Io.ev.tr.* 99.5, transl. J. Gibb & J. Innes, *St. Augustin: Lectures or Tractates on the Gospel According to St. John*, in P. Schaff (ed.), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7 (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1888) 1–452, 383.
[115] Aug.Hipp. *S*. 223/A.5, transl. *WSA* 3/6, 208.
[116] Aug.Hipp. *Imm.an*. 19, transl. G. Watson, *Augustine:* Soliloquies *and* Immortality of the Soul (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1990) 153.

> We can call this nature nothing other than God, and, if you look for something contrary to it, there is absolutely nothing. For being does not have any contrary except non-being. There is, therefore, no nature contrary to God.[117]

> Consequently, I trust it will be obvious to those who are spiritually minded that no nature can possibly exist which is contrary to God. […] If we were asked what the opposite of black was, we would reply white, and we would say that cold is the opposite of warm, slow the opposite of speedy, and so on. But when we are asked what the opposite of what exists is, we rightly respond: what does not exist.[118]

> For, since God is the supreme being – that is, he supremely *is* and is therefore immutable – he gave being to the things he created out of nothing, but not supreme being such as he himself is. To some he gave being more fully, and to others he gave it less fully, and so he arranged created natures according to their degrees of being. (Just as the word 'wisdom' comes from the verb 'to be wise', so the word 'being' [*essentia*] comes from the verb 'to be' [*esse*]; it is, of course, a new word which was not used by Latin authors of old, but has come into use in our times to give our language a term for what the Greeks call *ousia*, for which it is a literal equivalent.) Thus the only nature contrary to the nature which supremely is, and by which everything else that is was made, is a nature which has no being at all. For it is obvious that the contrary of that which has being is that which does not. And it follows that there is no being contrary to God, that is, to the supreme being, who is the author of all beings of any kind whatsoever.[119]

B.5) God is all that He has: He coincides with his substantial attributes, and these coincide with each other.

> God is not great by participating in greatness, but he is great with his great self because he is his own greatness. The same must be said about goodness and eternity and omnipotence and about absolutely all the predications that can be stated of God, because it is all said with reference to himself, and not metaphorically either or in simile but properly.[120]

> God however is indeed called in multiple ways great, good, wise, blessed, true, and anything else that seems not to be unworthy of him; but his greatness is identical with his wisdom (he is not great in mass but in might), and his goodness is identical with his wisdom and greatness, and his truth is identical with them all; and with him being blessed is not one thing, and being great or wise or true or good, or just simply being, another.[121]

> He is what he has, therefore, with regard to what is said of him in himself, not what is said of him in relation to another. Thus it is in himself that he is said to be living, because he has life, and he himself is that very life.[122]

[117] Aug.Hipp. *Mor.* 2.1, transl. *WSA* 1/19, 69.
[118] Aug.Hipp. *F. et symb.* 7, transl. *WSA* 1/8, 160–161.
[119] Aug.Hipp. *Civ.* 12.2, transl. *WSA* 1/7, 38–39.
[120] Aug.Hipp. *Trin.* 5.11, transl. *WSA* 1/5, 196.
[121] Aug.Hipp. *Trin.* 6.8, transl. *WSA* 1/5, 211.
[122] Aug.Hipp. *Civ.* 11.10, transl. *WSA* 1/7, 11.

C.1) Every nature essentially different from God is a creature of God, and every creature is essentially different from God and inferior to Him.

> "Why did he make them?" So that they might be. Just being, after all, in whatever degree, is good, because the supreme Good is being in the supreme degree. "What did he make them out of?" From nothing, since whatever is must have some kind of specific look, however minimal. Thus even the minimal good will still be good and will be from God, for, since the supreme specific look is the supreme good, the minimal specific look is the minimal good. Now, every good is either God or from God; therefore even the minimal specific look is from God.[123]

> The nature that has been made is always less than the one that made it.[124]

C.2) God creates creatures by making them be, that is, by radically giving and preserving their being; therefore, only God is a 'creator' in the proper sense.

> How much the more, then, ought we to say that God alone is the creator of natures. For he makes nothing from any material that he did not make himself, and the only workers that he has are those which he created himself. And if he were to withdraw his constructive power from things, those things would not exist at all, just as they did not exist at all before they were made. When I say 'before', however, I am speaking with reference to eternity, not time.[125]

C.3) Creation is different from the generation by which the Son is derived from the Father and from the procession by which the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Son and the Holy Spirit are in fact of the same substance as the Father – that is, they are God – whereas creatures are essentially different from God.

> Every nature is either God who has no author or is from God, because it has him as its author. A nature that has God as the author of its being is either uncreated or created. That which is uncreated and yet has being from him is either begotten by him or proceeds by him. That which is begotten is the only Son; that which proceeds is the Holy Spirit. This Trinity is of one and the same nature, for these three are one. Each one alone is God, and all together they are one God, immutable, everlasting, without temporal beginning or end. But that nature which is created is called a creature, while God, its creator, is the Trinity. A creature, then, is said to come from God in such a way that it is not made out of his nature; after all, it is said to come from him precisely because it has him as the author of its being, not so that it is born from him or proceeds from him, but so that it is created, constituted, made by him.[126]

[123] Aug.Hipp. *Vera rel.* 35, transl. *WSA* 1/8, 51.
[124] Aug.Hipp. *Trin.* 15.26, transl. *WSA* 1/5, 417.
[125] Aug.Hipp. *Civ.* 12.25, transl. *WSA* 1/7, 65.
[126] Aug.Hipp. *An. et or.* 2.5, transl. *WSA* 1/23, 482.

C.4) God creates every creature according to an eternal reason (idea) that God has in Himself.

> Once this has been established and conceded, who would dare to say that God created all things without good reason? If this cannot be rightly said and believed, it remains that all things were created in accordance with reason, but humankind in accordance with a different reason than the horse, for it is absurd to think this [i.e., that they were created in accordance with the same reason]. Individual things, then, have been created in accordance with their own reasons. But where should these reasons be thought to exist if not in the very mind of the creator? For it is sacrilegous to imagine that there was something located outside of himself that he looked at, so that in accordance with it he could create what he created. If the reasons for all the things that will be created and that have been created are contained in the divine mind, and if there can be nothing in the divine mind that is not eternal and unchangeable, and if Plato refers to these principal reasons of things as ideas, then ideas not only exist but are themselves true because they are eternal and remain the same and unchangeable. It is by participation in them that a thing exists, in whatever way it exists.[127]

C.5) God created some things (formless matter, the causal reasons of material things, angels, at least the soul of the first man) instantly from nothing and creates other things over time from the things originally created from nothing.

> There is a created nature that comes from no other, that is, that comes from absolutely nothing, such as heaven and earth or, rather, all the matter of the whole worldly mass created along with the world. And there is a created nature that comes from another nature already created and existing, for example, the man from the mud of the earth, the woman from the man, a human being from parents.[128]

C.6) All creatures are mutable (by virtue of B.1 and C.1).

> And for this reason he alone is immutable, while all the things that he has made are mutable because he has made them from nothing.[129]
>
> Hence, since he [i.e., God] is immutable, it is not surprising if what he has made is not immutable but mutable, because it is not equal to him.[130]
>
> Nothing simple is changeable; everything created is changeable.[131]
>
> And so, these latter [i.e., creatures] can change, either because of the will, as the rational creature could, or because of their own qualities, as the other things, precisely because they were made out of nothing, not out of God, though only God made them, that is, because they are

[127] Aug.Hipp. *Div.qu*. 46.2, transl. *WSA* 1/12, 60.
[128] Aug.Hipp. *An.et or.* 2.5, transl. *WSA* 1/23, 482.
[129] Aug.Hipp. *Nat.b.* 1, transl. *WSA* 1/19, 325.
[130] Aug.Hipp. *C.Fel.* 2.18, transl. *WSA* 1/19, 313.
[131] Aug.Hipp. *Trin*. 6.8, transl. *WSA* 1/5, 211.

not the same thing as that nature which was not made and which, for this reason, is alone immutable.[132]

All things, nonetheless, which were made, are mutable because they were made out of nothing; that is, they were not, and now they are, because God makes them.[133]

C.7) Corporeal creatures are changeable in space and time, whereas incorporeal creatures are changeable only in time.

There is a nature mutable in terms of places and times, such as a body. There is also a nature mutable in no way in terms of places, by only in terms of times, such as the soul. And there is a nature which cannot be changed either in terms of places or in terms of times; this is God. What I have here said is mutable in some way is called a creature; what is immutable is the creator.[134]

C.8) Creatures, compared to God, are not.

Contemplating other things below you, I saw that they do not in the fullest sense exist, nor yet are they completely non-beings: they are real because they are from you, but unreal inasmuch as they are not what you are. For that alone truly is, which abides unchangingly.[135]

We must not on this account deny true existence to the things he has made, for to deny real existence to his creatures would be to insult their maker. Why did he make them, if anything he has made does not exist? And what did he make, if anything he made has no being? The things he has made do exist; yet, when we compare them with him, we know that he alone is true being. Thus he said, *I AM WHO I AM*, and, *Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, HE WHO IS has sent me to you*. He did not say, "I am the Lord, the omnipotent, the merciful, the just one," though, if he had said that, he would have spoken truly. Instead he set aside all those names that could be applied to God and answered that he was called Being-Itself, as though that were his name. *Thus shall you say*, he ordered, *HE WHO IS has sent me*. His very nature is to be, and so true is this that, when compared with him, all created things are as though they had no being. When not compared with him they do exist, for they derive their being from him, but compared with him they do not exist, because he is true being, unchangeable being, and this can be said of him alone.[136]

Whatever else there is, in comparison with him it is not.[137]

[132] Aug.Hipp. *C.Iul.imp.* 5.44, transl. *WSA* 1/25, 569.
[133] Aug.Hipp. *C.Iul.imp.* 5.60, transl. *WSA* 1/25, 585.
[134] Aug.Hipp. *Ep.* 18.2, transl. *WSA* 2/1, 51.
[135] Aug.Hipp. *Conf.* 7.17, transl. *WSA* 1/1, 128.
[136] Aug.Hipp. *En.Ps.* 134.4, transl. *WSA* 3/20, 193.
[137] Aug.Hipp. *S.* 223/A.5, transl. *WSA* 3/6, 208.

*C.9) Having been created from nothing, or from things created from nothing, creatures can tend towards nothing; that is to say, they can fail (*deficere*).*

> But you say to me: "Why are they failing?" Because they are subject to change. "Why are they subject to change?" Because they do not have being in the supreme degree. "Why not?" Because they are inferior to the one by whom they were made. "Who is it that made them"? The one who *is* in the supreme degree. "Who is that?" God, the unchanging Trinity, since he both made them through his supreme Wisdom and preserves them through his supreme Kindness.[138]

> But every defect tends toward destruction, and even if it is not clear that a particular thing comes to destruction it is, nonetheless, clear to everyone that destruction brings it to the point that it is no longer what it was. Hence, the soul concludes that things fail or can fail for no other reason than that they were made out of nothing.[139]

D.1) The rational soul is changeable; therefore, it is a creature (by virtue of C.6); therefore, it is not of the same substance as God (by virtue of C.1).

> Every soul, since it is something subject to change, and even though it is a magnificent creature, is still a creature. Even though it is better than the body, still it is something made. So then, every soul is subject to change; that is, in one moment it believes, in the next it does not believe; in one moment it wants something, in the next it does not; in one moment it is adulterous, it the next it is chaste; in one moment it is good, in the next it is bad; the soul is changeable.[140]

D.2) The rational soul, being incorporeal, 'is' more than the body (by virtue of C.8).

> God is an immutable spirit; a mutable spirit is a nature that has been made, but one better than a body.[141]

> But if a body is only that which stands still or is moved through an area of space with some length, breadth and depth so that it occupies a larger place with a larger part of itself and a smaller place with a smaller part and is smaller in a part than in the whole, then the soul is not a body.[142]

D.3) The rational soul 'is' more if it comes close to God, whereas it 'is' less if it moves away from Him.

> For if the soul exists more fully when it is turned towards *ratio* and clings to it (it does so because it clings to something unchanging which is the truth, and this is being in the greatest and most fundamental fashion), when it turns away from the truth it has less being, and that is loss.[143]

[138] Aug.Hipp. *Vera rel.* 35, transl. *WSA* 1/8, 51.
[139] Aug.Hipp. *Ep.* 118.15, transl. *WSA* 2/2, 113.
[140] Aug.Hipp. *Io.ev.tr.* 39.8, transl. *WSA* 3/12, 592.
[141] Aug.Hipp. *Nat.b.* 1, transl. *WSA* 1/19, 325.
[142] Aug.Hipp. *Orig.an.* 4, transl. *WSA* 2/3, 80.
[143] Aug.Hipp. *Imm.an.* 12, transl. Watson, *Augustine:* Soliloquies, 143.

> In that way the soul perceives that it is less stable to the extent that it clings less to God, who exists in the highest way, and that he exists in the highest way because he neither makes progress nor fails because of any mutability. The soul perceives, however, that it profits from that change by which it makes progress so that it clings to God perfectly and that the change that consists in its failing is full of defects.[144]

To these propositions we can add, for the sake of completeness, a fifth group, formed by those that summarise Augustine's meontology (i.e., his doctrine of nothingness):

E.1) The term 'nothing' has a meaning, either because it means the state of mind in noticing the absence of something or because it means that which absolutely does not exist and yet is thinkable by deprivation with respect to that which exists, as the void is thinkable by deprivation with respect to that which is full.

> Shall we, instead of saying that this word signifies a thing which does not exist, rather say that it signifies some state of the mind when it sees no reality, yet finds, or thinks that it finds, that the reality does not exist?[145]

> People who think like this pay insufficient attention to the way in which all sorts of things unknown may be understood through their contraries which are known, so that no hearer is flummoxed when the names of things that do not exist are introduced into the conversation. What does not exist at all, I mean, is called '*nihil*' ['nothing']; and nobody fails to understand these two syllables who hears and speaks Latin. How so, if not because their common sense has a grasp of what does exist, and so recognizes what does not by subtracting it? In the same way too, when the word 'empty' is uttered, by considering the fullness of a body we understand 'empty' as meaning its contrary lack or subtraction, just as with our sense of hearing we make judgments not only about sounds and utterances, but also about silence.[146]

E.2) Nothingness does not exist at all; it is not something.

> And for this reason nothing is neither a body nor a spirit, nor something that pertains to these substances, nor any formed matter, nor an empty place, nor darkness itself, but absolutely nothing.[147]

[144] Aug.Hipp. *Ep.* 118.15, transl. *WSA* 2/2, 113.
[145] Aug.Hipp. *Mag.* 3, transl. J.M. Colleran, *Saint Augustine: The Greatness of the Soul, The Teacher* (New York & Mahwah, New Jersey: The Newman Press, 1950) 133.
[146] Aug.Hipp. *Gn litt.* 8.34, transl. *WSA* 1/13, 366, modified.
[147] Aug.Hipp. *C.Iul.imp.* 5.44, transl. *WSA* 1/25, 569.

5. *Conclusions: Similarities and differences between the ontology of Augustine and that of the Eleatics*

If we assume for Augustinian ontology the set of propositions just enunciated and for Eleatic ontology the propositions laid out in the earlier section "The main tenets of Eleatic ontology," we can finally compare them, observing similarities and differences. I will limit myself to the most macroscopic similarities and differences, which I will present in extreme synthesis.

Let us start with the similarities. Both ontologies argue that being, considered in its most proper meaning, does not admit of becoming in itself. What 'is' in the proper sense does not change, whereas 'becoming' means precisely changing. From this point of view, all the Eleatic predicates of being that imply immutability, or that are implied by it, are accepted in principle in Augustine's ontology. Examples of this are presentness and eternity. Augustine and the Eleatics also agree that nothingness does not exist at all.

However, alongside these similarities, which can be seen immediately, there are equally obvious differences, the greatest of which is undoubtedly the idea of creation as bringing into being of what did not exist before. For Eleatic ontology, this is impossible, whereas for Augustine, creation is precisely the act by virtue of which something other than God's immutable being exists. That which changes – even if it 'is' not in the most meaningful sense of this verb, which belongs exclusively to God – nevertheless has a lower degree of being, because it is not a pure nothing. Change is not only apparent but real: Creatures really change. If 'to be' means to remain eternally identical to oneself by virtue of oneself, then only God 'is'; but if 'to be' means 'to be something real,' 'to exist' or 'to be there,' then not only God but also creatures 'are.' Between the supreme being of God and nothingness (i.e., the absolute non-being), there is something intermediate, the creatures, which 'are' (because they exist) and 'are not' (because they do not remain). God therefore does not coincide with the totality of what exists, but He is only a part of this totality, the part to which the other parts owe their existence. The totality of beings does not constitute something one and homogeneous; it is diversified and articulated in a hierarchical way. It does not coincide with the intelligible, because in addition to the intelligible (incorporeal) beings there are the sensible (bodily) beings, which are located at the lowest level of the hierarchy. Besides, for Augustine, something can be born out of nothing, if the expression 'out of nothing' means 'being derived from nothing pre-existent,' because God Almighty can make creatures without obtaining them from anything

pre-existent, not from other creatures and not even from Himself. Having been drawn from nothing, creatures can also tend towards nothingness (i.e., fail and lose something of their reality).

The root of evil lies in this possibility for creatures to be deprived of part of their being and therefore of their goodness, that is, to be corrupted. For this reason, some beings may be defective, imperfect or corrupt; thus, no created being is completely perfect. In particular, the rational soul, which participates in divine stability if it adheres to God, can, by virtue of its free will, distract itself from the immutable Good that is God and turn to changing goods, which are not permanent and make the soul lose its participated stability; that is, they make it 'be' less. In Augustine's vision, all the moral life of the human soul and its destiny of happiness or unhappiness are based on the soul's ability to 'be' more or less, meaning to be spiritually united to God or separated from Him.

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8.
Proclus and the Overcoming of Eleaticism without Parricide*

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Abstract: This paper aims to examine Proclus' estimation of Plato's debt to his Eleatic predecessors. On Proclus' account, Plato brilliantly developed Eleatic theories on being, integrating them within a metaphysical-theological system that makes it possible to identify Parmenides' one in the second hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*. It will be shown how, in his commentary on the dialogue, Proclus succeeds in passing from Eleatic ontology to Platonic *hen*-ontology without any mention of the Platonic criticism of Eleaticism and the issues that made the 'parricide' of Parmenides necessary. Proclus sees the importance of Eleatic ontology to lie in the inescapable unity of Being, while he credits Plato with bringing to completion what is inherent in the works of Zeno and Parmenides, applying the training theorised by the former and tracing the latter's enquiry back up to the actual One.

Keywords: Proclus, *hen*-ontology, the One-that-is, multiplicity, σκοπός ('target').

1. *Introduction*

In Proclus' *Platonic Theology* Greek philosophy as a whole is presented as the convergence of different theological and philosophical traditions, harmoniously brought together by Plato's doctrine.[1] Proclus thereby establishes the unity of all Hellenic theology, sprung from obscure Orphics with revealing names, such as Aglaophamus[2] – who taught Pythagoras Orphic

* I wish to thank Christopher Kurfess for his suggestions and the careful reading of this text.

[1] See Procl. *Theol.Plat*. 1.1 6.16–7.8. See also Procl. *in Ti*. 3.168.6–7 and Anon. *Proll*. 7.1–8.31. On Proclus' harmonising effort, see L. Brisson, "La place des *Oracles Chaldaïque* dans la *Théologie Platonicienne*," in Segonds (ed.), *Proclus et la Théologie platonicienne: actes du Colloque International de Louvain (13 – 16 mai 1998) en l'honneur de H.D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000) 109–162 and H.D. Saffrey, "Accorder entre elles les traditions théologiques: une caractéristique du néoplatonisme athénien," in H.D. Saffrey (ed.), *Le néoplatonisme après Plotin* (Paris: Vrin, 2000) 143–158.

[2] On this figure associated with Orphism, see L. Brisson, "Nascita di un mito filosofico: Giamblico (*VP* 146) su Aglaophamos," in M. Tortorelli Ghidini, A. Storchi Marino & A. Visconti (eds.), *Tra Orfeo e Pitagora. Origini e incontri di culture nell'antichità* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2000) 237–253. His name is revealing because it means 'having a splendid voice'.

theology[3] – and from the thought of well-known Presocratic philosophers, such as the representatives of the Eleatic or Italian school, who contemplated intelligible Being.[4] Compared to Plotinus, who acknowledges the great importance of Eleaticism and of the *Sophist* for the conceptualisation of Being as identical to Thought,[5] Proclus considers this development and the *Sophist* itself to be only preliminary (προτέλεια) to the theological mysteries of the *Parmenides*.[6] In particular, although the Stranger of the *Sophist* (244d14–245b11) and the Parmenides of Plato's *Parmenides* (137c) speak of the same One, it is in the *Parmenides* that Plato develops a more scientific and systematic argument on the whole metaphysical cosmos.[7]

Without ignoring the Neoplatonists' indebtedness to Pythagoreanism, yet at the same time without dwelling on the subject, which lies beyond the scope of the present paper,[8] I will focus on the *hen*-ontological discussion in the *Parmenides*, which carries a theological significance for Proclus. In order to reconstruct Proclus' theorisation of Being in relation to the One and to beings, I will consider various Neoplatonist texts, particularly some crucial passages from Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides*.[9] These texts will be seen to suggest that while Proclus praises the Eleatics for the scientific accuracy of their dialectical method,[10] it is the contents of their reflection on being that enable the Neoplatonist construction of a metaphysical cosmos.[11] My chief aim is to examine the theoretical debt that Plato incurred with the Eleatics,

[3] See Iamb. *VP* 146.15–147.1 and Procl. *Theol.Plat.* 1.5 25.24–26.4.

[4] See Procl. *in Prm*. 629.24–630.14. Citations from the *in Prm*. are to Steel's edition.

[5] In this article I write 'One', 'Being' and 'Thought' when such terms refer to hypostases, or realms of reality, and 'one', 'being' and 'thought' when they are used with reference to the Presocratic context.

[6] See Procl. *in Prm*. 1079.18–26. On the Neoplatonist exegesis of the *Parmenides*, see F. Romano, "L'esegesi neoplatonica del *Parmenide*," in F. Romano, *L'Uno come fondamento: la crisi dell'ontologia classica. Raccolta di studi rari e inediti*, a cura di G.R. Giardina (Catania: CUECM, 2004) 161–177. On the difference between Plotinus' exegesis and Proclus', see W. Beierwaltes, *Denken des Einen. Studien zur Neuplatonischen Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1985) 155–192.

[7] See Procl. *Theol. Plat*. 1.12 55.23–56.10.

[8] Pythagoreanism crucially contributed to the essentially metaphysical turn of Platonism through the theorisation of a First Principle that transcends Being. See R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London: Duckworth, 1972) 48; M. Bonazzi, "Plotino e la tradizione pitagorica," *Acme* 53 (2000) 39–73; M. Bonazzi, "Pythagoreanising Aristotle: Eudorus and the systematisation of Platonism," in M. Schofield (ed.), *Aristotle, Plato and Pythagoreanism in the First Century BC: New Directions for Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 160–186.

[9] The importance of Book 1 of the *Commentary on the Parmenides* for an investigation of this sort has also been emphasised by D. Cürsgen, *Henologie und Ontologie. Die metaphysische Prinzipienlehre des späten Neuplatonismus* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007) 131–135.

[10] See Procl. *in Prm*. 623.28–31; 646.30–647.2.

[11] See R. Chlup, *Proclus. An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 47–61.

and hence the way in which Proclus reinterprets Platonic references to Eleatic ontology. The underlying hypothesis is that according to Proclus the Platonic texts express not a deconstructive critique of Eleatic thought, but rather an attempt to identify Parmenides' thought as one of the fundamental historical antecedents of Plato and Platonism.[12] The history of philosophy is thus seen to find its culmination in Plato,[13] who developed some brilliant Eleatic insights in his own particular fashion.

2. *From the* Sophist *to the* Parmenides*: an introduction to ontology,* hen-*ontology and henology*

The fact that Proclus aims to rewrite the history of Plato's critique of Eleaticism is evident not just from the *Platonic Theology*, but also from the *Commentary on the Parmenides*: the *Platonic Theology* is not the starting point of Proclus' thought, but rather – as is well-known – the outcome of his exegesis of the *Parmenides*.[14] Already from this preliminary observation it is clear that Proclus' interpretation of Eleaticism has a theological twist, because the *Parmenides* is Plato's theological dialogue and the *Platonic Theology* is a summa of late Neoplatonist theological-metaphysical thought. In order to reconstruct Proclus' reception of Eleatic ontology, it is not enough to consider his references to the *Sophist*, whose proximity to the *Parmenides* was nonetheless quite clear to Neoplatonist exegetes.[15] Indeed, Proclus' interpretation of the *Sophist* can only partly be reconstructed, because Proclus may never have written a commentary on the *Sophist*.[16] However, from the *Platonic Theology* it is possible to derive an exegesis of *Sph*. 242c–245e: by comparing the plural-

[12] On the Eleatic school and its followers, see Procl. *in Prm*. 623.28–31.

[13] See Anon. *Proll*. 7.3–5.

[14] See H.D. Saffrey, "La *Théologie Platonicienne* de Proclus, fruit de l'exégèse du *Parménide*," *RThPh* 116 (1984) 1–12, C. Steel, "Le *Parménide* est-il le fondement de la *Théologie platonicienne*," in Segonds (ed.), *Proclus et la* Théologie platonicienne, 373–398 and C. Steel, "Une histoire de l'interprétation du Parménide dans l'antiquité," in M. Di Pasquale Barbanti & F. Romano (eds.), *Il* Parmenide *di Platone e la sua tradizione. Atti del III Colloquio Internazionale del Centro di Ricerca sul Neoplatonismo* (Catania: CUECM, 2002) 11–40.

[15] See Procl. *Theol.Plat*. 3.21 73.10–12 and M.-A. Gavray, *Simplicius lecteur du* Sophiste*: contribution à l'étude de l'exégèse néoplatonicienne tardive* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2007) 17–22.

[16] This is suggested by C. Steel, "Le *Sophiste* comme texte théologique dans l'interprétation de Proclus," in E.P. Bos & P.A. Meijer (eds.), *On Proclus and his Influence in Medieval Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill 1992) 53, who as weak evidence in support of the opposite hypothesis points to only one passage from the *Commentary on the Parmenides* (774.24).

ists' position and that of the monists, Proclus establishes that, according to the pluralists' perspective, the multiplicity of beings can be traced back to a single principle, namely the Monad of being, whereas the monists' perspective leads to the positing of a principle that transcends Being.[17] Therefore, the pluralists' thesis leads to the One-that-is,[18] that of Parmenides to the One in itself. So despite the lack of a Neoplatonist commentary on the dialogue, it is possible to infer a harmonising interpretation of Platonism and Eleaticism, which will be brought to completion with the exegesis of the *Parmenides*.

To be more precise, this interpretation suggests that the same exegetical procedure which Proclus applies to the *Parmenides* was also applied to the *Sophist* – which in the Iamblichean reading order for the dialogues is included among the physical dialogues and hence comes before the *Parmenides*[19] – where, according to Proclus, the Eleatic Stranger's speech on non-being ultimately confirms Parmenides' doctrine. However, it is precisely in the *Sophist* that Plato, through the Stranger's words, makes the philosophical move which some people might regard as a 'parricide' against Parmenides, namely, the admission within thought and speech of non-being, understood as difference. It is this new conception of non-being that Proclus exploits in the *Parmenides*, strategically avoiding any mention of the fact that it was developed in explicit opposition to Parmenides.[20] The Parmenides revealed by Proclus' treatment of Plato's *Parmenides* takes his own hypothesis, namely that the one exists,[21] as the starting point of the dialectical discussion, and ultimately reaches the One in itself.[22] The chain of negations[23] does not lead to an impossibility, but to the First Cause, that is, the One beyond Being: "Now the hypothesis that the One exists is true. The Eleatic Stranger also demonstrates this when he is countering as absurd the thesis that the One does not exist."[24]

In order to show that Proclus not only finds no trace of parricide in Plato's

[17] See Procl. *Theol.Plat*. 1.4 18.13–20 and 2.4 34.12–35.9.

[18] See Procl. *Theol.Plat*. 3.24 84.26–85.4.

[19] On the reading order, see Anon. *Proll*. 26.13–44.

[20] On Proclus' interpretation of the *Sophist*, see Steel, *Le* Sophiste *comme texte théologique dans l'interprétation de Proclus*, 51–64.

[21] See Pl. *Prm*. 137b2–3 with Procl. *in Prm*. 638.17–639.7 and 1032.26–1035.32.

[22] See Procl. *in Prm*. 1039.33–36.

[23] See Procl. *in Prm*. 1079.21–26.

[24] Procl. *in Prm*. 1065.12–13. All translations of the *Commentary on the Parmenides* are taken from G.R. Morrow & J.M. Dillon, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's* Parmenides (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). On the composition of the *Commentary on the Parmenides* see C. Luna & A.-Ph. Segonds (eds.), *Proclus, Commentaire sur le 'Parménide' de Platon* 1.2 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007) xlii–liii.

texts, but feels the need to reaffirm and acknowledge the Eleatic's role as the father of Platonic metaphysics, who acknowledges the One in itself – i.e. the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* – as the First Principle, I will now move on to examine:

1a) in what way Proclus presents Eleaticism as a historical antecedent of Platonism;
1b) how the *Parmenides* stages the perfecting of Eleatic ontology (§§ 3; 4);
and
2a) Zeno's defence of Parmenides' thesis (that the one exists), along with the Platonic criticism of Parmenidean monism, which becomes an argument in support of the plurality of Being;
2b) the Neoplatonist defence of Parmenides' ontology through the identification of the σκοπός ('target') of the *Parmenides* (§§ 5; 6).

According to Proclus, it is in the *Parmenides* that Plato praises Eleaticism: the ancient interpreters, he writes, have "rightly" (εὖ) stated that Plato has brought Zeno's and Parmenides' writings to completion, by applying the training theorised by the former, and by tracing the latter's enquiry back up to the actual One.[25] However, it is worth emphasising that Proclus endeavours to integrate Eleaticism into Platonism by receiving the terminology of Eleatic texts within an essentially theological-metaphysical context. For this reason, the whole discussion here cannot be limited to Eleatic *ontology*; rather, it seems necessary to introduce the terms hen-*ontology* and *henology*.[26] Indeed, Proclus' discussion of Eleaticism is centred on the inescapable unity of Being: without the unity of Being, ensured by the One, being could never be predicated of entities.

3. *In search of Parmenides, the father of Platonic ontology*

Antecedents for the Neoplatonists' henological and theological interpretation are to be found in Moderatus of Gades, Numenius of Apamea, Clement of Alexandria, Alcinous and Platonising Gnostic texts.[27] As first emphasised by Dodds in a landmark article, the distinction between the One and Being

[25] See Procl. *in Prm*. 997.13–17.
[26] The term *hen*-ontology refers to the account of being in relation to the One; the term henology concerns the doctrine of the One. On this see Cürsgen, *Henologie und Ontologie*, 87–130.
[27] See J.D. Turner, "The Gnostic Sethians and Middle Platonism: Interpretations of the *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*," *VChr* 60 (2006) 9–64.

springs from a metaphysical exegesis of the *Parmenides* and the *Republic*.[28] However, what lies behind the Neoplatonist interpretation is more than just Plato. Plotinus reflects not only on Parmenides' conception of the one – which lets itself be grasped through a multiplicity of aspects[29] – but also on the conceptions of Anaxagoras, Heraclitus and Empedocles,[30] as well as Pythagoras and Pherecydes.[31] According to Plotinus, the intrinsic limit of the Parmenidean interpretation is its lack of exactness: in the *Parmenides*,[32] Plato is more precise than Parmenides,[33] insofar as he distinguishes between a first One (τὸ πρῶτον ἕν), a second One (ἓν πολλά/the One-Many), and a third One (ἓν καὶ πολλά/the One and Many).[34]

The anonymous author of the *Prolegomena*, writing after Proclus and under his influence,[35] falls within the same exegetical strand as the founder of Neoplatonism when he states:

> The point is that, while they only recognized the contributory causes, Plato made a distinction and defined as the real causes the exemplary, the efficient, and the final cause.[36] Anaxagoras, it is true, as from a vision in a heavy slumber, declares the Intelligence to be the efficient cause,[37] but he failed to apply this principle to his account of coming-to-be and passing away; instead,[38]

[28] See E.R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One," *CQ* 22 (1928) 129–142, who pointed to the second part of Plato's *Parmenides* as the main Plotinian source for the notion of a One that is beyond being. On the ontological and metaphysical exegesis of the *Parmenides*, a hallmark of Plotinian thought and later Platonism, see H.-R. Schwyzer, "Die zwiefache Sicht in der Philosophie Plotins," *MH* 1 (1944) 87–99; Steel, "Une histoire de l'interprétation du Parménide dans l'antiquité," 11–40; and M. Bonazzi, "Un lettore antico della *Repubblica*: Numenio di Apamea," *Méthexis* 17 (2004) 71–84.

[29] See Plot. 5.1.8.22–23; 6.6.18.42–43.

[30] See Plot. 5.1.9.1–7.

[31] See Plot. 5.1.9.27–32. For an analysis of the presence of the Presocratics in Plotinus, see G. Stamatellos, *Plotinus and the Presocratics. A Philosophical Study of Presocratic Influences in Plotinus'* Enneads (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007). As M. Vorwerk, "Plotinus and the Parmenides: Problems of Interpretation", in J.D. Turner & K. Corrigan (eds.), *Plato's* Parmenides *and Its Heritage, II: Reception in Patristic, Gnostic, and Christian Neoplatonic Texts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010) 23–33, 30 highlights: "It is only within the doxography […] that Plotinus introduces the first three hypotheses of the *Parmenides* as a correction of Parmenides himself."

[32] See Pl. *Prm*. 137c–142a; 144e5; 155e5.

[33] See Parm. DK 28 B3 (= LM 19 D6.8).

[34] See Plot. 5.1.8.22–23.

[35] See A. Motta, "Platone nelle università del mondo antico. Gli appunti di un anonimo studente della metà del VI sec. d.C.," *Intersezioni* 38 (2018) 145–168.

[36] On the theory of causes in Neoplatonism, see S.E. Gersh, *ΚΙΝΗΣΙΣ ΑΚΙΝΗΤΟΣ. A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973) 45–57 and L. Siorvanes, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 86–113. See also Anon. *Proll*. 17.40–48 and, on this passage, A. Motta, *λόγους ποιεῖν. L'eredità platonica e il superamento dell'aporia dei dialoghi* (Napoli: Iniziative editoriali Paolo Loffredo, 2018) 200 n. 151.

[37] See DK 59 B12 (= LM 25 D27).

[38] See also Pl. *Phd*. 97b8–99c7. Plato criticises Anaxagoras not for having failed – like the other natural philosophers – to find suitable causes to account for the appearance of given forms, but rather for having ignored the

> he based his explanation on such things as whirling air and wind, but never on intelligence.[39]

Clarity, precision and a scientific approach mark Plato's superiority over his predecessors. Although the Presocratics trace the study of nature back to that of matter,[40] without paying due attention to the true causes of the physical world,[41] this does not mean that they are completely mistaken. By narrowing the question down to Eleatic ontology, Plotinus argues that Plato distinguishes (διαιρεῖ) what Parmenides has failed to distinguish, while the Anonymous emphasises that Plato distinguished (διέκρινεν) between between actual causes and contributory causes. Both these Neoplatonist authors stress the fact that Plato has better defined some crucial and correct Presocratic insights, including the Eleatic reflection on being and thinking. As Parmenides[42] – Plotinus claims – "correctly (ὀρθῶς) says that 'thinking and being are one and the same,'" Proclus argues:

> if there is intellection in the One Being according to Parmenides, then there is also motion, since inevitably there must be life along with intellection; everything after all that lives moves by virtue of living.[43]

Every clarification that Proclus attributes to Plato, as an admirer of Parmenides, might be viewed as the acknowledgement of a (Neo)Platonist philosophical orientation in the unitary tradition prior to Plato.[44] In the specific case of the passage just quoted, Parmenides, according to Proclus, envisages being as something motionless and fixed in its identity, although thought makes it mobile (at least in a noetic sense).[45] This acknowledgement preserves the great

causal function of the Intellect, in particular its function as final cause. See Dam. *in Phd*. 1.412.1–6; Simp. *in Ph*. 3.16–19, 10.32–11.3.

[39] Anon. *Proll*. 8.3–10. All translations of the *Prolegomena* are from L.G. Westerink, *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*. Introduction, Text, Translation and Indices (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1962).

[40] See Procl. *in Ti*. 1.2.9–15.

[41] The study of nature – as is also clear from Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus* (1.2.1–9) – entails an investigation of the material and formal causes, as well as the instrumental (*in Ti*. 1.357.12–15), and of the actual causes, namely the efficient, exemplary, and final.

[42] Plot. 5.9.5.29–32 is quoting DK 28 B3 (= LM 19 D6). According to the *Index* of Plotinus' *Enneads* in P. Henry & H.R. Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964–1982), echoes of DK 28 B3 (= LM 19 D6) occur in seven places: 1.4.10.6; 3.5.7.51; 3.8.8.8; 5.1.8.17–18; 5.6.6.22–23; 5.9.5.29–32; 6.7.41.18. On this Parmenidean fragment, see G. Casertano, *Parmenide il metodo la scienza l'esperienza* (Napoli: Guida, 1978) 16–17, 61–67.

[43] Procl. *in Prm*. 1153.3–6.

[44] On the interpretation of Parmenides based on the *Sophist*'s theory of the highest genera, see J. Mansfeld, *Die Offenbarung des Parmenides und die menschliche Welt* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1964) 78 and M. Abbate, *Parmenide e i neoplatonici. Dall'Essere all'Uno e al di là dell'Uno* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2010) 176–177.

[45] See Gersh, *ΚΙΝΗΣΙΣ ΑΚΙΝΗΤΟΣ*, 101–117.

theoretical weight of Eleaticism. In his *Commentary on the Parmenides* Proclus states that the arguments adduced by Parmenides in the *Parmenides* are of absolutely remarkable depth,[46] as Socrates himself had already noted in the *Theaetetus*. There – Proclus writes – Socrates recalls that he came across the elderly Parmenides as he was philosophising about being by presenting not training methods, but profound insights.[47] Admiration for the Eleatics, therefore, is not limited to their method, but extends to the acknowledgement of a spiritual father for Platonic ontological theory (or rather *hen*-ontological theory, as we shall see). When in the *Prolegomena* to Plato's philosophy the Anonymous reconstructs the history of Plato's teachers, he explicitly mentions Parmenides:

> Further he attended courses by Cratylus the Heraclitean and Hermippus the Parmenidean to become acquainted with the doctrines of Heraclitus and Parmenides; as a result he wrote two of his dialogues, the *Cratylus* and the *Parmenides*, in which he refers to the teachings of these men.[48]

It seems, then, that within the *Parmenides* it is possible to find teachings with which Plato became familiar through his acquaintance with Hermogenes, as mentioned by Diogenes Laertius (and not with Hermippus, as erroneously reported by the Anonymous).[49] According to the metaphysical interpretation of the *Parmenides*,[50] the σκοπός ('target'[51]) of the dialogue is not simply being as conceived by Parmenides, since the positive and negative statements made by the Eleatic philosopher in the dialogue do not apply to Being, "which is to say to the One-that-is" (ὅπερ ἦν τὸ ἓν ὄν[52]). Therefore, Parmenides would start off by talking about 'his' one,[53] i.e. the One-that-is[54] and, based on the consequences of this hypothesis, would then move on to discuss everything that has come into being starting from the One.[55] Thus in the *Parmenides* Eleatic ontology intertwines

[46] See Procl. *in Prm*. 636.8–9.
[47] See Procl. *in Prm*. 636.12–13.
[48] Anon. *Proll*. 4.4–9.
[49] See D.L. 3.6.
[50] This will be discussed in greater detail below.
[51] On the target of the dialogues, see A. Motta, "The theme and target of Plato's dialogues in Neoplatonist cosmo-literary theory," *The Classical Quarterly* 73.1 (2023) 78-89.
[52] See Procl. *in Prm*. 638.20.
[53] See C. Steel, "Beyond the Principle of Contradiction? Proclus' *Parmenides* and the Origin of Negative Theology," in M. Pickavé (ed.), *Die Logik der Transzendentalen. Festschrift für J. A. Aertsen zum 65. Geburtstag* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2003) 592–594.
[54] See Pl. *Prm*. 137b1–4.
[55] See Procl. *in Prm*. 638.13–19.

with *hen*-ontology, only to then give way to Neoplatonist henology: the dialogue named after Parmenides discusses beings insofar as they all stem from the One, i.e. insofar as they are the One's offspring (ἔκγονα).[56] And the question of beings that come from the One is addressed precisely by Parmenides, someone who – according to Proclus' interpretation – is of the same rank as Being, since Being is the focus of his thought and since he primarily defines it as one.[57]

4. *The perfecting of Eleatic ontology through Proclus'* hen-*ontology*

As I will endeavour to argue, perfecting the Parmenidean doctrine, according to which being – not the One in itself – is the principle of all things, does not mean killing Parmenides, but rather paving the ground for the more correct notion of the One above Being. In other words, it means overcoming the limits and inaccuracies found in the Parmenidean formulation of being. The *Parmenides* does not support the idea that Plato carried out an act of parricide against Parmenides – the very act performed in the *Sophist* – but rather increasingly appears to tone down any purported break with Eleaticism. In support of this thesis, Proclus explains that, as opposed to the *Sophist*, where Parmenides is refuted because he does not yet talk about the One, in the *Parmenides* Parmenides' discussion *de facto* leads to the true One: that One which is free from all multiplicity, and which is not only transcendent with respect to being, but cannot countenance the attribute 'that-is'.[58]

> As for the philosophy of Parmenides, here Plato is superior in so far as Parmenides declared Being to be the principle of all things that are; Plato, however, showed that this is not so, but the One is beyond it. For if it were Being, all things would aspire to be,[59] since everything is dependent on its principle; but as a matter of fact we see some people despising being for the sake of a greater good.[60] It follows that Being is not the One Principle of everything, but the One, which transcends[61] (ἐπαναβέβηκεν) Being.[62]

[56] See Procl. *in Prm*. 641.1–6.
[57] See Procl. *in Prm*. 628.1–6 and *in Prm*. 708.8–27.
[58] See Procl. *in Prm*. 638.9–27.
[59] On the differences between the first two Principles, see Plot. 5.3.10; 5.5.13; 6.7.20.16–18.
[60] The same expression occurs in El. *in Porph*. 1.8–9. See also Procl. *Theol. Plat*. 1.25 111.19–21; *in Alc*. 144.4–5; 337.12–13; *in R*. 2.89.27–28, 90.25–26; Dam. *in Phd*. 1.475.1–3, 2.91; Olymp. *in Alc*. 117.13–15.
[61] On the transcendence of the First Principle, see Plot. 5.6.6.
[62] Anon. *Proll*. 8.24–31.

In this passage from the *Prolegomena*, it is clear that, according to Parmenides, being is the principle of all beings. Despite the use of the verb ἐπαναβαίνω, it is equally evident that the author is referring to DK 28 B7–8 DK (= LM 19 D8) without any polemical intent, whereas the DK 28 B7–8 is criticised in Pl. *Sph*. 243b3–250d4 and *Prm*. 141e7–142a1. Based on the cosmo-literary theory of the Neoplatonists, which stresses the importance of considering each dialogue a unitary cosmos,[63] isolated passages of a dialogue do not produce any unity and therefore, in the specific case at hand, do not offer an overall picture of the reception of Eleatic ontology. Moreover, according to Proclus, Plato often engages with the history of philosophy, but – as he does with the principles of wisdom as a whole[64] – strews his reflections throughout his dialogues, eventually bringing them together in the *Parmenides*, the theological dialogue *par excellence* which, along with the *Timaeus*, crowns the bi-cyclical curriculum of the dialogues studied in schools.[65] In order to prove the remarkable unity and comprehensiveness of the Platonic doctrine contained in the *Parmenides*, Proclus recalls that, whereas Socrates in the *Phaedo* accuses Anaxagoras of Clazomenae of not using intellect in a proper way, and of explaining the nature of things through "air currents, dispositions, and other such things," in the *Sophist* Socrates asks the Eleatic Stranger to introduce him to the philosophy of the Italian school. In these dialogues, Proclus explains, Socrates "separately accomplishes" what the *Parmenides*, already in its dramatic structure, shows within a unitary framework: this dialogue brings together in Athens not just the Italian philosophers, in order for them to transmit their ancestral ideas to the Athenian philosophers, but also the Ionic philosophers of Clazomenae, in order for them to receive the Italians' teachings.[66]

What lies behind this rather literary reflection – for Proclus is talking about the dramatic structure of the dialogue – is actually the crucial idea that without the perfecting of Parmenides' ontological theory and its harmonisation within the metaphysical-theological context of (the school of) Athens, the Neoplatonist system could never attain historical and theoretical perfection. The formal, historical and theoretical perfection that the *Parmenides* stages within the Platonic corpus is – as just noted – the outcome of the recombination into a harmonious whole of 'partial' reflections to be found in other dialogues, even in a dialogue not included

[63] On this theory, see Motta, *λόγους ποιεῖν*, 188–212.
[64] Procl. *Theol.Plat*. 1.5 23.22–24.1 and 1.7 32.3–6.
[65] See Anon. *Proll*. 26.13–44.
[66] See Procl. *in Prm*. 630.1–13.

in the canonical reading curriculum.[67] Indeed, Proclean *hen*-ontology – like Neoplatonic metaphysics more generally – necessarily entails an interpretation of the *Republic*,[68] and particularly of what it states about the Good in Book 6. In *Dissertation* 11 of his *Commentary on the Republic*,[69] Proclus writes that Socrates shows that the Good is beyond Being through the analogy of the sun. This illustrates how the Good ensures the subsistence of the truth, which is superior to Being just as light is more venerable than what is visible precisely by virtue of the light itself.[70] With regard to this claim, Proclus further 'clarifies' a Parmenidean insight – which is to say that he reinterprets it, albeit not explicitly. If the light which proceeds from the Good is called truth by Plato,[71] then, according to Proclus, it is clearly superior to Being, since Parmenides too speaks of the truth, but as an attribute of 'his' one.

Therefore, having acknowledged the importance of Parmenides' reflection on Being,[72] Proclus sees this Presocratic philosopher's *auctoritas* as the foundation of Platonic philosophy and of his own metaphysical system: the Parmenidean identity between being and thought enables the Neoplatonists to argue that Being/Intellect is a reality encompassing the intelligible forms and which cannot coincide with the First Principle.[73]

> Another proof that Intelligence is not the first Cause is this: if it were, since there is a plurality of forms, there will also be a plurality of intelligences; and if this is true, the principle will be a manifold, which is absurd, for at the beginning of things there must be unity.[74]

From a causal point of view, too, what subsists by virtue of the Good cannot coincide with the First Principle or First Cause; hence, the Neoplatonic One is different from the Parmenidean one. In turn, the Neoplatonic One, from which Being derives the unity and truth ensuring the identity between being and thought,[75] does not coincide with the Intellect.[76]

[67] On the reasons for the absence of the *Republic* from the Neoplatonist "canon" of dialogues, see D. O'Meara, "Plato's 'Republic' in the School of Iamblichus," in M. Vegetti & M. Abbate (eds.), *La* Repubblica *di Platone nella tradizione antica* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1999) 193–205.

[68] See L.P. Gerson, "From Plato's Good to Platonic God," *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 2 (2008) 93–112.

[69] On the peculiarities of this Proclean text, see D. Baltzly & J.F. Finamore, Proclus's *Commentary on Plato's Republic* 1.1–6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 9–15.

[70] See Procl. *in R*. 1.277.23–27. Cf. Procl. *Theol.Plat*. 2.4 33.12–17.

[71] See Procl. *Theol.Plat*. 1.21 100.13–15; *in R*. 1.279.26–29.

[72] See Steel, "Le *Sophiste* comme texte théologique dans l'interprétation de Proclus," 51–64.

[73] The Intellect is 'One-Many' (ἕν πολλά), according to Pl. *Prm*. 144e5: see Plot. 5.1.8.26; 5.3.15.11. An extensive discussion of this may be found in R. Chiaradonna, *Plotino* (Roma: Carocci, 2009) 49–79.

[74] Anon. *Proll*. 9.37–41.

[75] On the First Principle beyond truth itself, see Procl. *in R*. 1.280.24 ff.; 277.14 ff.

[76] See Procl. *Theol.Plat*. 2.4 31.25–26.

5. *Parmenides, Zeno and the 'Uni-Multiplicity' of Being*

At the beginning of the *Commentary on the Parmenides* Proclus describes the setting of the dialogue and the arrival of Parmenides and Zeno. The two are not just citizens of Elea, but also members of the Pythagorean school,[77] and they have come to Athens for the Great Panathenaia, in order to help suitably gifted Athenians to acquire 'knowledge of divine beings.'[78] For many Athenians and foreigners this is an occasion to come together and listen to a reading of Zeno's book against the multiplicity of beings. Zeno's book is a disguised attempt to support the Parmenidean thesis that being is one: the book has been written in response to the foolish questions of those who, incapable of grasping the truth, infer from the statement that being is one that it is impossible for both Parmenides and Zeno to exist at the same time. Zeno, Parmenides' pupil, believes that Parmenides' thesis does not require any additional proof; yet, 'in a remarkable way'[79] and without openly siding with Parmenides, he shows that those who posit the multiplicity of being run into no fewer difficulties than those who instead support that being is one. In fact, according to Zeno those who posit the many encounter even worse difficulties. It is at this point that Proclus breaks off his description of the narrative in order to express his personal opinion on the cogency of the Eleatic theses on Being:

> And if I may interpolate my opinion, I think he did so plausibly. For Being must be both one and many; every monad has a plurality correlative with it, and every plurality is comprehended under some appropriate monad. But since in every case the ground of plurality is tied up with the monad and cannot exist without it, these men of Elea were focusing their attention upon the incomprehensible unifying causality of the monad when they made the One Being primary. Seeing that every plurality exists in unity, they declared that the One Being is prior to the many; for what primarily is, is one, and from it the plurality of beings proceeds.[80]

According to Proclus, Zeno's argument contributes to showing that Plato derives the 'uni-multiplicity' of Being precisely from Parmenidean mon-

[77] See Procl. *in Prm*. 618.22–619.10. See note 8 above. On the importance of Pythagoreanism, see the previous remarks in this paper. With reference to what has just been stated, see also D. O'Meara, *Pythagoras revived. Mathematics and philosophy in late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) and C. Steel, M. Bonazzi & C. Lévy (eds.), *A Platonic Pythagoras: Platonism and Pythagoreanism in the Imperial Age* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).
[78] Procl. *in Prm*. 619.12–13: εἰς τὴν τῶν θείων ἐπιστήμην.
[79] Procl. *in Prm*. 619.33: δαιμονίως.
[80] Procl. *in Prm*. 620.4–16.

ism.[81] In this section of the dialogue, therefore, Parmenides and Zeno would be discussing the One-that-is, i.e. the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. The reference to the monad – a term which in mathematics describes the first element in a series of numbers – indicates that Being is the peak of the hierarchical series proceeding from the One.[82] The Eleatics' one would thus be the Monad of Being, from which the multiplicity of intelligible reality derives and on which it depends: according to Proclus' reinterpretation of Parmenides' being, the summit of all entities is found to be anterior to their multiplicity.

> So also Parmenides knows that intelligible plurality proceeds from the One Being, that prior to the many beings there is this fundamental One Being in which the plurality of the intelligibles has its unity. It is therefore far from true that he had to deny plurality because he posited the One Being – he who in the passages above superposes that beings are many; rather in saying that the many get their being, whatever it is, from the One Being, he rightly regards this cause as sufficient and so declares that Being is One.[83]

Therefore, while on the one hand Parmenides and Zeno may be credited with having identified the 'uni-multiplicity' (ἕν πολλά) of Being, on the other hand the limit of Eleatic ontology lies in having identified this Being with the One understood as First Cause. The one discussed by Zeno is not absolutely transcendent, but rather a One-Many: for the Eleatics, "seeing that every plurality exists in unity, [...] declared that the One Being is prior to the Many."[84] This is justified by the fact that this being is at the same time, and primarily (πρώτως), one and the source of the multiplicity of beings. The difference between Zeno and Parmenides, according to Proclus, is that whereas Parmenides leaves multiplicity out of his discussion on being, focusing on the unity of being,[85] Zeno – who is 'daemonic' and inferior to his teacher – attempts to trace the multiplicity of being back to the unity from which it derives and on which it depends. Indeed, a discourse on multiplicity that overlooks unity would engender confusion and disorder: "Thus he showed that when the One is taken

[81] On Parmenides' monism, see P. Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides. Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) 64–97.

[82] See Procl. *Inst.* 21: "Every order has its beginning in a monad and proceeds to a manifold co-ordinate therewith; and the manifold in any order may be carried back to a single monad"; transl. E.R. Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*. A revised Text with Introduction and Commentary, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

[83] Procl. *in Prm*. 708.34–709.6.

[84] Procl. *in Prm*. 620.13–15.

[85] See Procl. *in Prm*. 620.13–15, where it is stated that Parmenides did not deem it appropriate to re-descend towards multiplicity and instead chose to focus entirely on the unitary nature of the One-that-is, limiting his enquiry to the contemplation of this One. Cf. *in Prm*. 1030.19–20: Parmenides "shrinks from once again descending into 'the multiplicity of arguments' from his intellectual and simple form of activity."

away there is complete confusion and disorder among the Many."[86] Moreover, a person who leaves the one out, even inadvertently, acts like someone who posits a rift between the divine and things. This is how Zeno ultimately conforms to his teacher's view: "If Being is not a many, either nothing at all exists or Being must be one".[87] By conforming to Parmenides' view, Zeno accepts that the one "exists in itself prior to plurality, and plurality is what it is entirely (πάντως) from the One,"[88] and comes to interpret in causal terms (κατ' αἰτίαν) the multiplicity of the one, which "cannot be preserved in mere plurality."[89]

6. *Conclusions: the σκοπός ('target') of the* Parmenides *and the henological outcome*

Zeno *de facto* fails to provide adequate support for Parmenides: he fails to move beyond the discussion of the One-that-is, as Parmenides is made to do in the dialogue. To understand how Parmenides manages to save Eleatic ontology, becoming the father not just of Neoplatonic *hen*-ontology but also of henology, it is necessary to take a closer look at the issue of the σκοπός ('target') of the *Parmenides*.[90] First of all, it must be said that it is far from easy to identify the σκοπός ('target'), as is shown by the historical analysis of the interpretations of the dialogue provided by Proclus in the introduction to the commentary. However, this analysis is useful, because 1) it leads to the truthful and "wholly sacred and mystical" analysis developed by Proclus' teacher, Syrianus;[91] and 2) it allows us to better grasp the exegetical strategy which Proclus deploys in order to save Parmenides.

In the *Commentary on the Parmenides*, as in the *Platonic Theology*, we find essentially two historical-interpretative hypotheses regarding the σκοπός (namely, the logical and the theological), although each is then further divided into two sub-hypotheses in order to outline the various stages in the exegesis of the dialogue.[92] What is most interesting for the purpose of the

[86] Procl. *in Prm*. 620.28–30.
[87] Procl. *in Prm*. 621.10–11.
[88] Procl. *in Prm*. 621.14–16.
[89] See Procl. *in Prm*. 621.13–14.
[90] On the σκοπός of the *Parmenides*, see G. Radke, *Das Lächeln des „Parmenides": Proklos Interpretationen zur platonischen Dialogform* (Berlin – New York: W. de Gruyter, 2006) 232–305.
[91] See Procl. *Theol.Plat*. 1.8 33.22–23.
[92] On the history of the interpretations of the dialogue as presented by Proclus, see Radke, *Das Lächeln des „Par-*

present enquiry is the fact that the Neoplatonists are only capable of saving Parmenides and Parmenidean ontology through a metaphysical reading of the dialogue, which is to say by reinterpreting – and in some cases clearly stretching – the very heart of Eleaticism.

In discussing the hypothesis according to which the *Parmenides* is a merely polemical exercise carried out with no consideration for its contemplation of real things, Proclus criticises those exegetes who have identified being as the object of the dialogue. He argues that, according to these interpreters, Plato, like the Eleatics, sought to establish that being is one by using the Eleatics' method, namely by presenting Zeno as refuting the Many and Parmenides as revealing the One-that-is.[93] This perspective has been partially overcome by those interpreters who regard the logical exercise as useful for acquiring experience and abilities in discussion.[94] Whereas in the former case the *Parmenides* would be an aporetic dialogue, in the latter interpretation leads to the identification of three 'positive' nuclei (the aporias on the ideas, the theoretical teaching of the method, and an example of its practical application).

However, we are still far from the heart of the Neoplatonist interpretation. A first real turn in the history of the exegesis of the dialogue occurs when the logical exercise is assigned a metaphysical connotation,[95] i.e. when the exegetes shift their attention from the method to the object, which according to some interpreters is Parmenides' one.[96]

> Indeed, although the hypotheses do actually take their departure from Parmenides' One, which is identical with the One Being of the dialogue, yet as they proceed from this point they sometimes fix upon the notion of One apart from Being and develop the implications of genuine unity, purged of all plurality and therefore as transcending Being and repudiating that predicate.[97]

Yet, the σκοπός ('target') of the *Parmenides* does not coincide with the One in itself, the true One to which the consequences of Parmenides' hypothesis leads. In order to fully grasp the purpose of the dialogue, to overcome the indebtedness to Eleatic *hen*-ontology, and to attain henology, it is necessary – within this metaphysical interpretation – to outline the law of

menides," 517–547; E. Gritti, *Proclo. Dialettica, Anima, Esegesi* (Milano: LED, 2008) 154–165; and S. Mesyats, "Iamblichus' Exegesis of *Parmenides*' Hypotheses and His Doctrine Of Divine Henads," in E. Afonasin, J. M. Dillon & J. Finamore (eds.), *Iamblichus and the Foundations of Late Platonism* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

[93] See Procl. *in Prm*. 630.37–633.12.

[94] See Procl. *in Prm*. 633.13–635.27.

[95] See C. Steel, "Iamblichus and the theological interpretation of the *Parmenides*," *SyllClass* 8 (1997) 15–30.

[96] See Procl. *in Prm*. 635.28–638.2.

[97] Procl. *in Prm*. 638.17–23.

Neoplatonic causality and its principles.[98] Identifying such principles helps us grasp the fact that the enquiry carried out in the dialogue concerns the truth represented by all beings, not only insofar as they all derive from the One and depend on a single Cause, but also – Proclus adds – insofar as each entity possesses a divine quality depending on the degree to which it participates of the One, seeing that God and the One coincide.[99] Such is the reading of the *Parmenides* offered by Proclus' master Syrianus.[100] It is a reading which, through the character of Parmenides, reconciles Eleatic ontology with the metaphysical developments of late Platonism. It does so within a new theological framework[101] that sees Parmenides and his school as the historical antecedent of Platonism:

> Considering such to be the dialogue's purpose, our master denied that it was about Being, or about real beings alone; he admitted that it was about all things, but insisted on adding "in so far as all things are the offspring of one cause and are dependent on this universal cause," and indeed, if we may express our own opinion, in so far as all things are deified; for each thing, even the lowest grade of being you could mention, becomes god by participating in unity according to its rank. For if God and One are the same because there is nothing greater than God and nothing greater than One, then to be unified is the same as to be deified.[102]

[98] On Neoplatonic causality, see Chlup, *Proclus*, 62–98.

[99] See Procl. *in Prm*. 641.3–12.

[100] See C. D'Ancona, "La doctrine des principes: Syrianus comme source textuelle et doctrinale de Proclus. 1ère partie: Histoire du problème," in Segonds (ed.), *Proclus et la* Théologie platonicienne, 189–225 ; C. Luna, "La doctrine des principes: Syrianus comme source textuelle et doctrinale de Proclus. 2e partie: Analyse des textes," in Segonds (ed.), *Proclus et la* Théologie platonicienne, 227–278; and J. Dillon, "Syrianus's Exegesis of the Second Hypothesis of the Parmenides: The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe Revealed," in Turner & Corrigan (eds.), *Plato's* Parmenides *and Its Heritage, II*, 133–141.

[101] See L.G. Westerink, "Proclus et les Présocratiques," in J. Pépin & H.D. Saffrey (eds.), *Proclus. Lecteur et interprète des anciens* (Paris : Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1987) 105–112.

[102] Procl. *in Prm*. 641.1–12.

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9.
Why Rescue Parmenides?
On Zeno's Ontology in Simplicius*

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Abstract: This paper examines the role Simplicius attributes to Zeno in the Eleatic ontology and tries to determine his place within the Neoplatonic system. It shows how the commentator competes with his Peripatetic forerunners (Eudemus and Alexander) and makes Zeno's goal congruent with Parmenides. Zeno talks of the same One-Being as Parmenides did, not of any physical one or being. However, instead of determining it directly, he has to convert his readers, Parmenides' opponents, through dialectical arguments (ἐπιχειρήματα). Therefore, this article also questions the meaning of being a disciple and rescuing one's master: Simplicius uses Zeno as a model for every philosopher in this position.

Keywords: One-Being, dialectical arguments, dichotomia, division, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Simplicius, Plato, Zeno of Elea, Parmenides, Aristoteles, Eudemus of Rhodes

In the *Parmenides*, Socrates presents Zeno as Parmenides' dear friend who, wishing to rescue his compatriot's thesis ("being is one"), composed a treatise against his opponents and showed that those who ridiculed it and supported the opposite view ("beings are many") encounter even more absurd consequences.[1] Plato's *mise en scène* creates one of the more peculiar situations in the history of philosophy:[2] one gifted mind rescues another by corroborating his writings and an author does not formulate a theory of his own but confirms that of his predecessor through subtler arguments. We are free to believe in the Platonic narrative and to interpret Zeno's arguments

* I thank Simon Fortier for revising my English, as well as Anna Motta and Topher Kurfess for their careful reading and suggestions. All mistakes are obviously my own.

[1] Pl. *Prm*. 128a4–8: "I understand that Zeno wants to be on intimate terms with you not only in friendship but also in his book. He has, in a way, written the same thing as you, but by changing it round he tries to fool us into thinking he is saying something different."; 128c6–d2: "The truth is that the book comes to the defense (βοήθειά τις) of Parmenides' argument against those who try to make fun of it by claiming that, if it is one (κωμῳδεῖν ὡς εἰ ἕν ἐστι), many absurdities and self-contradictions result from that argument." (transl. M.L. Gill & P. Ryan, in J.M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997) 362.

[2] As aptly noted by F. Solmsen, "The Tradition about Zeno of Elea Re-Examined," *Phronesis* 16 (1971) 116–141,140.

as so many proofs of Parmenides' ontology.[3] In the eyes of the later Neoplatonists, Plato's authority left no doubt in this regard. Their understanding of Zeno was mediated by Plato's dialogue and they afforded him the special status of an auxiliary figure. Did they, however, see Zeno as a minor philosopher who made no real contribution to the Eleatic position? If so, what role did he have to play in the Eleatic "school"? These are the questions I propose to examine.

More precisely, this article is anchored in Simplicius, our primary source for Eleatic thought. Without Simplicius, the project of reconstructing the history of the Eleatic ontology would be a lost cause or, at least, would be an exercise as promising as that of writing a monograph on the authentic teachings of Socrates. Without Simplicius, most of our fragments on Parmenides and Melissus would be lost, and we would be limited to the testimonies of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Proclus. Without Simplicius, our portrait of their thought would truly be nothing more than a sketch. It is not surprising, therefore, that studies on his interpretation of Parmenides and Melissus have multiplied in recent years.[4] His Zeno, unfortunately, has not received the same attention, although the Commentary on *Physics* is our only source for many of the Eleatic's arguments.[5] Nevertheless, if Zeno had remained a secondary figure in his eyes, why would Simplicius have taken the trouble to quote and discuss his arguments, as he does those of Melissus and Parmenides, especially when the portion of Aristotle's text he is commenting on presently does not explicitly require it? That is the gap in our knowledge which this article intends to fill.

[3] My concern here is not the interpretation of Zeno's fragments or his aporias on movement. It will be to analyse the role in the Eleatic ontology that late Neoplatonists gave him.

[4] On Parmenides in Simplicius, I refer to the two monographs, as thick as they are recent, of I.A. Licciardi, *Parmenide tràdito, Parmenide tradìto, nel* Commentario *di Simplicio alla* Fisica *di Aristotele* (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2016), and *Critica dell'apparente e critica apparente. Simplicio interprete di Parmenide nel* Commentario *al* De Caelo *di Aristotele* (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2017), as well as to N.-L. Cordero, "Simplicius et l' 'école' éléate," in I. Hadot (ed.), *Simplicius, sa vie, son œuvre, sa survie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987) 166–182, and A. Stevens, *Postérité de l'être. Simplicius interprète de Parménide* (Bruxelles: Ousia, 1990). On Melissus, I refer to M. Brémond, *Lectures de Mélissos. Édition, traduction et interprétation des témoignages sur Mélissos de Samos* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

[5] Only M. Caveing, *Zénon et le continu. Étude historique et critique des Fragments et Témoignages* (Paris: Vrin, 1982), reminds us that the interpretation of Simplicius is tied up in his Neoplatonism. He offers a remarkable study of several passages that will interest me here. However, since he focuses on determining the meaning of Zeno's arguments, he leaves aside the question of the present article, namely, how Zeno is integrated into Simplicius' Neoplatonic schema.

1. *Zeno, a matter of dispute I*

In Simplicius, the philosophers before Plato are part of a historical schema in which each one fulfils a specific function within the system.[6] Those who deal with the first and intelligible principle occupy three successive ranks, whose historical order mirrors the order of procession:[7] Xenophanes speaks of the One, Parmenides of the One-Being (the Intelligible), Melissus of the Life at this level (the Intelligible-Intellective). Zeno is absent from this taxonomy, as he is from the history of principles with which Aristotle opens the *Physics* (1.2–3), where his name does not appear among the partisans of the unity of being. Simplicius thus appears to treat Zeno as having an essential role in neither the construction of Eleatic ontology nor the elucidation of the relationship between Being and One according to the architecture of later Neoplatonic metaphysics.

However, Simplicius does not confine Zeno to physical aporias about the need to be in one place or the impossibility of movement that Aristotle later discusses.[8] It is regarding an ontological question that Simplicius introduces Zeno into his commentary, by way of a quotation from the Peripatetic commentators he diligently follows.[9] In other words, Eudemus of Rhodes and Alexander of Aphrodisias impose a certain perspective on him, and all his efforts concentrate on saving Zeno from an exegesis which he considers inaccurate. Here is the starting point:

> After quoting the passage we have to explain, Alexander adds: "either [Aristotle] divides the ways according to which each thing is both one and multiple, or showing that one is not said univocally, he speaks of how Zeno showed that each sensible is many, a thesis by which one could be troubled. For, either beings are many in definition (τῷ λόγῳ), but one in subject (τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ): for example, the musical Socrates and the white Socrates are many in definition (the definition of musical is, in fact, different from that of white), although Socrates is one in subject; or, the same is both one and many, as are the whole and the parts: one as a whole, many as made of parts, since the part is not shown as identical to the whole.[10]

[6] See M.-A. Gavray, "Une histoire néoplatonicienne des principes. Simplicius, *In Phys.*, I, 1–2," in M.-A. Gavray & A. Michalewski (eds.), *Les principes cosmologiques du platonisme. Origines, influences et systématisation* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017) 249–272.

[7] See Simp. *in Ph.* 29.5–21.

[8] See Arist. *Ph.* 4.1 209a23–24 and 210b22–24; 6.9 239b5–240a18.

[9] On Alexander's role in Simplicius' Commentary, see M. Rashed, *Alexandre d'Aphrodise. Commentaire perdu à la* Physique *d'Aristote (livres IV–VIII). Les scholies byzantines* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011) 23–29; see also H. Baltussen, *Philosophy and Exegesis in Simplicius. The Methodology of a Commentator* (London: Duckworth, 2008) 107–135 (on Alexander) and 99–104 (on Eudemus).

[10] Simp. *in Ph.* 96.21–30; my transl.

The reference remains vague and seems to point towards to the *Parmenides* (129c–d) more than the famous treatise of Zeno, which Alexander does not seem to have had at his disposal. It at least allows Simplicius to open a discussion that will end some fifty pages later (*in Ph.* 144.14–16). He immediately invokes Eudemus, who was probably the first to identify the Eleatic as the source of the disturbing arguments that Aristotle evokes in the *Physics*:

> Perhaps it is in no way worse to also quote Eudemus, in the perspective of giving greater attention to what is said. Here is the text that follows the answers on the meanings of the one: "Therefore, on the one hand, is it not [one], on the other hand, is there anything one? That was indeed in question. Zeno, it is said (φασι), asserted that if one exposed to him what one is, he could also say what the beings are. He was in doubt (ἠπόρει), as it seems (ὡς ἔοικε), because each sensible is said to be many by attribution (κατηγορικῶς) and by partition (μερισμῷ), and to pose that the point is <nothing>.[11] For what does not increase by addition nor diminish by subtraction, he considered that it does not belong to beings".[12]

These quotations pose several problems for Simplicius. First, they associate Zeno with the troubling arguments about the one and many to which Aristotle refers (1.2 185b25–27). If Eudemus expresses some reservations regarding this attribution (i.e. φασὶ, ὡς ἔοικε), Alexander has no such qualms. However, the two commentators do not put Zeno in the same position: for Alexander, Zeno is at the origin of these troubling arguments, while for Eudemus, Zeno himself fell prey to them.[13] Secondly, these quotations attribute to Zeno the idea that there is a close relationship between the being and the one, according to which the former would not exist without the latter. Thirdly, they link Zeno to the argument from the point, which implies a spatialization of being (i.e. there belongs to beings only that which increases or decreases by its presence or absence; the point does not have any magnitude; therefore, the point does not exist). Finally, they associate him with attribution and partition, ideas which the commentators will use to do what Zeno apparently could not and solve the aporia of the plurality of the one. To restore what appears to him to be the correct interpretation (as opposed to that of the Peripatetics), Simplicius will not only situate Zeno with regard to the aporia, but he will also determine at what level of reality being and one belong according to him.

[11] Reading μηθέν, as in *in Ph.* 139.1, rather than μηδὲ ἕν. The quotation comes again in *in Ph.* 138.31–139.3.
[12] Simp. *in Ph.* 97.9–16; my transl. This text is known as Eudemus fr. 37a Wehrli = DK 29 A16 (= LM 20 D10).
[13] As noted by Caveing, *Zénon et le continu*, 20.

2. *Aristotle's lemma*

The two quotes appear in connection with *Ph.* 1.2 185b25–186a3. In this lemma, Aristotle evokes a difficulty that has troubled his recent predecessors, namely that the same thing is both one and many. He names Lycophron, whose solution consists in suppressing the copula because of the plurality that the utterance (λόγος) or the division (διαίρεσις) produce in the one. Since Simplicius' commentary on this passage passes through several different moments, it will be useful to lay out the movement he follows in his interpretation of Zeno.

Lemma *Ph.* 1.2 185b25–186a3 (*in Ph.* 90.23–102.15):

- Examination of the λέξις ('the particular exegesis') (90.24–92.26): Lycophron and the Eretrians rejected predication, considering that it was the only way to make a being many. They did not realise that the definition also makes the same thing one and many, according to different perspectives.
- Quotation of Porphyry's "innovative" (καινοπρεπῶς) solution to the problem of the one and the many (92.26–96.14): the same is many according to the definition and the attributes, but one according to the subject and the substance.
- Quotation of Alexander and Eudemus (96.15–102.15): did Aristotle settle the two aspects of the aporia, predication (the plurality of predicates) and division (the continuum)?
- Introduction of Zeno via Alexander (96.15–30): every sensible is also many.
- Acknowledgement by Alexander that the aporia of predication is unresolved (96.30–97.6): Simplicius opposes Porphyry's solution mentioned above.
- Quotation of Eudemus (97.6–99.6), who challenges the solutions of Lycophron (the suppression of copula) and Plato (the replacement of predication by participation), before removing Zeno's objection by a distinction between potentiality and actuality.
- Distinction between the argument that Eudemus assigns to Zeno and that of the *Parmenides* (99.7–31): Simplicius contests the interpretation of Zeno by the Peripatetics.
- Plato's solution to the aporia *qua* the Forms (99.32–101.27): Simplicius anticipates *Physics* 187a1–12, where Aristotle writes that "some have made concessions to the argument."
- Aristotle's solution, made clear by Porphyry, *qua* sensibles (101.28–102.15).

As we can see, Zeno is not at the heart of Simplicius' concerns. He is above all an object of exegetical dispute amongst Aristotle's commentators.

3. *Eudemus' position*

In order to take advantage of their opponent, the two Peripatetics project their own concepts onto Zeno. Here is how Eudemus proceeds:

> Moreover, if one were to add the remaining categories, one would build a more convincing argument. For the point obviously produces neither substance, nor quality, nor anything existing according to the divisions (κατὰ τὰς διαιρέσεις). Now, if the point is such, if each of us is said to be many (for example white, musical, and all the rest, as well as the stone, since the comminution (θραῦσις) of each is infinite), how could the one exist?[14]

Eudemus distinguishes two arguments: the unreality of the point and the plurality drawn from the definition. The first comes from the *Metaphysics*, where Aristotle mentions "Zeno's axiom" according to which "that is nothing which, added or removed, makes neither greater nor smaller," because "what is is a magnitude (μέγεθος), and if it is magnitude, it is corporeal (σωματικόν)."[15] Magnitude would be the right criterion of reality: only bodies would exist, while the one or the point would be nothing. Eudemus' interpretation goes a step further since he extends the argument to the other categories (what is said "according to the divisions"). Not only does the point not exist and not generate any magnitude, but it does not produce any substance, quality, or anything else. This is an *a fortiori* argument: it does not prove that each category entails that the one is many, but it emphasizes that a one without magnitude will never give rise to anything real (or corporeal, as said in the *Metaphysics*). Consequently, at the physical level of magnitudes and bodies, there would be no constitutive unity and, following Zeno's argument, the elementary one would disappear.

The second argument draws from our lemma. Eudemus' strategy this time around is to compare the fragmentation of a stone to the plurality obtained by definition (while Aristotle made two distinct arguments) and to consider that predication, in a sense, divides a substance into its properties. Just as a

[14] Simp. *in Ph*. 97.16–21; my transl.

[15] Arist. *Metaph*. 3.4 1001b7–13 (= DK 29 A21 = LM 20 D8), transl. modified from that of W.D. Ross in J. Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle*: *The Revised Oxford Translation*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) 1581–1582.

stone can shatter in an infinite number of ways, enunciating the properties of a substance, in a virtually infinite process, reveals its plurality (Socrates is white, musical, etc.). This μερισμός ('partition'; Aristotle's term is διαίρεσις, 'division') immediately evokes Zeno's dichotomy and the process of infinite division. However, the example chosen by Eudemus (the comminution of a stone) places its interpretation at the level of physics and the sensible: in this domain, Zeno will have to agree that there will be no unity of the order of the totality because of the infinite plurality of possible viewpoints on a sensible substance.

Eudemus' exegetical caution shows that he has no direct access to the texts of Zeno. Comparing two passages from Aristotle, he gives a reading of Zeno firmly rooted in physics (the level of corporeality) and attributes to him the removal of the one, both as a constitutive element of magnitudes and as a mode of totality. Therefore, to get out of the aporia, he opposes to Zeno's aporia the couple of potentiality and actuality, which is also at work in the physical realm and restores the one at the same time as the being:

> If Zeno were present to us, we would tell him about the actual one that it is not many. Unity belongs to him properly, plurality according to potentiality. Thus, the same is both one and many, but only one of them actually, never both together. If we succeed in persuading him with these arguments, we would think that we have fulfilled our commitment.[16]

4. *Simplicius' answer*

The refutation of the Peripatetic readings of Zeno is carried out over the course of Simplicius' exegesis of Aristotle's text. With texts in hand, Simplicius successively refutes Eudemus, Eudemus as read by Alexander, and Alexander himself. His response to the Peripatetics has a twofold aim, at once hermeneutic and doctrinal. He wishes to craft an interpretation of Zeno in accord not only with the extant sources, but also with what he understands to be the teachings of Parmenides, which Zeno is supposed to defend. First, against Eudemus, Simplicius emphasizes that the argument he attributes to Zeno is found neither in Zeno's book, nor in the *Parmenides*. This amounts to a rejection of Eudemus' reading insofar as it finds no support either in the letter of Zeno's texts or in Plato's authority. Commenting on the previous citation, Simplicius writes:

[16] Eudemus *apud* Simp. *in Ph*. 99.1–6; my transl.

> In this passage, Zeno's argument is obviously different from that reported in his book, which Plato also mentions in the *Parmenides*. There, indeed, flying to the rescue (βοηθῶν) of Parmenides who asserts that being is one, Zeno shows that it is not many. Here, however, Eudemus claims, he denies even the one (because he speaks of the point as the one), while he admits the existence of the many.[17]

Then, *contra* Alexander's reading of Eudemus, according to which Zeno's argument would amount to suppressing the many as well since, if a plurality is a collection of units, it cannot exist in the absence of the one, Simplicius finds that Eudemus draws no such conclusion, since his reasoning, on the contrary, is based on the multiplication of the one.[18] Finally, against Alexander, Simplicius objects that Zeno's book contains no argument suppressing both the one and the many,[19] which at the same time removes any attempt to reduce Zeno's work to a simple hatchet job. In doing so, Simplicius neutralises the Peripatetic readings and makes an alternative reading possible, which takes the aporia out of physics. Instead of compelling Zeno to remove the one, the many, or both, the aporia becomes the source of a reflection on their relationship. The end of the lemma thus distinguishes three levels of solving the aporia, related, respectively, to three authoritative texts.

The first solution concerns the relations between the Forms and comes from the *Sophist*. The inclusion of Plato amongst the "last of the elders" in the Eudemus' quote catches Simplicius' eye, and he recalls that Plato settled the aporia of predication by means of the mutual participation of the Forms.[20] Each has a proper character that distinguishes it from all others. Nonetheless, they all participate in each other and constitute a whole, at once one in totality and many by otherness. This solution, Simplicius notes, is precisely that of Parmenides: Being, which unites the totality of the Forms, is one while being made many by the differences which our intellect introduces into it when it seeks to know the properties of each Form. In doing so, Simplicius presents the possibility of a solution that goes beyond physics and connects the Eleatic and Platonic positions, through an aporia originally raised by Zeno – as the commentators confirm.

The second solution concerns the relationship of sensibles to the Forms

[17] Simp. *in Ph.* 99.7–12; my transl.
[18] Simp. *in Ph.* 99.12–17.
[19] Simp. *in Ph.* 99.17–18.
[20] Simp. *in Ph.* 99.32–100.26; 101.17–22. Simplicius quotes *Sph.* 251a6–c8 and alludes to 253b9–d3. On this passage in a broader interpretation of the *Sophist*, M.-A. Gavray, *Simplicius lecteur du* Sophiste (Paris: Klincksieck, 2007) 71–73.

and comes from the *Parmenides*.[21] Simplicius cites *Prm*. 129c4–e3, where Socrates explains that every sensible participates in the models of the one and the many, before asking for the demonstration of the mutual participation of the Forms. This dialogue confirms that it is Zeno who pushes us towards the solution to the aporia and who articulates the two models of participation. While not positing the solution *per se*, he poses a problem that forces us to turn from the sensibles to the intelligible, from one uni-multiplicity to the other. In a way, he plays the role of an intermediary who leads us to Parmenides' One-Being and Plato's Intelligibles.

The third solution concerns the relations of attributes to substance and is derived from Aristotle's lemma as commented on by Porphyry.[22] As a subject, substance guarantees the unity of the whole, whereas accidents produce a plurality which does not affect it, no more than do the genus and species because they are posterior to the individual. This solution extends the participation developed in the previous ones, insofar as it shows that the principle of unity remains unaffected by plurality when it is added thereto and admits that plurality is complementary to the individual substance. Zeno's aporia therefore demands that we solve the problem of predication as well.

If none of the preceding solutions rests directly on Zeno, he is, nevertheless, responsible for Plato's and Aristotle's answers. It is, therefore, difficult to locate him in Simplicius' system. It is obvious, however, that, by helping Parmenides, his role is less that of offering a direct solution than that of leading others, Plato and Aristotle first and foremost, towards solutions in agreement with Eleatic ontology, i.e. with the One-Being of the Neoplatonic system. From this point of view, he is not directly responsible for the definition of Being, but serves as a guide on the path toward formulating it.

5. *A Neoplatonic solution to the aporia of unity: Asclepius*

Simplicius' solution reflects a shared reading within the school of Ammonius, as attested by Asclepius' commentary on the 11th aporia of *Metaphysics* B (which mentions Zeno and serves as a source for the testimony of Eudemus),[23] namely

[21] Simp. *in Ph*. 100.26–101.17; 101.22–24.

[22] Simp. *in Ph*. 101.25–102.15. Simplicius quotes Porphyry extensively earlier in the lemma, 92.26–96.14.

[23] In his ἀπὸ φωνῆς commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Asclepius is the spokesman of Ammonius, who was the first master of Simplicius in Alexandria. The commentary on *Metaph*. 3.4 1000b4–1001b25 is divided into a θεωρία

to interpret Zeno's aporia on the one beyond the limits of the sensible. Asclepius' effort consists in moving the Eleatic from the level of "gross" (φορτικῶς) reasoning to which Aristotle condemns him, through the process of double exegesis. In the λέξις ('particular exegesis'), which unfolds on the surface of the text, Asclepius shows that to maintain Zeno at the level of what is three-dimensional, i.e. corporeal, amounts to attributing to him the suppression of the one, to the extent that the latter never affects what it is added to and, consequently, has no real existence.[24] In this light, Aristotle's conclusion is right. In the θεωρία ('general exegesis'), on the other hand, the commentator assumes the truth of Zeno's axiom, similar to that of Parmenides and the Pythagoreans, according to which unity would be constitutive of plurality not as an element, but insofar as it "produces intelligible numbers by its generating power,"[25] these in turn producing nature, which is unity, and matter, which is duality. As the first principle and source of numbers, one acts differently from sensible units, in the sense that it produces plurality without ever suffering the slightest internal loss, like a model and its images.[26]

Here again, it is not Zeno who provides the solution, but he forces us to reflect on the essence of unity and its capacity to produce plurality, not only that of intelligible numbers, but also that of nature and matter, which generate the sensible. Zeno is the driving force that pushes us from the sensible to the Intelligible, by positing an aporia that requires us to go beyond the former and think of its relationship with the latter, as well as to understand how being, as a unit, produces the manifold reality with which sensible experience confronts us. On the exegetical side, he forces us to go beyond the surface reading, anchored in sensation, and to consider the aporia on another level. If Zeno plays a role in ontology, it is indirectly, through the conversion of his readers (and the opponents of Parmenides).

6. *Zeno, a matter of dispute II*

Simplicius' second mention of Zeno in an ontological context confirms this reading. Again, he intervenes in a debate with the Peripatetics about the

('general exegesis,' *in Metaph.* 200.25–202.32) and a λέξις ('particular exegesis,' *in Metaph.* 202.33–208.22, itself subdivided into several sections).

[24] Ascl. *in Metaph.* 206.21–207.20, in particular, 206.33–207.12.

[25] Ascl. *in Metaph.* 207.18–19.

[26] Ascl. *in Metaph.* 202.19–32.

twofold aporia mentioned by Aristotle in which Parmenides, Plato (the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*), Xenocrates, Themistius, Eudemus, Alexander, and Porphyry all feature.[27] Aristotle states:

> Some thinkers, in point of fact, made concessions to both arguments. To the argument that all things are one if being means one thing, they conceded that what is not is; to that from dichotomy, they yielded by positing indivisible magnitudes.[28]

According to Simplicius, these two arguments refer respectively to Parmenides and Zeno,

> who wanted to come to the rescue of Parmenides' account "against those who try to mock it (πρὸς τοὺς ἐπιχειροῦντας αὐτὸν κωμῳδεῖν) by claiming that, if it is one, many absurdities and self-contradictions result from that argument (128c7–d2)," since Zeno shows how "their hypothesis, if it is many, would, if someone examined the matter thoroughly, suffer consequences even more absurd than the those suffered by the hypothesis of its being one (128d4–6)." For Zeno himself, in the *Parmenides*, is clearly a witness with his account (τῷ λόγῳ). As for Parmenides' account (ὁ λόγος), he says that the One-Being is all things, since being means one.[29]

Simplicius brandishes the *Parmenides* to justify his interpretation of Zeno, insofar as he proclaims the doctrinal agreement between the master and his disciple that will allow him to overcome the interpretations of the Peripatetics, Alexander and Eudemus. His strategy is first of all exegetical, emphasizing the distance between these interpreters and the sources, not only Plato, but Aristotle as well.

Alexander attributes the dichotomy to Zeno and judges that it suppresses the one, according to a reading which again takes up the model of corporeal fragmentation and confines being to physics: if all beings have a magnitude, the one is excluded because division makes it infinitely many and without magnitude.[30] However, the authority of the *Parmenides* and the *Physics* allows Simplicius to challenge Alexander's construal of Zeno's intention. Simplicius aims to restore Zeno's agreement with Parmenides. If the two Eleatics have the same goal, Zeno indirectly reaches it by dialectical arguments (ἐπιχειρήματα) aiming to destroy the many, that is to say, aiming to prove *per impossibile* the necessity of going beyond the many and beyond physics. This nod to the *Parmenides* makes it possible to emphasize, *contra* Alexander, that the one is

[27] Simp. *in Ph.* 133.30–148.24. See the structure of the lemma in appendix.

[28] Arist. *Ph.* 1.3 187a1–3, transl. modified from that of R.P. Hardie & R.K. Gaye in Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 319.

[29] Simp. *in Ph.* 134.4–10; transl. after that of Gill & Ryan in Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works*, 362.

[30] Simp. *in Ph.* 138.18–22.

neither plurality, nor magnitude, nor anything divisible, but that it is merely all things. The *Physics* provides a second argument. If the dichotomy were to bring about plurality, it would manifestly conflict with Parmenides' λόγος ('account'), which is why Aristotle would have no reason to associate them.[31] From Simplicius' point of view, Alexander's error is, therefore, a departure from the dual authority of Plato and Aristotle regarding Zeno's project.

As for Eudemus, from whom Simplicius takes up the passage quoted above,[32] he appears only as a possible source of Alexander's idea that Zeno would annihilate the one. Simplicius does not go further since he has already shown the error of this reading. Instead, he questions the status and function of Zeno's arguments.

7. *Zeno's arguments*

The discussion with the Peripatetics shows that Simplicius attributes dialectical reasoning to Zeno. His arguments are neither λόγοι ('accounts'), as the *Physics* says about the dichotomy, nor ἀπορίαι ('aporias'), as discussed above, but ἐπιχειρήματα, 'dialectical syllogisms'[33] – according to the definition given by Alexander of Aphrodisias.[34] In the *Topics*, the verb *epicheirein*, taken absolutely ('to put one's hand to'), and derived terms never receive a proper definition. They refer to the action of the questioner who, in a dialectical context, tries to challenge the opponent's thesis or even to build contrary evidence to refute it.[35] It is argumentation aiming at ruining a thesis rather than establishing the truth of its opposite. This is the sense that Simplicius has in mind when he writes that "he who contradicts an opinion can argue in two ways (διχῶς ἐπιχειρεῖ): either he reverses the words that serve to establish it (κατασκευάζοντας), or he realises its universal suppression (καθολικὴν ... τὴν ἀναίρεσιν)."[36] While the first way does no more than refute the premises, not

[31] Simp. *in Ph.* 138.22–28. Aristotle associates the two λόγοι ('accounts') in *Ph.* 1.3 187a1–3.

[32] Simp. *in Ph.* 138.31–139.3. Cf. 97.9–16 (*supra*).

[33] Simplicius refers to Zeno's arguments as ἐπιχειρήματα in *in Ph.* 99.18, 138.20, 139.3–8, 141.1 (ἐπιχείρησις).

[34] Alex.Aphr. *in Top.* 126.11–12: ἔστι δὲ ὁ τόπος ἀρχὴ καὶ ἀφορμὴ ἐπιχειρήματος· ἐπιχείρημα δὲ καλοῦσι τὸν διαλεκτικὸν συλλογισμόν.

[35] See R. Smith, *Aristotle. Topics, Books I and VIII with Excerpts from Related Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) 25 and 125.

[36] Simp. *in Ph.* 71.19–20 (my transl.; see 71.19–72.2). This passage introduces a discussion of Aristotle's attitude towards Parmenides and Melissus.

the thesis, the second leads to a solid refutation (βεβαίως, 'firmly') because it attacks the thesis directly. According to Simplicius, it is this latter mode that Zeno uses, since his arguments are intended to refute the thesis of the existence of a plurality completely.[37]

Now, the idea that Zeno would advance dialectical arguments does not come from Aristotle or his commentators. Simplicius likely takes his inspiration from the *Parmenides*: firstly, the verb *epicheirein* is used by Zeno about the contradictors of Parmenides who set about deriding him; secondly Socrates uses it to designate the aporias on the one and the many which apply to the sensible.[38] If the use seems different – insofar as the technical sense likely only appears with Aristotle – Simplicius could nevertheless seize upon an echo of this dialectical vocabulary in Plato to determine the status of Zeno's arguments: when he argues it is to defeat a thesis contrary to that of his master, and he does not simply content himself with attacking the evidence, but makes a universal refutation that demonstrates the thesis' invalidity. The purpose that Simplicius attributes to Zeno's arguments confirms this point:

> It is likely with the idea of practising to argue on both sides (ὡς ἐφ' ἑκάτερα γυμναστικῶς ἐπιχειροῦντα) – which is why he is called 'double-tongued' – and to raise difficulties that Zeno makes such arguments about the one. In his treatise, which contains many dialectical arguments (πολλὰ ... ἐπιχειρήματα), he shows by each one (καθ' ἕκαστον) that the man who says that beings are many exposes himself to contradictions.[39]

This passage involves at least three difficulties. First of all, Simplicius attributes to Zeno's dialectical arguments the function of exercises. But for what are they exercising us and how do they do so? The adverb γυμναστικῶς is rare in Simplicius. The only other instance precisely qualifies the mode of argumentation used by Zeno in the infinite dichotomy.[40] As for the two occurrences of the related adjective, they confirm that, far from being an end in itself, the exercise aims *to prepare us for something*.[41] Yet for what, in Simplicius's eyes, do Zeno's exercises prepare us: to argue or to defend a thesis? A clue emerges with

[37] Simp. *in Ph.* 138.20–22: ὅς γε τοὐναντίον πολλὰ γέγραφεν ἐπιχειρήματα τὸ πολλὰ εἶναι ἀναιρῶν, ἵνα διὰ τῆς τῶν πολλῶν ἀναιρέσεως τὸ ἓν εἶναι πάντα βεβαιωθῇ, ὅπερ καὶ ὁ Παρμενίδης ἐβούλετο.

[38] Pl. *Prm.*128c7–d1: πρὸς τοὺς ἐπιχειροῦντας αὐτὸν κωμῳδεῖν (quoted in *in Ph.* 134.5) and 129d2–3: ἐὰν οὖν τις τοιαῦτα ἐπιχειρῇ πολλὰ καὶ ἓν ταὐτὸ ἀποφαίνειν (quoted in *in Ph.* 101.3).

[39] Simp. *in Ph.* 139.3–7; my transl.

[40] Simp. *in Ph.* 1205.25–26: γυμναστικῶς τινος κατὰ τὸν Ζήνωνος λόγον ἐκ τῆς ἐπ' ἄπειρον διχοτομίας.

[41] Simp. *in Cat.* 7.7–10: the adjective refers to Aristotle's use of "obscurity" as an exercise for shrewdness; *in Cael.* 482.29–483.1: ἡ γυμναστικὴ διατριβή simply refers to gymnastics.

the second difficulty. The fact that for each argument (καθ' ἕκαστον) the end is to annihilate the thesis supporting the existence of plurality confers unity on Zeno's book: to refute the existence of plurality. In this sense, his arguments do not only train to argumentation, but they argue *against a given thesis* with the idea that its opposite is valid. Which leads to the last difficulty: why does Simplicius speak of arguments *on both sides*, if they all aim to refute the same thesis? Here he refers less to two contradictory ("being is one" and "being is not one") or opposite theses ("being is one" and "beings are many"), than to two contradictory conclusions taken from the same thesis ("plurality is limited" and "plurality is not limited") to show the truth of its reverse ("being is one," instead of "being is many").

Zeno prepares us for Parmenides, to the extent that he trains us to conclude the necessary truth of his master's thesis while refuting the contrary firmly and definitively. In a way, he embodies the dialectical side of Eleatism, which rejects any opposition to its thesis on the unity of being. Let us now examine how the arguments that Simplicius attributes to Zeno contribute to Parmenides' thesis.

8. *Zeno's first quotation*

Zeno wrote a treatise containing forty arguments to refute the theory that being is many and to prove, on the contrary, that it is one.[42] Now, as our main witnesses all are Neoplatonists, and as nine centuries separate them from their source, we have every reason to remain cautious about the supposed number and end of these arguments, as well as the idea that they all come from a single treatise.[43] At least it is likely that Simplicius quotes three excerpts from the same text, the one available to Proclus and Elias, who attribute these arguments to Zeno. The rest is subject to speculation.

Simplicius' first quotation shows, according to him, that plurality implies that beings are both infinitely large and so small as to be devoid of magnitude. However, he adds, according to Zeno, what is dimensionless is nothing.[44]

[42] Procl. *in Prm*. 696.17–19 (DK 29 A15 = LM 20 D2) and 631.36–632.7 (LM 20 R 28); Elias *in Cat*. 109.15–20 (DK 29 A15 = LM 20 D3). Proclus calls Zeno's arguments λόγοι, as Aristotle does, while Elias call them ἐπιχειρήματα (on this term, see §7 above), which could be the common use in the School of Ammonius.

[43] On this, see the conclusions of J. Dillon, "Proclus and the Forty *Logoi* of Zenon," *ICS* 11 (1986) 35–41.

[44] Simp. *in Ph*. 139.7–11.

> For – Zeno says – if it were added to another being, it would not make it any larger. Indeed, since its magnitude is nothing, it is not capable of contributing to the magnitude of what it is added to. It follows that what is added would be nothing. And if, when it is removed, the other thing is not less and, conversely, when it is added, it does not increase what it is added to, it is clear that what is added is nothing, nor what is removed.[45]

Simplicius truncates the quotation and focuses on the elements related to the extract of Eudemus, i.e. the part relating to the smallness and the composition of the plurality, neglecting the reasons why plurality would lead to infinite size. According to him, the argument is based on a process of infinite division that does not lead to the removal of the one, as the Peripatetics claim, but instead shows that the division of the many – entities made up of several elements – ultimately leads to entities so small that they are without size. Now, he recalls, Zeno has already shown that if each constitutive element of the many is one and identical to itself, it no longer has a magnitude, since these properties imply its indivisibility, where division supposes plurality and possession of parts. The argument thus leads to a contradiction between two premises. On the one hand, every element of the many has a magnitude. Otherwise, it could not generate the plurality. On the other hand, none has magnitude because of the process of division that it undergoes since it is many. It is, therefore, the very possibility of plurality that is put in doubt, insofar as its elements no longer satisfy the conditions of existence that enable them to compose this plurality. The thesis of unity, on the other hand, is saved.

This analysis leads Simplicius into a debate with two of his predecessors, Themistius and Porphyry. He reproaches Themistius for maintaining that the argument of divisibility would allow Zeno to establish (κατασκεύαζειν) the thesis according to which "being is one," by the demonstration of its continuity.[46] In the dialectical register used here, this means that the Eleatic would justify certain premises in order to construct a thesis. However, Simplicius refuses him any positive thesis and maintains that he occupies himself purely with refutations. Then he reproaches Porphyry for attributing the dichotomy to Parmenides, an argument which would serve as a foundation for the unity of being.[47] Porphyry finds some support in two attributes of being, ho-

[45] DK 29 B2 = LM 20 D7, *apud* Simp. *in Ph.* 139.11–15; my transl.

[46] Simp. *in Ph.* 139.19–23.

[47] Simp. *in Ph.* 139.24–140.26. In this long quotation (139.26–140.18), Porphyry names Xenocrates among those who conceded to the argument: he apparently introduced indivisible lines in order to avoid the dissemination of being, taken here in a strictly physical sense.

mogeneity and continuity, from which he deduces its resistance to division. Nevertheless, Simplicius objects on textual grounds: on the one hand, Parmenides says nothing of the kind in his poem, while, on the other, the sources concerning the aporias on movement, and Porphyry himself, agree that the dichotomy may be traced back to Zeno.

Why does Simplicius make it a point of honour to restore the original intention of Zeno's arguments and the paternity of the dichotomy? Although he bases his demonstration on textual evidence, his project is primarily systematic. If it is not possible in his eyes that Zeno argues in favour of a thesis, his or that of Parmenides, and if it is no more possible that Parmenides invented the dichotomy, it is for a crucial reason. Among the Eleatics, Zeno assumes the role of dialectician whose sole function is to destroy the theses opposed to that of Parmenides. The latter, on the other hand, embodies the solemnity of his principle: he will never lower himself to refute the partisans of plurality because his discourse works on a higher level. In other words, if Zeno has knowledge of the Eleatic thesis and has the role of leading to it, he approaches it only from the angle of plurality to show the need to rise beyond. The two following quotations confirm Simplicius' reading.

9. *Zeno's second quotation*

According to Simplicius, the second quotation provides textual confirmation for the attribution of the dichotomy to Zeno. It rests on a numerical multiplicity (κατὰ πλῆθος) and implicitly implements an infinite division where, between every two beings, a third one always slips:

> If [beings] are many, it is necessary that they be as many as they are, neither more nor less than themselves. And if they are as many as they are, they will be limited. If they are many, beings are unlimited, because there are always beings in between, and still others between them. And, in this way, beings are unlimited.[48]

Simplicius quotes this excerpt for the sole purpose of corroborating the attribution to Zeno of a position mirroring that of Parmenides, without aiming at any further explanation. It shows the impossibility of supporting the plurality of beings because it results in a contradiction (to be both unlimited and limited), thereby showing the (implicit) necessity of admitting the unity of being.

[48] DK 29 B3 = LM 20 D11, *apud* Simp. *in Ph.* 140.29–33; my transl.

10. *Zeno's third quotation*

The last quote relies, according to Simplicius, on the infinite 'according to the magnitude' (κατὰ μέγεθος). It works in the same way as the previous one:

> After having shown that "if being had no magnitude, it would also not exist," he adds: "But if it is, each will necessarily have some magnitude and thickness, and for the one to be external to the other. And the same reasoning applies to what projects. It will have a magnitude and something within will project indeed. It is the same to utter this once and to repeat it always, because none of this will be last, nor one will be related to another. Thus, if beings are many, they will necessarily be both large and small, so small that they have no magnitude, so large as to be infinite."[49]

The end recalls the words with which Simplicius introduced the first quotation, a sign that the text does not appear in its original order but refers to moments in the same argument with several ramifications (at least for B1 and B3).[50] Again, Simplicius does not try to explain it. All he seeks is to confirm Zeno's paternity with regard to the dichotomy and his intention not to annihilate the one. From this argument, it appears that Zeno is refuting the thesis of plurality by confusing it with contradictions (being both large and small, limited and unlimited), which has the indirect effect of "reinforcing Parmenides' thesis which states that being is one" (τὸν Παρμενίδου λόγον βεβαιοῦντος ἓν εἶναι λέγοντα τὸ ὄν, *in Ph.* 141.8–11). No need for more analysis, since the agreement between the two Eleatics is restored, where everyone finds his right place. Simplicius can then resume the explanation of Aristotle's lemma and discuss the concessions made to the dichotomy.[51]

11. *Simplicius' solution*

Simplicius devotes the rest of his exegesis to the second argument, which affirms the unity of being. He seeks in particular to define the status of the

[49] DK 29 B3 = LM 20 D11, *apud* Simp. *in Ph.* 141.1–8; my transl.

[50] Simp. *in Ph.* 139.7–9. Several reconstitutions of the original order have been proposed. H. Fränkel, "Zeno of Elea's Attacks on Plurality," *AJPh* 63 (1942) 15–19, and H.D.P. Lee, *Zeno of Elea. A Text with Translation and Notes* (Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1967) 18–21 and 29, decide on B2–B1–B3 (Fränkel divides the texts with more accuracy). Caveing (*Zénon et le continu*, 38–47) suggests excluding B2 from this sequence, because it is about the cardinality of beings, rather than their magnitude. He proposes a division of the texts that mixes together some elements from Simplicius, almost literal, and quotations. His solution is more convincing, even if Caveing fails to notice that Simplicius' interest for the argument follows a Neoplatonic agenda.

[51] Simp. *in Ph.* 141.12–142.27.

Parmenidean Being and brings out several possible paths we might take to do so. It is not of a bodily (σωματικόν) nature, for even the Heavens, the most perfect natural reality, is not indivisible (ἀδιαίρετος), unlike Being.[52] Nor is it of a psychic (ψυχικόν) nature, because the soul is mobile whereas Being is "all together" (ὁμοῦ πᾶν) and "identical to itself" (κατὰ ταὐτά), both according to the actuality, the potentiality, and the substance.[53] Nor is it of an intellective (νοερόν) nature, because it precedes the distinction between the Forms and leaves no place for not-being since it is at the same time νοεῖν ('thinking'), νοητόν ('intelligible') and νοῦς ('intellect'). Finally, it is not a common property (κοινότης), in the sense of a *post rem* concept drawn from abstraction or of a property *in* things, because they are the result of sensation and opinion.[54]

> Therefore, it remains that the intelligible be the cause of all things, by which there is thinking (νοεῖν) and intellect (νοῦς), in which all things are already contained according to one union, in a contracted and unified way. This is the Parmenidean One-Being, in which there is one nature both of the One and the Being. Hence Zeno also said that, if anyone could show him the one, he could give being, not in the sense that it departs from the one, but in the sense that it coexists by nature with being. Furthermore, all the preceding conclusions agree with this One-Being.[55]

Nearly fifty pages later, Simplicius finally gives his reading of the words Eudemus attributes to Zeno. These detours were necessary in order to understand the Peripatetics' objections and interpretations. They also led Zeno back to his proper level: the level of the first principles of the system, instead of the level of nature.[56] Zeno's arguments intend to show that the true One, that of Parmenides, is beyond plurality, nature, and distinction. This is the right perspective for reading Zeno: not to associate his arguments with any residual unity, the necessary *terminus* of the division of complex and multiple natural realities, but with the only true One, that which makes possible the knowledge and the existence of all things. Since they lead any hypothesis positing the plurality, the division, and the distinction of beings to contradiction, they amount to the necessary connection between Being and One. This level, concludes Simplicius, the one to which Zeno truly belongs, corresponds to the summit of theology, far from the domain of physics.[57]

[52] Simp. *in Ph.* 142.31–143.8. He quotes Parm. DK 28 B8.1–3, B8.22 and B8.43 (= LM 19 D8.6–8, D8.27 and D8.48).
[53] Simp. *in Ph.* 143.8–18. He quotes Parm. DK 28 B8.5, B8.29 and B8.38 (= LM 19 D8.10, D8.34 and D8.43).
[54] Simp. *in Ph.* 144.2–11.
[55] Simp. *in Ph.* 144.11–17; my transl.
[56] As proven for Parmenides and Melissus, *in Ph.* 46.11–47.6.
[57] Simp. *in Ph.* 148.22–24.

12. *Zeno, the good disciple*

To return to our initial question, how should one understand Zeno's attempt to rescue Parmenides? In his commentary on the *Parmenides*, Proclus deploys an allegorical interpretation according to which Zeno embodies the participated intellect and life, Parmenides embodies the unparticipated and divine intellect (the One-Being), and Socrates embodies the intellect proper.[58] Zeno thus occupies the place reserved for Melissus, the other pupil of Parmenides, in the system described by Simplicius. However, Proclus' reading stands out on three points. First of all, Proclus identifies each character with a divine class, whereas Simplicius attributes to each a *discourse on* a divine class.[59] Rather than interpreting the history of philosophy, Proclus elaborates an allegory of his metaphysical system. He then insists on Zeno's intermediary position, between Socrates and Parmenides, and he attributes to him the function of motivating by his arguments the conversion of the former to the latter, from the intellect to its object.[60] Finally, he recognizes that Zeno uses a lower form of dialectic than Parmenides since it involves an inferior faculty: intellection for one, and reason for the other.[61] In this schema, if Zeno rescues Parmenides, it is because Parmenides, as being and perfection, already contains in himself the means of deploying the science that intelligizes him, which is embodied by Zeno.[62] In other words, the disciple is already contained in the master, and his help is simply commanded as procession is by conversion.

In Simplicius, things take a more historical turn. Against the Peripatetics, he works to restore the link between Zeno and Parmenides, emphasizing their friendship and the proximity of their theses. He wants to show that, by rescuing his master, Zeno fulfils the role of the perfect disciple: not to try to equal the master nor to compete with him, but to contribute to the understanding of his thesis by dismissing any objections, alternatives, or misunderstandings. From this angle, the hermeneutical position of Simplicius is closer to that of Elias and the School of Alexandria:

[58] Procl. *in Prm.* 628.1–27 and 700.6–701.10. Proclus elaborates his allegorical interpretation throughout his commentary. One can find a summary in D. Del Forno, *La dialettica in Proclo. Il quinto libro dell'*In Parmenidem *tradotto e commentato* (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 2015) 306–311.

[59] Procl. *in Prm.* 673.8–10.

[60] Procl. *in Prm.* 689.14–690.22.

[61] Procl. *in Prm.* 701.21–702.17.

[62] Procl. *in Prm.* 716.

> In favour of his own master, Parmenides, who asserts that being is formally one, but beings appear to be many, he concludes from forty arguments (ἐκ τεσσαράκοντα ἐπιχειρημάτων) that being is one, judging it good to ally with his own master (ἀγαθὸν νομίσας τῷ οἰκείῳ συμμαχεῖν διδασκάλῳ). Moreover, agreeing again with the same master who maintains that being is immobile, he establishes by five arguments that being is immobile.[63]

If Simplicius would not admit that Zeno's arguments were intended to *establish* Parmenides' thesis, he agrees that the role of a disciple consists of fighting for his master, in producing arguments in his favour. Not positive arguments, because that would amount to taking the place of the master, whose thesis is self-sufficient. But arguments that avert a misunderstanding are welcome. This is the path taken by Zeno with regard to Parmenides. This is also the path that Aristotle will take later with regard to Plato. This is, ultimately, the model that Simplicius himself takes up with regard to his masters, Damascius and Ammonius.

Appendix: structure of the lemma Ph. *1.3 187a1–11 (Simp.* in Ph. *133.30–148.24)*

- Examination of the 'particular exegesis' (λέξις, *in Ph.* 133.30–134.18): "making concessions" means to accept one of the premises and it concerns Plato, who accepts not-being.
- Discussion of the first concession (134.19–138.2):
  - Position of the commentators on Plato's thesis in the *Sophist* (134.19–135.14):[64]
    - Theophrastus (134.11–12): syllogistic formalisation of Aristotle's refutation.
    - Alexander (134.19–32): Plato admits absolute not-being but refuses the unity of being.
    - Porphyry (135.1–14): Plato admits not-being *qua* not-being.
  - Refutation of the commentators on Plato's thesis in the *Sophist* (135.15–138.2):
    - Alexander (135.15–136.32): the *Sophist* defines the *not-being something* (τὸ τὶ μὴ ὄν), which is contrary to the Form of being, not to the complete being (τὸ παντελῶς ὄν).

[63] DK 29 A15 = LM 20 D3, *apud* Elias, *in Cat.* 109.15–20.
[64] The arguments of the *Sophist* and of Parmenides are studied in Gavray, *Simplicius lecteur du* Sophiste, 77–88, and Licciardi, *Parmenide tràdito*, 421–432.

    - Porphyry (136.33–137.7): Plato establishes not-being in the division of intelligibles.
    - Alexander and Porphyry (137.8–138.2): according to the *Sophist*, it is impossible that Aristotle blames Plato for introducing absolute not-being or the unity of being, since not-being and plurality are related to each other.
- Examination of the second concession (138.3–148.24): the dichotomy
  - Alexander's position (138.3–28): the argument comes from Zeno and means that, if being has magnitude, it is divisible, which leads him to remove the one from beings.
    - Quotation of Xenocrates (138.10–18): Xenocrates belongs to those who made a concession to the argument, by introducing indivisible lines.
    - Simplicius' answer (138.18–28): as shown in the *Parmenides* and the *Physics*, Zeno agrees with Parmenides and proves that plurality does not exist.
    - Quotation of Eudemus (138.29–139.3), already given in 97.9–16: Alexander draws from Eudemus saying that Zeno removed the one.
  - Simplicius' answer (139.3–142.27): each of Zeno's arguments aims at contradicting the thesis that beings are many.
    - Status of Zeno's arguments (139.3–7): they all refute plurality.
    - Zeno's first quote (139.7–23): DK 29 B2 (= LM 20 D7).
      - Quotation of the argumentation and exegesis by Simplicius (139.7–140.26)
      - Themistius' position (139.19–23): Zeno states that being is one.
      - Porphyry's position (139.24–140.26): Parmenides authored the dichotomy, to which Xenocrates made a concession with the thesis of indivisible lines.
    - Zeno's second quote (140.27–34): DK 29 B3 (= LM 20 D11).
    - Zeno's third quote (140.34–141.11): DK 29 B1 (= LM 20 D6).
    - Discussion of Xenocrates' thesis on indivisible lines (141.12–142.27): it draws from the distinction between division *ad infinitum* (ἐπ' ἄπειρον), a fundamental principle in geometry acknowledged by Xenocrates, and division into an infinity (εἰς ἄπειρα), i.e. the reduction of a magnitude to an infinity of elements infinitely small, which seemed absurd to Xenocrates.
- Return to the first concession (142.28–148.24):
  - Status of Parmenides' One-Being (142.28–146.26): Being is
    - not corporeal, because it is indivisible (142.31–143.8);

- not psychic, because it is unmovable and same to itself (143.8–18);
- not intellective, because it is not divided (143.18–144.2);
- not a property *post rem* or *in re*, because it is not a matter of opinion nor sensation (144.2–11);
- but it is intelligible (144.11–146.26): quote of DK 28 B8.1–15 and B8.16–52 (= LM19 D8.6–20 and D8.21–57).

- Status of Parmenides' Poem (146.26–148.24):
  - Discussion of the poetic form (146.26–147.16): altogether, these attributes are only suitable to the One-Being, which is the cause for posterior beings.
  - Discussion of Plato and Aristotle's criticisms (147.16–148.24):
    - Plato makes his criticism from the intellective level, i.e. from the first distinguished order (147.16–148.6): at this level not-being exists.
    - Aristotle refutes through division, which does not apply to the intelligible (148.6–11).
    - Conclusion (148.11–24): it is through philanthropy, in order to prevent misunderstandings, that Plato and Aristotle refuted Parmenides; however, they both acknowledge his wisdom and take on his conception of One-Being (Plato in the *Parmenides*, Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*).

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Editions are specified in cases of possible ambiguity. Presocratic fragments are cited according to the Diels-Kranz (DK) numeration unless otherwise indicated. Alternative editions and proposed addenda to collections of fragments are given after the conventional references.

Index Nominum

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