

PEITHO

— E X A M I N A A N T I Q U A —

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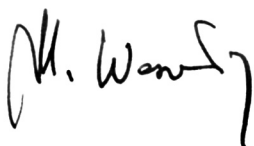
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Commentarius PEITHO / Examina Antiqua in Instituto Philosophiae Universitatis Studiorum Mickiewiczianae Posnaniensis conditus id spectat, ut in notissimis toto orbe linguis, lingua quoque Latina et nostra lingua Polona minime exclusa, antiquorum philosophorum opera atque cogitationes nec non earum apud posteros memoria longe lateque propagentur. Non exstitit adhuc in Polonia commentarius, quem docta societas internationalis legeret; at nostra magnopere interest gravissimas philosophiae antiquae quaestiones, cultui atque humanitati totius Europae fundamentales, communiter considerari, solvi divulgarique posse. Namque philosophia, Graecorum et Romanorum maximi momenti hereditas, hodie novis scientiarum rationibus et viis adhibitibus ab integro est nobis omni ex parte meditanda et disputanda.

Itaque caractere internationali commentarius hic variarum terrarum et gentium hominibus doctis permittet, ut credimus, cogitationes, investigationes, laborum effectus magno cum fructu commutare et instrumentum doctorum fiet utilissimum ad se invicem persuadendum, ut antiquus id suggerit titulus (Latine Suada), quem scripto nostro dedimus. Sed commentarius hic late patefactus est quoque omnibus rebus, quae philosophiae sunt propinquae et affines, quae ad temporum antiquorum atque Byzantinorum culturam lato sensu pertinent, quae eiusdem denique philosophiae fortunam aetate renascentium litterarum tractant. In nostra PEITHO praeter commentationes scientificas doctae disputationes quoque et controversiae atque novorum librorum censurae locum suum invenient. Itaque omnes, qui philosophiae favent, toto exhortamur animo et invitamus, ut nostri propositi participes esse dignentur.

MARIAN WESOŁY



MIKOŁAJ DOMARADZKI



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ARTYKUŁY

Anaksymander i Anaksymenes z Miletu – ważniejsza doksografia i fragmenty

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MARIAN ANDRZEJ WESOŁY

/ Akademia im. Jakuba z Paradyża w Gorzowie Wielkopolskim /

*Is [sc. Anaximander] enim infinitatem
naturae dixit esse e qua omnia gignerentur.
Post eius auditor Anaximenes infinitum aera,
sed ea, quae ex eo orerentur, definita: gigni
autem terram, aquam, ignem, tum es iss omnia.*

*On [Anaksymander] bowiem bezkres
natury orzekł tym, z czego wszystko się wywodzi.
Potem jego słuchacz Anaksymenes bezkresne powietrze
[orzekł], lecz to co z niego się wywodzi jest skończone:
rodzi bowiem ziemię, wodę, ogień, a z tych wszystko.*

Cyceron, Acad. pr. II 37.118

Trzech Milezyjczyków, Talesa, Anaksymandra i Anaksymenesa, przedstawia się zwykle jako pierwszych filozofów greckich tworzących szkołę jońską. Warto jednak wiedzieć, że oni sami nie nazywali się jeszcze „filozofami”, a pojęcie szkoły filozoficznej jest również

późniejsze (zob. Rossetti 2015; Grecchi 2023). Pisma tych Jończyków z Miletu nie zachowały się, a nasza wiedza o nich pochodzi z doksografii, czyli od późniejszych antycznych, bizantyńskich oraz średniowiecznych autorów streszczających ich poglądy (*doxai*) i niewiele cytujących ich własne zdania czy słowa (*ipsissima verba*).

Całościowe zebranie w edycji krytycznej wszelkich świadectw o Talesie, Anaksymandrze i Anaksymandrze tych różnych autorów od antyku do nowożytności w porządku chronologicznym ukazało się ostatnio w serii „*Traditio Praesocratica*”, gdzie Talesowi przypadło w sumie 592 jednostek teksów, Anaksymandrowi 277, i Anaksymenesowi 241 (Wöhrle 2009; 2012). Opracowanie to stanowi wyraz zespołowej erudycji filologicznej i historycznej, lecz zebrane w tak ogromnej ilości teksty ukazują świadectwo recepcji tych Milezyjczyków tak, że jedne i te same dane wciąż się powtarzają, i dlatego potrzeba ustalenia wyjściowych, podstawowych i w miarę wiarygodnych o nich źródeł.

Takie wzorcowe ustalenia źródeł oferowała, jak wiadomo, klasyczna już edycja *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* H. Dielsa (1903) i podjęta dalej przez W. Kranza (1934) według rozróżnień tekstów jako biografii i doksografii (A), fragmentów (B) oraz naśladowań (C).

Pod inną nazwą *Les débuts de la philosophie: des premiers penseurs grecs à Socrate* oraz *Early Greek Philosophy* (2016) powstały nowe edycje tych autorów z pominięciem jednych a dodaniem drugih według nieco innych trzech kryteriów, mianowicie w układzie P – informacji o osobie, D – danych o nauce, oraz R – jako recepcji. Tak ujęty materiał różnorodnych tekstów jest instruktywny poznawczo i służyć może roboczo w badaniach, lecz bywa niekiedy w szczegółach nazbyt rozczłonkowany (*disiecta membra*) i arbitralny zwłaszcza w rozróżnieniach dotyczących nauki (D) oraz recepcji (R) przedstawianych filozofów.

Powstały jeszcze inne nowsze częściowe edycje tekstów i przekłady tych *Przedsokratyków* (por. zwłaszcza Graham 2010; Mansfeld 2011; Gemelli Marciano 2023), ale, jak się okazuje, niejednolicie porządkujące układ źródeł i fragmentów. Wynika to także z trzech różnych interpretacji tych przedsokratyków, a mianowicie interpretacji naturalistyczno-naukowej, mistyczno-mitycznej i polityczno-humanistycznej (na ten temat zob. Grecchi 2020; 54–63).

Niniejsze opracowanie jest moim kolejnym tłumaczeniem doksografii i fragmentów tych wczesnogreckich myślicieli. Z Milezyjczyków wcześniej przedstawiliśmy Talesa (zob. Wesoły 2020), do którego nie mamy bezpośredniego wglądu, a tylko późniejsze różne przekazy, gdzie jedno przewija się wymownie, mianowicie to, że uchodził on za „pierwszego” mędrca (*sophos*), odkrywcę w astronomii i geometrii, a później także za badacza natury i znaną postać filozofa. Z tej właśnie racji jako prekursor był on w antyku i nawet później wciąż podziwiany.

Obecnie podejmujemy następców Talesa, Anaksymandra i Anaksymenesa – tak samo w pewnym wybiórczym i systematyzującym układzie świadectw i tych nielicznych fragmentów, które choć dla wielu badaczy uchodzą za nieautentyczne, sami uznajemy za nader interesujące, raczej wiarygodne i warte przytoczenia. Traktowali oni również o kwestiach pryncypiów, kosmogonii, astronomii i meteorologii. Przedstawiamy każde-

go oddzielnie, ale łącznie w analogicznym układzie źródeł, nieco inaczej od dotychczasowych edycji, uwzględniając jako instruktywne najdłuższe ze wszystkich testimoniów o Anaksymandrze i Anaksymenesie, mianowicie relacje Hipolita z Rzymu w *Odparciu wszystkich herezji* (I 6–7).

* * *

Anaksymander z Miletu (Ἀναξίμανδρος ὁ Μιλήσιος, ok. 610–545 p.n.e.). Antyczne źródła umiejscawiają jego aktywność (*akme*) nieco przed połową VI wieku p.n.e. Na pierwszym miejscu przytaczamy dane o nim pochodzące od Diogenesa Laertiosa *Żywotów i poglądów słynnych filozofów* (II 1–2); są to informacje zwięzłe, ale jedyne o tej znaczącej postaci, otwierającej nurt joński filozofii, tak jak Pitagoras zaczynał nurt italski. Dowiadujemy się o tym, że Anaksymander oprócz zasadniczego poglądu o pryncypium jako *apeironie* (bezkresie) i o układzie wszechświata był wynalazcą gnomonu (zegara słonecznego) oraz pierwszy nakreślił kontury ziemi, mórz i konstrukcji sfery niebieskiej. Potwierdzają to także inne świadectwa antyczne, że był słynnym odkrywcą w dziedzinie geografii i astronomii. Ponadto był podróżnikiem i przewodził założeniu milezyjskiej kolonii w Apollonii nad Pontem Euksyńskim (Morzem Czarnym).

Szczególnie ważne jest to, że Anaksymander jako pierwszy ogłosił pisemny wywód *O naturze* (Περὶ φύσεως), który by zarazem pierwszym helleńskim napisanym prozą fachowym traktatem, nie licząc na poły mitologizującego utworu teologa Fereidydesa z Syros (zob. Wesoly 2002). Anaksymander tłumaczył rodowód świata i człowieka już nie na sposób mitologiczny, lecz działaniem mocy samej natury. Jego wpływ na ucznia Anaksymenesa i na dalszych następców uwiecznił się w rozległym projekcie badań natury (*peri physeos historia*) w nurcie jońskim oraz italskim. Traktowano w nich o powstawaniu i ginieciu – od genezy świata jako całości powstałego z pewnych materialnych elementów, łącznie do powstania istot żywych i człowieka z ich stanami zdrowia i chorób (zob. Wesoly 2001; Naddaf 2005).

Ogólny przedmiot i zasięg dociekań Anaksymandra rozpoznajemy z doksograficznej relacji Hipolita z Rzymu (*Ref.* I 6), dlatego tekst ten stawiamy na pierwszym miejscu *in extenso*, a nie rozczłonkowany tematycznie, jak w wielu nowszych edycjach. W doksografii powtarza się to, że Anaksymander pierwszy przyjął zasadę jako *apeiron*. To oryginalne pojęcie oznacza bezkres, czyli nieskończoność, nieograniczoność, jako też coś nieokreślonego w tym bezmiernym wymiarze. Wieloznaczność *apeironu* i stosowanie go przez badaczy natury podał Arystoteles w *Fizyce* (III 4–6), uwzględniając na pierwszym planie właśnie pogląd Anaksymandra. Wynika stąd, że *apeiron* nie ma początku ani końca, jest przedwieczny, niestarzejący się i niezniszczalny, wszechogarniający, wszystkim kierujący i boski. Cechy te przypominają znamiona nadane przez Hellenów bogom nieśmiertelnym, stąd utrwalił się pogląd w wymiarze naturalistycznym o boskim charakterze niebios i planet.

Natura *apeironu* dotyczy genezy naszego świata i wszelkich światów powstających w ilości nieskończonej, w bezgranicznej przestrzeni wszechcałości, która jako

taka jest niezmienna, bo tylko jej części podlegają przemianom powstawania i ginięcia. Z braku wystarczających danych nie wiadomo, jak rozumieć ową nieskończoność światów: w sensie jednoczesnego ich współistnienia, czy następowania jednego po drugim w bezgranicznym czasie i przestrzeni. Jeśli odwieczny i niewyczerpalny jest proces tworczy *apeironu*, to w grę wchodzi zarówno koegzystencja jak i sukcesja kolejnych światów rodzących się, rozwijających i w następstwie ginących, jak wszystko za sprawą natury w przemianach cyklicznych.

Anaksymander miał pierwszy przyjąć zasadę (*arche*) zwaną *apeironem*, czyli bezkresne i nieokreślone prazródło, obdarzone odwiecznym ruchem, z którego wyłonione przeciwieństwa pierwotne (gorące – zimne, suche – wilgotne) tworzą załążek (*gonimon*) w genezie kosmosu i wszelkiego w jego obrębie stawania się i zanikania. Dlatego *apeiron* stanowić ma gwarancję tego, że procesy naturalnego powstawania i ginięcia nie wyczerpują się, zachodząc podług konieczności i porządku czasu.

W związku z tym jedno istotne stwierdzenie Anaksymandra (fr. B 1 DK) zostało przekazane w możliwie oryginalnym brzmieniu, choć badacze co do tego nie są zgodni. Rzecz dotyczy prawidłowości powstawania i ginięcia wszechrzeczy wedle konieczności określonej porządkiem czasowym, czego naruszenie stanowiłoby karalny występki, podobnie jak w ludzkich relacjach handlowych mają się należności. Stanowi to dla nas najstarszy dokument sformułowania prawa natury jako zachowania materii, wyrażone też pewnikiem, że „nic się z niczego nie rodzi i nic w niwecz nie obraca” (przyjmujemy w tym nową interpretację: Lebedev 2022: 741–758).

Obraz kosmosu i układ planetarny w opisie Anaksymandra charakteryzuje się symetrycznym czy proporcjonalnym ujęciem (odległość od centralnej Ziemi do gwiazd, Księżyca i Słońca o stałych wymiarach pierścieni w proporcjach: 9/10, 18/19, 27/28). Sama Ziemia ma kształt cylindryczny o głębokości równej jednej trzeciej jej płaskiej szerokości. Ponadto na sposób ewolucyjny tłumaczy Anaksymander powstanie życia z wilgoci osuszanej przez słońce; człowiek zaś pochodzi od ryby i podobny był do niej na początku. Na temat tych poglądów kosmologicznych, astronomicznych i biologicznych Anaksymandra powstały niedawno oryginalne opracowania, doceniające nawet jego wkład na podobieństwo rewolucji w nauce (zob. Couprie 2011; Calenda 2015; Rovelli 2017).

W antyku poglądy Anaksymandra stały się inspiracją dla kolejnych dociekań wokół natury świata i człowieka. Niektórzy z fizyków (przyrodników), jak Leukippos i Demokryt, a później Epikur i Lukrecjusz, podjęli na swój sposób owo pojęcie *apeironu*, czyli nieskończoności w podstawach materialnych obrazu wszechświata.

Uczniem zaś i następcą Anaksymandra był Anaksymenes z Miletu (Ἀναξίμενης ὁ Μιλήσιος, ok. 585–ok. 525 p.n.e.), którego rozkwit (*akme*) przypadał na drugą połowę VI wieku p.n.e. Diogenes Laertios (II 3) podał o nim tylko to, że jako zasadę orzekł powietrze i bezkres, i że gwiazdy poruszają się pod ziemią. Pisać zaś miał prostym i niewyszukanym stylem jońskim; dodajmy, że wzorem swego mistrza był autorem zapewne analogicznej księgi *O naturze*.

Najdłuższe zaś i najważniejsze poglądy Anaksymenesa, podobnie jak w przypadku Anaksymandra, referuje Hipolit z Rzymu w *Odparciu wszystkich herezji* (II 7). Z tej

racji tak samo stawiamy je na pierwszym miejscu dla ogólnego wglądu doksograficznego i podania dalszych o nim świadectw.

Podobnie jak Tales i Anaksymander, przedstawił kosmogonię i kosmologię, wychodząc od jednej uniwersalnej zasady (*arche*), którą nie jest już woda ani nieokreślony substancjalnie *apeiron*, ale bezkresne i obdarzone wiecznym ruchem powietrze (*aer*). Otóż z powietrza powstają wszystkie rzeczy wskutek jego zgęszczania i rozrzedzania. Podstawowe etapy przemian z powietrza od najrzadszych do najgęstszych stanowią: ogień, wiatr, chmurę, wodę, ziemię i kamienie. Pierwiastki te posiadają własności przeciwstawne: ciepło i zimno, suchość i wilgoć. Ponadto powietrze jest boskie (a nawet jest samym bóstwem, z którego powstają inni bogowie), bezkresne w swym wymiarze – bez początku i bez końca. Wytworzyło ono kosmos i pozostaje w nim czynnikiem dominującym, także w wymiarze życiowego tchnienia i duszy.

Jak czytamy w domniemanym fragmencie (B 2 DK), powietrze jest zasadą życia, tchnieniem ogarniającym cały kosmos. Dla określenia tego 'tchnienia' użyte jest wyrażenie *pneuma*, które w późniejszej tradycji oznaczać będzie 'ducha' (łac. *animus*, gr. *anemos*, czyli wyziew czy wiatr). Anaksymenes odwołuje się do takiego prostego doświadczenia: powietrze wydalone przez ściśnięte usta ludzkie jest gęste i chłodne, natomiast to wydalone przez rozwarte usta jest rozrzedzone i ciepłe.

Nowością było to, że Anaksymenes niebo przedstawiał jako półkole obracające się wokół Ziemi, której powierzchnia jest płaska i zawieszona w powietrzu. Gwiazdy zaś pojmował jako ciała ogniste przytwierdzone do niebios i kręcące się wraz z nim wokół Ziemi. Tak jak Anaksymander zajmował się on też wyjaśnianiem takich zjawisk meteorologicznych, jak chmury, deszcze, wiatry, tęcza oraz trzęsienie ziemi.

Na końcu wyboru naszych źródeł o Anaksymenesie przytaczamy przekazaną przez Diogenesa Laertiosa (II 3; VIII 49) jego korespondencję z Pitagorasem. Nawet jeśli te listy nie były autentyczne, to dają nam ciekawe świadectwo o stanowisku badacza natury wobec ówczesnego zagrożenia Miletu ze strony Medów (Persów), którzy to wspaniałe miasto zburzyli (w 494 roku p. n.e.).

Anaksymenes był ostatnim z Milezyjczyków i często uważa się go za mniej znaczącego. Tradycja nie przypisała mu, jak jego poprzednikom, technicznych wynalazków, a jego poglądy zdają się być nieznane czy zapomniane przed Arystotelesem. Jednak wkład Anaksymenesa pod tym względem był istotny, jako że kontynuował wielką monistyczną wizję kosmogonii i kosmologii, genezy wszechrzeczy z jednego materialnego substratu poprzez jego stany i modyfikacje w cyklu przemian. Nadto jego koncepcja przemian jako zgęszczania i rozrzedzania elementów pierwotnych podjęta została *implicite* przez Heraklita i kwestionowana przez innych. Monizm zaś z uznaniem powietrza jako zasady wywarł wpływ na niektórych autorów hippokratejskich, a także po stu latach odnowiony został przez Diogenesa z Apolonii.

* * *

Poniżej odsyłamy do lektury w naszym możliwie wiernym przekładzie ważniejszych antycznych świadectw o Anaksymandrze i Anaksymenesie. Dla większej jasności w układzie tych tekstów nadajemy im odpowiednie nagłówki tematyczne. Mamy na względzie rekonstrukcję źródłową oraz historyczną, i to w pewnym tematycznym porządku, różnym wszak od kolejności wzorcowej według Dielsa-Kranza (DK), którą odnotowujemy przy każdej jednostce tekstu wraz z podaniem jej numeracji w edycji chronologicznej Wöhrlego (2012, gdzie Ar = Anaksymander; As = Anaksymenes). Takiego odnotowania nie możemy poczynić do ostatniej źródłowej edycji Laksa-Mosta (LM 2016), gdzie w przypadku Anaksymandra i Anaksymenesa porządek tekstów jest całkiem różny od naszego, a także nazbyt rozcłonkowany i schematyczny.

Znając wszak podstawowe teksty tych uczonych mędrców z Miletu, warto w każdym razie sięgnąć jeszcze do cytowanej na końcu tego artykułu literatury przedmiotu, której zwłaszcza nowsze oryginalne opracowania zasługują na szczególne rozpoznanie (zob. Calenda 2015; Gregory 2016; Kočandrle, Couprie 2017; Rovelli 2017; Lebedev 2022).

ANAKSYMANDER Z MILETU

(12 Diels Kranz; 6 Laks Most)

ŻYCIE, DZIEŁA I WYNAŁAZKI

1. Diogenes Laertios II 1–2 (A 1 DK = Ar 92 Wöhrle)

(1) Anaksymander, syn Priaksjadesa, Milezyjczyk. Twierdził on, że zasadą i elementem jest *apeiron* (τὸ ἄπειρον, *bez*kres / *nieskończoność*), nie określając tym powietrza, wody czy jeszcze czegoś innego. Otóż części ulegają przemianie, wszechcałość (τὸ πᾶν) zaś jest niezmienna. W środku położona jest ziemia, zajmując układ centralny, a ma ona kształt kulisty. Księżyc zaś świeci pozornie i przejmuje światło od słońca. Wszak słońce nie jest mniejsze od ziemi i jest ogniem najczystszym.

On pierwszy wynalazł gnomon i ustawił go przy zegarach słonecznych w Lacedemonie – jak podaje Faworinos w *Rozmaitej historii* – aby wskazywał przesilenia i zrównania dnia z nocą; skonstruował także wskaźniki czasu. (2) On też pierwszy nakreślił kontury ziemi i morza, a nawet skonstruował sferę niebieską.

Ze swoich poglądów sporządził streszczoną w rozdziałach wykładnię, z którą zetknął się także Apollodor z Aten [II wiek p.n.e.]. Podaje on w swych *Kronikach*, że w drugim roku 58 Olimpiady [547–546 p.n.e.] Anaksymander miał 64 lata i wkrótce potem zmarł. Jego *akme* przypada mniej więcej na panowanie Polikratesa, tyrana Samos.

Powiadają, że dzieci śmiały się słuchając jego śpiewu, a gdy się o tym dowiedział, miał powiedzieć: „Trzeba nam lepiej śpiewać ze względu na dzieci”.

2. Temistios, *Or.* 36 p. 317 (A 7 DK = Ar 120 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander, syn Praksjadesa, był jego [Talesa] uczniem, ale nie podążał za nim we wszystkim, lecz wybrał nową drogę i wkrótce wyróżnił się tym, że jako pierwszy z Hellenów, o którym wiemy, odważył się ogłosić pisemny wywód *O naturze* (Περὶ φύσεως). Wcześniej pisanie traktatów uważano za niegodne i nie było szanowane u Hellenów przed [Anaksymandrem].

3. Suidas (A 22 DK = Ar 237 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander, syn Priaksiadesa, Milezyjczyk, filozof, krewny, uczeń i następca Talesa. On pierwszy wykrył przesilenia i wskaźnik czasu, i to, że ziemia leży w centrum świata. Wprowadził też gnomon i w ogólnym zarysie ukazał geometrię. Napisał *O naturze* (Περὶ φύσεως), *Obejście ziemi* (Γῆς περίοδος), *O gwiazdach stałych* (Περὶ τῶν ἀπλανῶν), *Sferę* (Σφαῖρα) i jeszcze inne [dzieła].

4. Strabon, I.1.11 (A 6 DK = Ar 32 Wöhrle)

Eratostenes twierdzi, że dwoma pierwszymi [geografami] po Homerze byli Anaksymander, znajomy i współobywatel Talesa, oraz Hekajajos z Miletu: pierwszy z nich jako pierwszy sporządził mapę geograficzną, a Hekajajos pozostawił pismo, uważane za wiarygodne zgodnie z jego innym pismem.

5. Agathemerios I 1, 471 (A 6 DK = Ar 47 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander Milezyjczyk, słuchacz Talesa, pierwszy odważył się opisać na mapie zamieszkałą ziemię. Po nim Hekatajos Milezyjczyk, wielki podróżnik, dokonał uściśleń, tak że dzieło to budziło podziw.

6. Elian, V.H. III 17 (A 3 DK = Ar 78 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander przeprowadził założeniu kolonii z Miletu do Apolonii.

7. Cicero, *Div.* I 50.112 (A 5a DK = Ar 27 Wöhrle)

Przez fizyka Anaksymandra Lacedemończycy zostali ostrzeżeni, aby opuścili miasto i swoje domy i uzbrojeni czuwali na polu, gdyż zagrażało trzęsienie ziemi, które wtedy zniszczyło całe miasto i z góry Tajgetu runął szczyt, niczym rufa okrętu.

8. Diogenes Laertios VIII 70 (12 A 8 DK = Ar 94 Wöhrle)

Diodor z Efezu, pisząc o Anaksymandrze twierdzi, że naśladował go Empedokles, okazując teatralną pozę i nosząc uroczystą szatę.

APEIRON ZACZĄTKIEM WSZECHRZECZY I ŚWIATÓW

9. Hipolit, *Ref.* I 6,1 (A 11; B 2 DK = Ar 75 Wöhrle)

(1) Słuchaczem Talesa był Anaksymander, syn Praksjadesa, Milezyjczyk. Głosił on, że zasadą bytów jest jakaś natura *apeironu*, z której powstają niebiosy i zawarty w nich świat. Jest ona wieczna i niestarzejąca się, a obejmuje wszystkie światy. Nazywa zaś czas

określeniem powstawania i ginięcia rzeczy. (2) On to orzekł *apeiron* zasadą i elementem bytów, pierwszy stosując taką nazwę zasady. Do tego ruch jest wieczny, w którym zachodzi powstawanie niebios.

(3) Ziemia jest meteorom, nie podtrzymywana przez nic, pozostając w spoczynku dzięki jednakowemu oddaleniu od wszystkiego. Ma kształt płaski okrągły, podobnie do kamiennej kolumny; po jednej jej powierzchni się poruszamy, druga zaś leży po stronie przeciwnej. (4) Gwiazdy powstały jako krąg ognia, oddzielne od kosmicznego ognia, otoczone powietrzem. Istnieją jednak otwory, pewne kanaliki lejcowate, poprzez które ukazują się gwiazdy; dlatego wraz z zatknięciem tych otworów powstają zaćmienia. (5) Księżyc jawi się raz w pełni, raz się zmniejsza podług rozwarcia lub zamknięcia kanalików. Obwód słońca jest dwadzieścia siedem razy większy od ziemi (i osiemnaście razy większy od księżyca). Najwyższe jest słońce, poniżej okręgi gwiazd stałych i planet.

(6) Istoty żywe powstały w wilgoci wysuszonej przez słońce. Człowiek zaś zrodził się z innej istoty żywej, mianowicie z ryby i podobny był do niej na początku.

(7) Wiatry powstają z delikatnych podmuchów powietrza, wydzielających się i poruszających. Ulewy zaś z podmuchu od ziemi spowodowanego przez słońce. Błyskawice zaś powstają, gdy napierający wiatr rozdziela chmury.

Urodził się w trzecim roku 42 Olimpiady (610–609 p.n.e.).

10. Ps-Plurarch, *Strom.* 2 (A 10 DK = Ar 101 Wöhrle)

Po Talesie nastąpił jego towarzysz, Anaksymander Milezyjczyk, który twierdził, że *apeiron* stanowi ogólną przyczynę powstawania i ginięcia wszechświata, z której – powiada – nieba się wydzieliły (ἀποκρίσθαι) i w ogóle wszystkie nieskończone będące światy). Wykazywał, że ginięcie powstaje, a znacznie wcześniej powstawanie z odwiecznego *apeironu*, które wszystkie cyklicznie zachodzą.

Ziemi przypada – powiada – kształt cylindryczny, a ma ona głębokość równą jednej trzeciej względem szerokości. Powiada, że przy powstawaniu obecnego świata z wiecznego ciepła i zimna załążek (γόνιμον) się wydzielił (ἀποκριθῆναι), i z tego pewna ognista kula wytworzyła się w powietrzu wokół ziemi, tak jak kora na drzewie. Po jej rozprzestrzenieniu się i obramowaniu w pewne kręgi utworzone zostało Słońce, Księżyc i gwiazdy.

Mówi ponadto, że na początku powstał człowiek ze zwierząt o innym kształcie; jeśli inne zwierzęta żywiły się od razu samodzielnie, to tylko człowiek wymagał przez dłuższy czas opieki w żywieniu. Gdyby pierwotnie był takim, jak teraz, nie zdołałby przeżyć.

11. Simplikios, *Cael.* 615 (A 17 DK = Ar 192 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander, ziomek i towarzysz Talesa, założył coś nieokreślonego, lżejszego od wody i gęstsze od powietrza, dlatego że substrat winien być zdolny do przechodzenia

we wszystko. Pierwszy założył *apeiron*, aby co do powstawania móc posługiwać się nim niewyczerpalnie (ἀφθότως). I światy nieskończone i wszystko we światach przyjął, jak się zdaje, że wywodzi się z tego bezkresnego elementu.

12. Ps.- Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* I 3, 3 (A 14 DK = Ar 53 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander, syn Priaksidesa, Milezyjczyk, powiada, że zasadą bytów jest *apeiron*: z niego bowiem wszystkie rzeczy powstają i nań się wszystkie rozkładają. Dlatego też powstają nieskończone światy i znów się rozkładają na to, z czego powstają. Powiada przeto, dlaczego jest to bezkresem, po to, by zachodzące powstawanie w niczym się nie wyczerpywało.

Myli się on jednak, nie mówiąc, czym jest bezkres, czy jest to powietrze, woda, ziemia, czy jakieś inne ciała. Myli się więc, określając materię, a negując przyczynę sprawczą. Bezkrę bowiem niczym innym nie jest jak materią, a materia nie może być w akcie, jeśli nie wystąpi czynnik sprawczy.

13. Arystoteles, *De cael.* 303b10 (A 16 DK = Ar 7 Wöhrle)

Niektórzy zakładają tylko jeden [element], dla jednych jest nim woda, dla innych powietrze, dla innych ogień, a jeszcze inni coś rzadszego od wody i gęstszego od powietrza, o czym powiadają, że obejmuje wszystkie nieba i jest bezkresem.

14. Simplikios, *Phys.* 150, 23 (A 9 DK = Ar 120 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander był pierwszym, który substratem nazwał zasadę. Przeciwnościami zaś są gorąco – zimno, suchość i wilgotność, itp.

15. Arystoteles, *Phys.* I 4, 187a12 (A 16 DK = Ar 1 Wöhrle)

Ci bowiem, którzy przyjmują ciało jako substrat złożone z jednego z trzech [elementów] czy też coś innego, co gęstsze jest od ognia, a rzadsze od powietrza, wszystko zaś inne wytwarzają zgęszczaniem i rozrzedzaniem... Inni zaś z czegoś jednego wywodzą oddzielanie się zawartych w ich przeciwnościach, tak jak twierdzi Anaksymander, a także ci co powiadają, że zachodzi jedno i wielość, jak Empedokles i Anaksagoras, bo i oni z mieszaniny wydzielają wszystko inne.

CYTOWANY FRAGMENT

16. Simplikios, *Phys.* 24, 13 (B 1 DK = Ar 120 Wöhrle)

Spośród tych, którzy orzekają jeden [element], obdarzony ruchem i bezkresny, Anaksymander, syn Priaksiadesa, Milezyjczyk, następca i uczeń Talesa, głosił, że zasadą i elementem bytów jest *apeiron*, pierwszy wprowadzając taką nazwę zasady. Powiada, że nie jest nią woda ani żaden inny z tzw. elementów, lecz jakaś inna natura bezkresu, z której powstają wszystkie nieba i zawarte w nich światy.

Ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστὶ τοῖς οὖσι,
καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ
τὸ χρεών· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ
τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ
χρόνου τάξιν.

Z czego powstawanie jest bytów,
także rozpad na to powstaje wedle należ-
ności; wydają one bowiem prawość i karę
nawzajem za nieprawość podług porząd-
ku czasu.

Tak on to wyraził w słowach raczej poetyckich. Jasne jest, że zakładając wzajemną przemianę czterech elementów, nie sądził on, by coś jednego z nich tworzyło substrat, lecz coś innego poza nimi. Nie tworzy on przecież powstawania poprzez przemianę elementu, ale poprzez rozdzielanie się przeciwieństw wskutek wiecznego ruchu. Dlatego Arystoteles zestawiał go z Anaksagorasem.

ZASADA I RANGA APEIRONU W RELACJI ARYSTOTELESA

17. Arystoteles, *Phys.* III 4, 203b6 (A 15 DK = Ar 2 Wöhrle)

Trafnie zaś zakładają jako zasadę *bezkres* wszyscy [badacze natury]; nie może to bowiem być daremne ani inna nie przypada mu moc prócz bycia zasadą. Wszystko bowiem jest albo zasadą albo z zasady; nie ma zaś zasady bezkresu, gdyż byłaby jego kresem. Ponadto zasada jako taka jest czymś niezrodzonym i niezniszczalnym. To bowiem, co zrodzone, musi mieć swój kres, co jest końcem wszelkiego ginięcia. Dlatego, jak mówimy, nie ma dlań zasady, lecz zdaje się on być zasadą innych rzeczy i wszystkie obejmować jako i wszystkimi kierować, jak posiadają ci, którzy nie przyjmują poza *bezkresem* innych przyczyn, jak np. Umysł czy Miłość. A jest on czymś boskim; nieśmiertelnym bowiem i niezniszczalnym, jak mówi Anaksymander i większość przyrodników.

Przekonanie o istnieniu *bezkresu* bierze się u badaczy zwłaszcza z pięciu racji: 1. z czasu (bo on nieskończony), oraz 2. z podziału na wielkości (bo i matematycy posługują się nieskończonością). Ponadto 3. z tego, że nie zbraknie powstawania i ginięcia, jeśli jest bezkres, skąd bierze się powstawanie; 4. dalej z tego, że ograniczone zawsze z czymś

graniczy, toteż z konieczności nie ma żadnego kresu, jeśli jedno zawsze musi być ograniczone drugim. 5. Najbardziej zaś istotne to, co sprawia wszystkim wspólną aporię: skoro bowiem w myśleniu nie ma żadnej luki, to i liczba okazuje się nieskończona i wielkości matematyczne i to, co na zewnątrz niebios. Przy nieskończoności tego co na zewnątrz, również ciało okazuje się być nieskończone i światy; cóż bowiem w próżni może być bardziej tutaj czy tam? –

18. Arystoteles, *Phys.* III 5, 204b23 (A 16 DK = Ar 3 Wöhrlé)

Lecz to niemożliwe, by jedno i proste było ciało bezkresne, ani jak powiadają niektórzy, by było poza elementami, z których one się tworzą, ani na sposób prosty. Są bowiem tacy, którzy to uznają za *apeiron*, lecz nie powietrze czy wodę, aby inne rzeczy nie ulegały zniszczeniu przez ich bezkres. Mają bowiem względem siebie przeciwieństwo, jak np. powietrze jest chłodne, woda wilgotna, a ogień gorący. Gdyby z tych jeden był bezkresny, wyniszczyłby już inne; twierdzą więc, że bezkres jest czymś odrębnym, z czego te [elementy] powstają.

19. Arystoteles, *Phys.* III 6, 207a19 (fr. 9 Manfeld)

Ranga bezkresu: obejmuje wszystkie rzeczy i wszystko jest w nim zawarte (τὸ πάντα περιέχειν καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἔχειν), dlatego ma pewne podobieństwo do całości (τινὰ ὁμοιότητα τῷ ὅλῳ).

NIESKOŃCZONE ŚWIATY

20. Simplikios, *In Ph.* 1121.5–9 (A 17 DK = Ar 178 Wöhrlé)

Ci bowiem, którzy zakładali, że światy są w mnogości nieskończone, jak Anaksymander, Leukippos, Demokryt, a później Epikur, zakładali również, że światy powstają i przemijają w nieskończoności czasu, przy czym jedne powstają, a inne przemijają, i twierdzili, że ruch jest wieczny, ponieważ bez ruchu nie ma powstawania ani przemijania.

21. Augustyn, *De civ. Dei* VIII 2 (A 17 DK = Ar 128 Wöhrle)

Po nim [Talesie] nastąpił Anaksymander, jego słuchacz, i zmienił pogląd o naturze rzeczy. Nie tak jak Tales z jednej rzeczy, z wilgoci, lecz sądził, że ze swych własnych zasad te rzeczy się rodzą. Sądził, że te zasady rzeczy poszczególnych są nieskończone, i rodzą się nieskończone światy, i wszystko się w nich rodzi. Mniemał, że światy te raz rozprzęgają się, raz znów rodzą, na ile każdy zdoła pozostać w swoim wieku, sam nie przydzielając myśli boskiej w tych dziełach niczego.

22. Cyceon, *De nat. deor.* I 10, 25 (A 17 DK = Ar 29 Wöhrle)

Anaksymandra to pogląd, że bogowie są zrodzeni w długich okresach czasu na wschodzie i zachodzie, a są nimi nieskończone światy.

ZIEMIA**23. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* III 10 (A 25 DK = Ar 65 Wöhrle)**

Według Anaksymandra Ziemia przypomina kamienną kolumnę o płaszczyznach.

24. Arystoteles, *De caelo* 295b11–16 (A 26 DK = Ar 6 Wöhrle)

Są też tacy, którzy twierdzą – jak wśród prądawnych Anaksymander – że ziemia pozostaje w spoczynku wskutek swej równowagi; albowiem to, co jest przytwierdzone i pozostaje jednakowo względem krańców, nie ma skłonności poruszać się ku górze raczej czy ku dołowi, albo ku brzegom. Zarazem też nie jest możliwe odbywanie ruchu w kierunkach przeciwnych. Toteż z konieczności ziemia trwa w spoczynku.

25. Ammian Marcellin XVII 7, 12 (A 28 DK = Ar 118 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander powiada, że ziemia stając się zbyt wyschnięta z nadmiernej suszy wielkiej spiekoty, albo po nawałnicy deszczy, rozstępuje się na większe szczeliny, do których wpada z góry gwałtownie powietrze; i wstrząśnięta poprzez szczeliny strasznym nurtem bywa wstrząśnięta aż do fundamentów. Z tej to przyczyny drży jak te zachodzą lub w okresach ciepła i nadmiaru deszczy.

CIAŁA NIEBIESKIE

26. Simplikios, *In De Cael.* 471, 4–6 (A 19 DK = Ar 185 Wöhrle)

Kwestie te więc – powiada Arystoteles – „rozważy się na podstawie badań w astronomii”. Tam bowiem przeprowadzono dowodzenie dotyczące porządku planet, ich wielkości i odległości. Anaksymander był pierwszym, który wykrył proporcje w zakresie wielkości i odległości, jak podaje Eudemos (frg. 146 Wehrli), odnosząc do pierwszych pitagorejczyków odkrycie porządku ich położenia.

Natomiast wielkości i odległości słońca i księżyca do chwili obecnej znane są na podstawie badania ich zaćmienia; prawdopodobne było, że właśnie Anaksymander miał je wykryć, podczas gdy wielkości i odległości Hermesa (Merkurego) i Afrodyty (Wenus) poznane zostały na podstawie powiązań z tamtymi.

27. Pliniusz, *Nat. hist.* II, 31 (A 5 DK = Ar 40 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander z Miletu miał jako pierwszy podczas 58. Olimpiady [548–545 p.n.e.] rozpoznać jego [zodiaku] nachylenie, czyli otworzyć wrota rzeczywistości.

28. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* I 15–16 (A 18 DK = Ar 54–56 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander, Metrodor z Chios oraz Krates [twierdzą, że] najwyżej ze wszystkich zajmuje Słońce, po nim Księżyc, a poniżej nich gwiazdy stałe i planety.

Według Anaksymandra [ciała niebieskie] poruszane są przez obręcz i kręgi, na których każde z nich się znajduje.

29. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* II 20–21 (A 21 DK = Ar 57 Wöhrle)

Według Anaksymandra Słońce jest okręgiem, 28 razy większym od Ziemi, podobnym do koła rydwanu z wydrążoną obręczą, wypełnioną ogniem. W pewnej części ogień wydostaje się poprzez otwór, jak przez rurę z żarem. I tym jest Słońce.

Według Anaksymandra Słońce jest tak samo duże jak Ziemia, ale okrąg, z którego wywodzi się i po którym się porusza, jest 27 razy większy od Ziemi.

30. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* II 24 (A 21 DK = Ar 59 Wöhrle)

Według Anaksymandra [zaćmienie Słońca następuje], gdy otwór wylotowy ognia jest zamknięty.

31. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* II 25 (A 22 DK = 60 Wöhrle)

Według Anaksymandra Księżyc jest okręgiem, 19 razy większym od Ziemi, wypełnionym ogniem, podobnym do ognia Słońca. Zaćmiewa się on jednak zgodnie z obrotami koła. Przypomina bowiem koło wozu z wydrążoną obręczą wypełnioną ogniem i otworem wylotowym.

32. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* II 28–29 (A 22 DK = Ar 61–62 Wöhrle)

Według Anaksymandra [Księżyc] ma własne światło, które jednak jest nieco słabsze. Według Anaksymandra [Księżyc zaćmiewa się], gdy otwór w okręgu zostaje zatkany.

MORZE**33. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* III 16 (A 27 = 66 Wöhrle)**

Anaksymander twierdzi, że morze jest pozostałością po dawnej wilgoci, której większą część wysuszył ogień, a resztę przekształcił poprzez spalanie.

34. Arystoteles, *Meteor.* 353b5–11 (A 27 DK = Ar 8 Wöhrle)

Ci co mądrzejsi są w zakresie wiedzy ludzkiej, tworzą powstawanie morza. Pierwotnie bowiem wilgotna była cała przestrzeń wokół ziemi, wysuszona zaś przez słońce, część wyparowana – powiadają – wytwarza wiatry i fazy słońca i księżyca; reszta zaś jest morzem. Dlatego sądzą, że staje się ono mniejsze przez wysuszenie, a w końcu kiedyś zupełnie wyschnie.

35 Aleksander, *Meteor.* 67,1–14 (A 27 DK = Ar 84 Wöhrle)

Tamci przyrodnicy tłumaczą powstawanie morza, chociaż nie twierdzą, że jest ono niezrodzone, posiadając własne źródło, jak głoszą teolodzy. Jedni z nich bowiem powia-

dają, że morze jest pozostałością po pierwotnej wilgoci; teren był bowiem wilgotny wokół ziemi, potem pewna część wilgoci wysuszona została przez słońce i z tego powstały wiatry oraz obroty słońca i księżyca, tak iż wskutek tych parowań i wyziewów wytworzyły się również ich obroty, gdzie taka ich obfitość powstała, wokół których krążą. Część zaś wilgoci, która pozostała w zagłębieniach ziemi, stanowi morze. Dlatego zmniejsza się ono wysuszane każdorazowo przez słońce i w końcu kiedyś wyschnie. Taki pogląd, jak podaje Teofrast, głoszony był przez Anaksymandra i Diogenesa. Diogenes podaje także przyczynę zasolenia; otóż słońce wysysa słodycz, a to, co pozostaje, jest słońcem.

POWSTANIE JESTESTW I CZŁOWIEKA

36. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* V 19, 4 (A 30 DK = Ar 67 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander [twierdzi, że] pierwsze istoty żywe zrodziły się z wilgoci, otoczone kolczastą korą; wraz z dalszym przebiegiem ich życia przechodziły na teren bardziej suchy i po zrzuconiu kory przeżyły jeszcze krótki czas.

37. Censorinus 4, 7 (A 30 DK = Ar 90 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander Milezyjczyk sądził, że wody i ziemi pod wpływem ciepła zrodziły się czy to ryby czy też zwierzęta podobne do ryb; wewnątrz nich mieli wyrosnąć ludzie, pozostając zamknięci tak jak płód aż do dojrzewania; wreszcie po rozerwaniu błony przyszli na świat mężczyźni i kobiety, którzy zdołali odżywiać się samodzielnie.

38. Plutarch, *Symp.* 730E (A 30 DK = Ar 45 Wöhrle)

Potomkowie starodawnego Hellena oddają też cześć ojczystemu Posejdonowi, gdyż wierzą, tak jak Syrowie, że człowiek zrodzony został z wilgoci. Dlatego czczą nawet rybę jako pokrewną i odżywiającą się podobnie. Filozofują oni lepiej od Anaksymandra; tamten bowiem nie twierdzi, że ryba i człowiek zrodzili się w tym samym środowisku, lecz że ludzie najpierw zrodzili się w rybach i tam się żywili, tak jak rekiny, i stając się silniejsi, by sobie pomagać, oddzielili się i zajęli ląd. Tak samo więc jak ogień pochłania las, od którego się zajął, i który jest zarazem jego ojcem i matką, tak też powiada ten, kto wstawił do wierszy Hezjoda zaślubiny Kieksa, tak i Anaksymander uznał wspólną rybę za ojca i matkę ludzi i odrzucił jej spożywanie.

ZJAWISKA METEOROLOGICZNE

39. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* III 3 (A 23 DK = Ar 63 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander [twierdzi, że] wszystko to jest wynikiem przepływu powietrza. Gdy bowiem strumień ten zostaje uwięziony przez gęstą chmurę i z powodu swojej delikatności i lekkości gwałtownie z niej wyrывa się, rozrywanie [chmury] powoduje huk, a przecięcie w kontraście do ciemności chmury powoduje blask światła.

40. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* III 7 (A 24 = Ar 64 Wöhrle)

Według Anaksymandra wiatr jest strumieniem powietrza, gdy jego najdrobniejsze i najbardziej wilgotne cząsteczki zostają wprawione w ruch lub stopione pod wpływem słońca.

41. Seneka, *Nat. qu.* II 18 (A 23 DK = Ar 38 Wöhrle)

Anaksymander wszystko sprowadził do powiewu. Grzmoty – powiada – są odgłosem zderzanej chmury. Dlaczego są nierównej mocy? Ponieważ powiew jest nierówny. Dlaczego grzmi przy pogodzie? Ponieważ wtedy również przy zgęszczeniu i rozrzedzeniu powietrza powiew napiera. Dlaczego niekiedy nie błyska a grzmi? Ponieważ powiew słabszy nie ma siły na płomień, a ma na odgłos. Czym zatem jest sama błyskawica? Jest gwałtownym wstrząsem powietrza, gdy się rozdzieli, a następnie nagle zderzy z sobą, i w rezultacie wytwarza słabą strugę ognia, nie mającą dość siły, aby sforsować większą odległość. Czym jest piorun? Gwałtownym prądem powietrza, bardziej zgęszczonym i naładowanym.

ANAKSYMENES Z MILETU

(13 Diels Kranz; 7 Laks Most)

ŻYCIE I DZIEŁO

1. Diogenes Laertios II 3 (A 1 DK = As 72 Wöhrle)

Anaksymenes, syn Eurystratos, Milezyjczyk, był uczniem Anaksymandra; niektórzy podają, że był też uczniem Parmenidesa. Orzekł on jako zasadę powietrze i bezkres (ἀρχὴν ἀέρα εἶπεν καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον). Gwiazdy poruszają się nie pod ziemią, ale wokół ziemi. Posługiwał się stylem jońskim prostym i niewyszukanym.

A żył on, jak podaje Apollodoros, w czasie zdobycia Sardes (546–545 p.n.e.), umarł zaś podczas sześćdziesiątej trzeciej Olimpiady (528–524 p.n.e.).

POWIETRZE BEZKRESNE JAKO ZASADA WSZECHRZECZY

2. Hipolit, *Ref.* I 7, 1–3 (A 7 DK = As 56 Wöhrle)

(1) Anaksymenes, i on Milezyjczyk, syn Eurystratos. Twierdził, że bezkresne powietrze jest zasadą, z której rodzą się rzeczy powstające, powstałe i przysze, oraz bogowie i boginie i jeszcze inne z nich się wywodzą. Postać powietrza jest następująca: gdy jest najbardziej jednolite, dla wzroku bywa niejawne, uwidacznia się zaś w zimnie i ciepłe, w wilgoci i ruchu. (2) Porusza się wciąż; nie przemieniałoby się to wszystko, co się zmienia, gdyby było bez ruchu. (3) Zgęszczone i rozrzedzone wykazuje zróżnicowanie; gdy bowiem przejdzie w stan rzadszy staje się ogniem, a średnio zgęszczone powietrze stanowi wiatr. Z powietrza chmura się tworzy poprzez zgęszczenie, a w większym zgęstnieniu woda, w jeszcze większym ziemia, w największym zaś kamienie. Toteż głównymi czynnikami powstawania są przeciwieństwa: ciepło i zimno.

(4) Ziemia jest płaska, podtrzymywana przez powietrze; podobnie jak Słońce, Księżyc i wszystkie inne ciała niebieskie, które będąc ogniste utrzymują się w powietrzu dzięki płaskości. (5) Gwiazdy powstały z ziemi wskutek tego, że wilgoć z niej wyparowała. Z jej rozluźnienia ogień powstaje, a z ognia unoszonego się ku górze gwiazdy się utworzyły. Są też ziemskie natury na terenie gwiazd krążące z nimi. (6) Powiada, że gwiazdy nie poruszają się pod ziemią, jak inni przypuszczali, lecz wokół ziemi, tak jak wokół naszej głowy obraca się czapka. Słońce nie skrywa się schodząc pod ziemię, lecz

jest zasłanianie przez wyższe części ziemi i wskutek powstającego większego od nas jego oddalenia. Gwiazdy zaś nie nagrzewają ziemi wskutek wielkiej odległości.

(7) Wiatry powstają, gdy zagęszczone powietrze wyzwolone się unosi w górę; dochodząc do większej gęstości tworzą się chmury, i w ten sposób przekształcają się w wodę. Gradobicie powstaje, gdy z chmur spłynie zamarznięta woda; śnieg zaś, gdy te będąc bardziej wilgotne nabierają gęstości. (8) Powstaje piorun, gdy chmury rozrywane są siłą podmuchów, a przy ich rozrywaniu jasny i ognisty tworzy się błysk. Tęcza zaś się tworzy z promieni słońca padających na zagęszczone powietrze. Trzęsienie ziemi zachodzi przy większej jej przemianie pod wpływem ciepła i zimna.

(9) Takie więc poglądy głosił Anaksymenes. Jego rozkwit przypadał na pierwszy rok pięćdziesiątej ósmej Olimpiady (546–545 p.n.e.).

3. Ps. Plutarch, *Strom.* 3 (A 6 DK = As 83 Wöhrle)

Anaksymenes – powiadają – orzekł zasadą wszechrzeczy powietrze, bo jest ono w swej wielkości bezkresne, takimi własnymi jakościami określone; powstają wszystkie rzeczy przez pewne jego zagęszczenie i dalej rozrzedzenie. Ruch ten od wieczności zachodzi; przy zagęszczeniu powietrza – powiada – najpierw powstaje ziemia, będąc raczej płaska i z tej racji może ona utrzymywać się w powietrzu. Słońce, księżyc i pozostałe gwiazdy biorą początek powstawania z ziemi. Ukazuje zatem słońce jako ziemię, wskutek ostrego ruchu i nader rozżarzony przybiera obrót.

4. Simplikios, *Phys.* 24, 26 (A 5 DK = As 122 Wöhrle)

Anaksymenes, syn Eurystratosa, Milezyjczyk, towarzyszem był Anaksymandra, także on jedną naturę substratu i bezkresną orzeka, jak tamten, nie zaś nieokreślona, jak tamten, lecz określoną, powietrzem ją nazywając. Różnicuje się zagęszczaniem i rozrzedzaniem podług substancji; rozrzedzone staje się ogniem, zagęszczone zaś wiatrem, następnie chmurą, dalej bardziej zagęszczone wodą, potem ziemią, potem skałami, a inne rzeczy są z nich. Ruch i on czyni wiecznym, dzięki czemu powstaje przemiana.

5. Arystoteles, *Metaph.* A 3, 984a5 (A 4 DK = As 2 Wöhrle)

Anaksymenes i Diogenes [z Apolonii] stawiają powietrze jako wcześniejsze od wody i szczególnie jako zasadę spośród ciał prostych.

6. Platon, *Tim.* 49b2–e7 (As 1 Wöhrle)

Po pierwsze, to co teraz wodą nazwaliśmy, widzimy, jak nam się zdaje, że zgęszczone staje się skałami i ziemią; rozrzedzone zaś i rozpuszczone, staje się tchnieniem i powietrzem; rozpalone z kolei ogniem i, na odwrót, ogień ściśnięty i zgaszony wraca na powrót do formy powietrza, a powietrze ściśnięte i zgęszczone staje się chmurą i mgłą, a z nich obu, jeszcze raz ściśniętych, cieknie woda, wreszcie z wody rodzą się na nowo ziemia i kamienie.

OCALAŁE FRAGMENTY

7. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* I 3, 4 (B 2 DK = As 35 Wöhrle)

Anaksymenes, syn Eurystrotosa, Milezyjczyk, zasadą bytów objawił powietrze: z niego bowiem wszystkie rzeczy powstają i na nie znów się rozkładają. Tak powiada:

Ἡ ψυχὴ ἢ ἡμετέρα ἀὴρ οὖσα συγκρατεῖ ἡμᾶς, καὶ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον πνεῦμα καὶ ἀὴρ περιέχει.	Dusza nasza powietrzem będąc utrzymu- je nas w mocy, a cały kosmos tchnienie i powietrze ogarnia.
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Nazywa synonimicznie powietrze i tchnienie. Myli się i on sądząc, że istoty żywe składają się z prostego i jednolitego powietrza i tchnienia. Nie można bowiem zakładać jednej tylko zasady bytów jako materii, z której wszystkie rzeczy powstają, gdyż przyjąć trzeba również przyczynę czynną; na przykład srebro nie wystarczy do powstania naczynia, jeśli nie ma przy tym czynnika sprawczego, czyli wytwórcy, tak samo w przypadku brązu, drewna i wszelkiej innej materii.

8. Olimpiodor, *De arte sacra* 25 (B 3 DK = As 174 Wöhrle)

Jedną, ruchomą i bezkresną zasadę wszelkich bytów wyklada Anaksymenes: powietrze. Powiada bowiem następująco:

Ἐγγύς ἐστιν ὁ ἀὴρ τοῦ ἀσωμάτου· καὶ ὅτι κατ' ἔκροιν τούτου γινόμεθα, ἀνάγκη αὐτὸν καὶ ἄπειρον εἶναι καὶ πλού- σιον διὰ τὸ μηδέποτε ἐκλείπειν.	Bliskie jest powietrze bezcielesności. A że pod jego wpływem powstajemy, musi ono i bezkresne być i obfite, przez co nigdy nie zbraknie.
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9. Plutarch, *De primo frigido* 7, 947f (B 1 DK = As 27 Wöhrle)

Albo też, jak przypuszczał pradawny Anaksymenes: ani zimna w substancji ani ciepła nie pozostawiamy, lecz wspólne jakości materii powstające w przemianach. Twierdził on bowiem, że zimno jest ściśnięciem i zgęszczeniem materii, a ciepło rozrzedzeniem i rozluźnieniem (τὸ δ' ἀραιὸν καὶ τὸ χαλαρὸν) – dosłownie użył tego wyrażenia. Stąd nie jest bezzasadne stwierdzenie, że człowiek wydycha z ust ciepło i zimno. Oziębła się bowiem oddech ściśnięty i zgęszczony przez usta, a po ich rozwarciu wydany staje się ciepły wskutek rozrzedzenia.

Arystoteles (*Probl.* XXXIV, 7) uznaje to jednak za błędne w przypadku tego męża; przy otwartych ustach ciepło bowiem jest przez nas wydychane, a kiedy przymykając usta dmuchamy, nie wychodzi z nich powietrze, które jest wewnątrz nas, lecz naciskane jest i odpychane powietrze chłodne naprzeciw ust.

ZIEMIA

10. Arystoteles, *Cael.* II 13, 294b13 (A 20 DK = As 3 Wöhrle)

Anaksymenes, Anaksagoras i Demokryt twierdzą, że płaskość jest przyczyną spoczynku Ziemi; nie przecina bowiem, lecz przykrywa powietrze z dołu pod sobą, jak to zdają się sprawiać ciała mające płaskość; te bowiem wobec wiatrów okazują bezruch wskutek oporu. Mówią, że tak samo czyni Ziemia przez swoją płaskość względem leżącemu pod nią powietrzu, podczas gdy ono z braku miejsca zostaje w spoczynku stłoczone w jedną masę na sposób wody w klepsydrach. A że powietrze zamknięte i nieruchome może unieść duży ciężar, podają wiele świadectw.

SŁOŃCE, NIEBO

11. Arystoteles, *Meteor.* 354a28 (A 14 DK = As 4 Wöhrle)

Wielu z dawnych meteorologów było przekonanych, że słońce nie porusza się pod ziemią, lecz wokół ziemi i swego miejsca; skrywa się zaś i sprawia noc wskutek wzniesień na północy Ziemi.

12. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* II 11 (A 13 DK = As 36 Wöhrle)

Według Anaksymenesa niebo jest obwodem najbardziej zewnętrznym Ziemi.

ZJAWISKA METEOROLOGICZNE**13. Seneka, *Quaest. nat.* II 17 (A 24 DK = As 24 Wöhrle)**

Niektórzy badacze sądzą, że ognisty strumień powietrza przechodząc przez zimne i wilgotne warstwy powoduje hałas. Rozżarzone bowiem żelazo nie hartuje się bezgłośnie, lecz gdy rozżarzona masa trafia do wody, gaśnie gwałtownym syczeniem. Tak więc, jak twierdzi Anaksymenes, strumień powietrza wpadając w chmury wydaje grzmoty, a gdy próbuje znaleźć przejście przez przeszkody i szczeliny, sam wylot wywołuje iskrzenie.

14. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* III 4 (A 17 = As 42 Wöhrle)

Według Anaksymenesa chmury powstają przy największym zgęszczeniu powietrza, a jeszcze bardziej zgęszczone wyciskają deszcze. Śnieg powstaje, gdy spadająca woda zamarza, a grad, gdy wilgoć zawiera w sobie trochę powietrza.

15. Ps.-Plutarch, *Plac. phil.* III 5 (A 18 DK = As 43 Wöhrle)

Anaksymenes twierdzi, że tęcza powstaje od blasku Słońca skierowanego na chmurę gęstą, zwartą i ciemną, tak że promienie zebrane w niej nie mogą przeniknąć na zewnątrz.

16. *Schol. Arat.* 455, 1 Martin (A 18 DK = As 70 Wöhrle)

Anaksymenes twierdzi, że tęcza powstaje za każdym razem, kiedy promienie słońca padają na grube i gęste powietrze. Stąd wcześniejsza jego część przed słońcem wydaje się purpurowa, wygrzana przez promienie, reszta zaś ciemna, zdominowana przez wilgoć. A nocą – powiada – powstaje tęcza od księżyca, chociaż nie często, gdyż pełnia księżyca nie trwa ciągle i ma on światło słabsze od słońca.

TRZĘSIENIE ZIEMI

17. Arystoteles, *Meteor.* 365b6–12 (A 21 DK = As 5 Wöhrle)

Anaksymenes twierdzi, że podczas nawilżania i wysychania ziemia pęka i jest wstrząsana przez odłamujące się kawałki, które spadają do jej wnętrza. Stąd występowanie trzęsień ziemi w okresach suszy i z drugiej strony ulewnych deszczy: jak już wspomniano, podczas suszy ziemia pęka, a także rozchodzi się, gdy staje się nadmiernie wilgotna z powodu deszczu.

18. Seneka, *Quaest. Nat.* VI 10 (A 21 DK = As 25 Wöhrle)

1. Anaksymenes twierdzi, że Ziemia sama jest przyczyną swego trzęsienia, i nic z zewnątrz nie wpływa, co by ją wstrząsało, lecz w niej samej i z niej samej; pewnie bowiem jej części zapadają się, które albo wilgoć rozpuściła, albo ogień strawił, albo siła wiatru wstrząsnęła. Ale nawet przy braku tych sił nie brak innych, przez które coś się odrywa lub odpada, ponieważ z czasem wszystko ulega rozkładowi i nic nie jest bezpieczne przed starzeniem się. Dotyczy to również tych solidnych i mocnych ciał.

2. Przeto tak jak w starych budynkach niektóre części nawet bez wstrząsu walą się, ponieważ mają większą masę niż siłę oporu, tak też dzieje się w całym ciele ziemskim, że jego części ze starości się rozkładają, a potem odpadają, powodując wstrząsy wyższych regionów, najpierw gdy się odrywają (nic bowiem chyba dużego nie odpadnie bez wstrząsu tego, w czym tkwi); wreszcie, gdy runą, uderzone o twarde podłoże, odbijają się jak piłka, która po upadku podskakuje i jest często odbijana, otrzymując od ziemi coraz to nowy impet. Jeśli jednak runą na podziemne wody, to ten upadek wstrząsa sąsiednim uderzeniem, które wyrzuca nagle z wysokości wielką masę.

KORESPONDENCJA Z PITAGORASEM

19. Diogenes Laertios II 3–4 (As 73–74 Wöhrle)

Anaksymenes do Pitagorasa

Tales w dobrej sławie dożył starości, choć odszedł niezbyt szczęśliwie. Radosny, jak zwykle, wyszedł nocą ze swoją służącą z podwórza, aby obserwować gwiazdy. I nie bacząc na otoczenie potknął się i wpadł do urwiska. Dla Milezyjczyków taki to był koniec badacza nieba. My zaś sami jego rzecznicy (λεσχηνῶται) wspominajmy tego męża, jak

i nasze dzieci i rzecznicy, i ukazujemy nadal jego wywody. I tak punktem wyjścia każdego wywodu powinien być Tales.

Anaksymenes do Pitagorasa

Byłeś bardziej od nas zaradny, przeniosłeś się z Samos do Krotonu, gdzie zażywasz spokoju. Synowie Ajakesa popełniają zaś straszne występki na Samijczykach, a Milezyjczyków nie pozostawiają bez znęcania się. Straszny też dla nas ten król Medów, gdybyśmy nie chcieli płacić haraczu. Ale Jończycy zamierzają w imię wolności wszystkich przeciwstawić się zbrojnie Medom; dla nas powstańców nie ma już innej nadziei ocalenia. Jakże więc Anaksymenes ma nadal badać niebo, będąc w obawie zagłady lub niewoli? Ty zaś jesteś poważany u Krotończyków i innych Italiotów; zmierzają do ciebie rzecznicy także z Sycylii.

20. Diogenes Laertios VIII 49–50 (As 77 Wöhrle)

Pitagoras do Anaksymenesa

I ty, mój drogi, gdybyś nie był urodzeniem i sławą lepszy od Pitagorasa, wyjechałbyś uchodząc z Miletu. Teraz zatrzymuje cię tam sława po przodkach, a zatrzymałaby i mnie w miejscu Anaksymenesa. Jeśli wy, ci najlepsi, opuścicie miasta, wyzbyty z nich będzie porządek i bardziej groźne staną się dla nich poczynania Medów. (50) Nie zawsze piękne jest badanie nieba, troska o ojczyznę jest piękniejsza. Wszak i ja nie oddaje się w całości swoim naukom, lecz także wojnom, jakie Italczycy toczą ze sobą wzajemnie.

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Anaximander and Anaximenes of Miletus – Main Doxography and Fragments

In addition to the existing source editions and translations, several new works on the so-called Presocratics (i.e., early Greek philosophers) have been published (see bibliography). While this study continues our work on the translation of the doxography and fragments of these authors, this paper presents Anaximander and Anaximenes of Miletus, who dealt with the same issues of principles, cosmogony, astronomy, and meteorology. We deal with them separately, but in a similar arrangement of sources, slightly different from previous editions, taking into account as instructive the longest of all testimonies about Anaximander and Anaximenes, namely the accounts of Hippolytus of Rome in *Refutatio omnium haeresium* I 6–7. As previously with Thales, we approach these Milesians in a selective and systematic arrangement of testimonies and those few fragments which, although considered inauthentic by many researchers, we find extremely interesting, rather reliable, and worth quoting. For greater clarity, we have introduced appropriate thematic headings in our translation of these texts, which is as close to the original as possible. The brief information below may serve as an introduction to a new reading of the sources on Anaximander and Anaximenes of Miletus.

KEY WORDS

Anaximander, Anaximenes, doxography, fragments, new polish translation

The Pain of Philosophy: A Cynic Objection to Plato*

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Since antiquity, Diogenes the Cynic has been known as a fierce opponent of Plato.¹ Numerous testimonies report instances of conflict between the two;² this article focuses on the apophthegm related by Plutarch and Stobaeus. The two accounts read:

As Diogenes also said, when Plato was praised, “But what admirable point does this man have? He has been philosophising for so long and has never caused anyone pain”.³ For one cannot

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¹ See Overwien (2005: 381–384). Niehues-Pröbsting (2016: 21) characterises the anti-Platonic nature of Diogenes as ‘die notwendige Ergänzung und Kehrseite des Platonismus’, ‘respektlose Randglosse dazu, deren Konjektur zu machen wäre’, ‘Satyrspiel zum erhabenen platonischen Idealismus’ and ‘dessen »verrückte« Entsprechung.’

² For a rich collection of testimonies, see *SSR* (Giannantoni 1990) V B 55–65.

³ In this article, I use the term ‘pain’ and its derivatives to mean both physical and mental suffering without distinction (corresponding to the ordinary ambiguity of the Greek word ‘λυπέω’, ‘λύπη’). I will return to this point in Section 3 below.

say, as Xenocrates did, that scientific knowledge is as much the ‘handles of philosophy’⁴ as are the emotions of the young: shame, desire, regret, pleasure, pain and ambition. (Plu. *De virtute morali* 452d = SSR V B 61).⁵

From Themistius’ *On the Soul*.⁶ Now, whether Diogenes was right when he said of Plato, “How on earth can a man be beneficial to us if he has already been philosophising for so long and has never caused anyone pain?”, different people will judge [differently]. That is because the words of a philosopher should probably have the sweetness capable of stinging the wounded⁷ like honey. (Stob. III 13, 68 = SSR V B 61).⁸

Both testimonies convey an intriguing yet obscure criticism of Plato by the Cynics: philosophy ought to be painful, but Plato hurts no one. On what grounds did they make such a claim? Three issues arise here: first, it is unclear what is meant by ‘painful’; second, why should philosophy be so; third, whether Plato’s philosophy truly ‘never caused anyone pain’.

In this paper, I attempt to elucidate the Cynic conception of ‘philosophical pain’ and reflect on these issues. In the first section, I examine the two testimonies quoted above and their implications. The subsequent sections then discuss the key concepts of *parrhēsia* and *askēsis* to explore the possibility of a new interpretation that differs from those of Plutarch and Stobaeus.

Previous studies have referred to these testimonies without questioning their details. Owing to their elusiveness, such treatment is certainly understandable. Nonetheless, as the following arguments demonstrate, the concept of ‘pain’ has a much broader scope than expected, even relating to the overall outlook of each philosopher. I hope that this article will contribute to a deeper comprehension of both Platonic and Cynic philosophies by reconsidering their differences from this hitherto overlooked perspective.

Before we begin the investigation, a brief remark on the treatment of sources is necessary. There is no guarantee that the two testimonies can be traced directly back to

⁴ See D.L. IV 10 = fr. 2 Isnardi Parente (ed. Dorandi 2013): πρὸς τε τὸν μῆτε μουσικὴν μῆτε γεωμετρικὴν μῆτε ἀστρονομικὴν μεμαθηκότα, βουλόμενον δὲ παρ’ αὐτὸν φοιτᾶν, πορεύου, ἔφη [sc. Xenocrates], ‘λαβὰς γὰρ οὐκ ἔχεις φιλοσοφίας’. The phrase ‘λαβὰς φιλοσοφίας’ seems to have been coined by Xenocrates in the sense of a ‘preliminary course for further studies’. See Isnardi Parente (1982: 302–303): ‘propedeutiche alla filosofia.’

⁵ ἥ καὶ Διογένης ἐπανοιμμένου Πλάτωνος ‘τί δ’ ἐκεῖνος’ εἶπεν ‘ἔχει σεμνόν, ὃς τοσοῦτον χρόνον φιλοσοφῶν οὐδένα λελύπηκεν;’ οὐ γὰρ οὕτως τὰ μαθήματα φαίη τις ἂν, ὥς ἔλεγε Ξενοκράτης, λαβὰς εἶναι φιλοσοφίας, ὥς τὰ πάθη τῶν νέων, αἰσχύνην ἐπιθυμίαν μετάνοιαν ἡδονὴν λύπην φιλοτιμίαν. (ed. Pohlenz 1929).

⁶ This work survives only in fragments, all quoted by Stobaeus. See Stob. IV 22, 89; 50, 29; 52, 45.

⁷ The oxymoronic expression, ‘the sweetness capable of stinging the wounded’, presumably reflects the ancient use of honey as a kind of salve in surgical treatment (see Kuropatnicki, Klósek and Kucharzewski 2018). In this respect, the symbolism of honey can be ambivalent: it is a sweet and pleasant food, but it may also cause pain on occasion by penetrating wounds. It is probably because of this ambiguity, shared by honey and philosophical *logos*, that Themistius assumes that ‘different people will judge differently’.

⁸ Θεμιστίου ἐκ τοῦ Περί ψυχῆς. Εἰ μὲν οὖν ὀρθῶς ἐπὶ Πλάτωνος εἶπε Διογένης ‘τί δαι ὄφελος ἡμῖν ἀνδρός, ὃς πολὺν ἤδη χρόνον φιλοσοφῶν οὐδένα λελύπηκεν;’ ἕτεροι κρινοῦσιν. ἴσως γὰρ ὥς τὸ μέλι δει καὶ τὸν λόγον τοῦ φιλοσόφου τὸ γλυκὺ δηκτικὸν ἔχειν τῶν ἡλκωμένων (ed. Hense 1894).

Diogenes or other ‘genuine’ Cynics: the remarks they contain may have been devised by later generations and then attributed retrospectively to Diogenes.⁹ In that case, reconstructing the Cynics’ thought based on such statements of Diogenes as an anecdotal figure would be methodologically dubious. However, even if the testimonies are not necessarily historically grounded, it is still worth discussing the extent to which they represent the true spirit of Cynicism and the distance between it and Plato’s philosophy. The main concern of this article is precisely this discussion. Therefore, while the problem of historical accuracy constantly haunts the study of Cynicism, it is not fatal to the present work but rather a presupposition of it.

1. The Accounts of Plutarch and Stobaeus

Let us first consider the implications of Plutarch’s account. He quotes Diogenes’ criticism of Plato in support of his own belief that regret (μετάνοια) and shame (αἰσχύνη) can serve corrective purposes, especially in the education of the young (*De virtute morali* 452C–D). According to Plutarch, the pain (λύπη) engendered by admonition (νουθεσία) or censure (ψόγος) has a considerable pedagogical effect; Plato was, thus, an incompetent teacher for not using it. This context encourages us to understand ‘philosophical pain’ as a psychological motivator: it drives the will to change the *status quo* and remove the causes of such pain (e.g. ignorance) by continuing to practise philosophy. Scientific knowledge (μαθήματα), in contrast, does not have as strong a motivational force¹⁰ as pain (or rather emotions in general).¹¹ Plutarch links this allegedly weaker stimulus with Xenocrates, one of Plato’s most celebrated disciples. In this passage, at least, he is almost synonymous with his master. Both are equally criticised as poor mentors, unable to give their students sufficient incentive to apply themselves to philosophy.¹²

What about Stobaeus? Using Themistius as his source, he introduces a lesson in parallel to Plutarch’s, with a brief note on its controversial nature. Since *Florilegium* III 13, which contains the quoted passage, is entitled ‘On *Parrhēsia*’, Stobaeus seems to have interpreted the mooted apophthegm as concerning the intimate connection between

⁹ For the complicated transmission process of Diogenes’ anecdotes or sayings, see Overwien (2005).

¹⁰ Here, the vagueness of the phrase ‘handles of philosophy’ is worth noting. Plutarch seems to understand this expression as ‘the psychological occasions to begin the practice of philosophy’, deviating from the original usage of Xenocrates. See also footnote 4 *supra*.

¹¹ For Plutarch’s theory that *pathē* or the irrational part of the soul plays an essential role in moral formation, see Chastelnérac (2007).

¹² In this passage, Plutarch, a Platonist, presents Plato’s stance as a caricature nearly equivalent to that of his adversaries (e.g. the Stoics, who underestimate the importance of *pathē*), at least regarding the issue of pain. This unexpected portrayal is likely a consequence of adjustment to Diogenes’ critique, which he cites to substantiate his argument, and does not reflect his personal view on Plato. For the mainly Platonic foundation of *De virtute morali*, see Roskam (2021: 62–63).

‘philosophising’ and ‘outspokenness’ (the typical translation of *parrhēsia*).¹³ One might suppose that a philosopher must be a *parrhēsiastēs*, who does not hesitate to sacrifice the feelings of his audience in service of the truth.¹⁴ In Diogenes’ eyes, Plato did not meet this requirement. This was exactly because he never caused anyone pain in his long philosophical career and, thus, was most unlikely to have been a truth-teller. Compared to Plutarch’s version, there is less emphasis on pedagogical issues. In Stobaeus’ account, Diogenes simply questions whether Plato is ‘beneficial to us’ (ὄφελος ἡμῖν). The issue here is unlikely to concern the education of the young since Diogenes counts himself among the potential beneficiaries.¹⁵ Additionally, Stobaeus does not generalise the object of Plato’s neglect to emotions as a whole (πάθη); he tacitly countenances the possibility that Plato appealed to pleasure (ἡδονή), which Plutarch’s account (or at least its implication) does not allow.

In either case, was Plato unfamiliar with ‘painful’ philosophy, as the two texts claim? It seems not. At least in his dialogues, Plato portrays the protagonist Socrates as a distinctly irritating figure.¹⁶ He was a ‘gadfly’ (μύωψ) who disturbed the sleep of the *polis* (*Ap.* 30e–31a) and his philosophical practice often upset those around him.¹⁷ Consequently, he incurred the deep hatred of several people who eventually obliged him to die. Notably, such annoyingness was, in a sense, an essential requirement of Socrates’ philosophy and, therefore, impossible to reduce entirely to his peculiar (i.e. dissimilar to Plato’s) personality. According to his attitude, intellectual improvement necessarily involves the pain of recognising one’s ignorance (especially of what one believes one should and does know).¹⁸ Not experiencing such pain is tantamount to closing one’s eyes to one’s ignorance and remaining intellectually inferior. Hence, those who wish to be wise (thus, virtuous and happy) must endure pain, at least transitionally. This is a recurrent motif in Platonic–Socratic philosophy. In the *Symposium* (*Smp.* 218a), Plato has Alcibiades describe the shock caused by Socrates’ ‘philosophical discourses’ (οἱ ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ λόγοι): “I was bitten by something more painful [than a viper], in the most painful place one can be bitten”.¹⁹ In the *Republic* (*R.* 502d–e), the Platonic Socrates lays

¹³ As is well known, *parrhēsia* was a hallmark of the Cynics. See e.g. D.L. VI 69 = SSR V B 473: ἐρωτηθεὶς τί κάλλιστον ἐν ἀνθρώποις, ἔφη [sc. Diogenes], ‘παρρησία’. For further discussion, see also Section 2 below.

¹⁴ See Foucault (2009: 12): “Pour qu’il y ait *parrhēsia* [sic], [...] il faut que le sujet, [en disant] cette vérité qu’il marque comme étant son opinion, sa pensée, sa croyance, prenne un certain risque, risque qui concerne la relation même qu’il a avec celui auquel il s’adresse. Il faut pour qu’il y ait *parrhēsia* [sic] que, en disant la vérité, on ouvre, on instaure et on affronte le risque de blesser l’autre, de l’irriter, de le mettre en colère et de susciter de sa part un certain nombre de conduites qui peuvent aller jusqu’à la plus extrême violence. C’est donc la vérité, dans le risque de la violence.”

¹⁵ When Diogenes became (or awakened to his being) the Cynic, he had already reached adulthood (see D.L. VI 20–22). Even in the anecdotal tradition, there are no examples in which Diogenes the Cynic is portrayed as a youth.

¹⁶ Quotations from Plato’s dialogues follow the current editions in the Oxford Classical Texts series.

¹⁷ E.g. *Pl. Men.* 80a–b; *Tht.* 149a. See also Blank (1993); Helmer (2021: 95–99).

¹⁸ See Warren (2014: 21–32); Delcomminette (2018).

¹⁹ ἐγὼ οὖν δεδηγμένος τε ὑπὸ ἀλγεινότερου καὶ τὸ ἀλγεινότατον ὧν ἂν τις δῆχθῃ. In a slightly earlier passage (215d–216c), Alcibiades also speaks of the intense shame evoked by listening to Socrates and being

bare his conviction that “the downright truth is both disgusting and intractable”²⁰ in at least some topics. Moreover, the *Theaetetus* (*Tht.* 148e–151d) presents the famous metaphor of ‘maieutics’, comparing the process of philosophical inquiry to that of pregnancy and parturition. Socrates takes pride in his art of inducing and regulating ‘labour pains’ (ὠδῖνες) in the souls of those with whom he interacts.²¹

Furthermore, Plato did not fail to observe the motivational power of ‘philosophical pain’; on the contrary, he was well acquainted with it. In the *Symposium* (*Smp.* 203a–204c), *Erōs* is characterised as a true philosopher. He recognises his lack of knowledge and pangs of hunger for it, precisely because of his intermediate position between the perfectly wise and the utterly ignorant. In this passage, the Platonic Socrates takes for granted that the painful consciousness of one’s deficiency immediately arouses a desire for what one is lacking.²² The *Theaetetus* (*Tht.* 168a) offers another expression of such a perspective, where Socrates charitably represents Protagoras’ stance:²³

If you do the above [sc. refute properly], those with whom you converse will blame themselves for their confusion and embarrassment [caused by the refutation], not you. And then, while they will pursue and love you, they will hate themselves, flee from their present situation, and take refuge in philosophy – to abandon their former selves and become different people.²⁴

Notably, in this passage, unpleasant and painful states of mind of ‘confusion’ (ταραχή) and ‘embarrassment’ (ἀπορία) are mentioned as significant spurs to the love of wisdom. We can, therefore, assume that a certain kind of ‘pain’ also played an important psychological role in Platonic–Socratic philosophy.

Finally, *parrhēsia* is one of the most fundamental postulates of Platonic–Socratic dialogue.²⁵ In the *Gorgias* (*Grg.* 486e–487a), Socrates lists *parrhēsia* as one of the three requirements for the philosophical examination of opinions of the soul.²⁶ In multiple contexts, he urges his interlocutors to speak openly with their real beliefs.²⁷ This is mainly

made aware of his worthlessness (including his ignorance).

²⁰ ἐπίφθονός τε καὶ χαλεπὴ γίγνεσθαι ἢ παντελῶς ἀληθής. See also *Pl. Ap.* 31e: καὶ μοι [sc. Socrates] μὴ ἄχθεσθε λέγοντι τάληθῃ.

²¹ Here, I mainly follow Futter’s interpretation. Philosophical ‘labour pains’ are due to a lack of knowledge and a thirst for it (2018: 499, 502) and are closely related to the pain of ignorance, as described above.

²² The *Symposium* (*Smp.* 216d–e) refers to the relationship between *erōs* and pain more explicitly. See also *Pl. Phdr.* 251b–253c; *R.* 490b; Futter (2018).

²³ Like most interpreters, including Blank (1993: 430–431) and Delcomminette (2018: 38), I believe that the account here is perfectly consistent with Plato’s own position. See also *Pl. Sph.* 230b–d.

²⁴ ἂν μὲν γὰρ οὕτω ποιῆς, ἑαυτοὺς αἰτιάσονται οἱ προσδιατρίβοντές σοι τῆς αὐτῶν ταραχῆς καὶ ἀπορίας ἀλλ’ οὐ σέ, καὶ σὲ μὲν διώξονται καὶ φιλήσουσιν, αὐτοὺς δὲ μισήσουσι καὶ φεύξονται ἀφ’ ἑαυτῶν εἰς φιλοσοφίαν, ἵν’ ἄλλοι γενόμενοι ἀπαλλαγῶσι τῶν οἱ πρότερον ἦσαν.

²⁵ On Socratic *parrhēsia*, see also Foucault (2009: 67–152); on that of Plato, Foucault (2009: 57–59, 203–208).

²⁶ The other two are knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and favour (εὖνοια).

²⁷ E.g. *Pl. Cri.* 49c–d; *Grg.* 495a, 500b–c; *Prt.* 331c–d.

because his scrutiny is directed in each case at the whole life of the respondent.²⁸ The focus of this open exchange of views is not on seducing others with flattery or overwhelming them with sophisms but on living better (and leading others to do so) through sound arguments. In this respect, Plato was undoubtedly a faithful heir to Socrates.²⁹

Hence, we should recognise that Plato did cause pain, in a sense, to others. Although it is impermissible to identify Plato with the Socrates he portrays, the latter's frequent suggestion of the importance of 'philosophical pain' most likely reflects the former's tenet, at least in part.

This conclusion, however, does not mean that the apophthegm under consideration is entirely inaccurate. 'Pain' is a polysemous concept. There remains the possibility that Plato's philosophy is, indeed, devoid of the kind of 'pain' that Diogenes identified. In that case, we could broadly countenance the mooted claim that "Plato never caused anyone pain". In the following sections, I shall introduce two antitheses that distinguish the Cynic usage of 'philosophical pain' from Plato's: passive/active and physical/mental.

2. Cynic *Parrhēsia* and Passive Pain

Since the Cynic *parrhēsia* differs palpably from Plato's in quality, there remains room for more careful examination than described above. In this section, I shall argue that the 'pain' involved in the Cynic *parrhēsia* is quite alien to Plato's philosophy: the former can be completely passive, while Plato's 'pain' requires the active commitment of the sufferer.

Etymologically, the Greek word *parrhēsia* means 'speaking all' (παῖς + ῥῆσις). Yet, at the level of ordinary language, the sense of 'all' is essentially relative.³⁰ Consider, for example, an enslaved person who can only speak as their master allows. Compared to such an individual, 'speaking all' would be understood as 'freedom of speech as a privilege of an independent citizen' or, more generally, 'saying what one thinks without being subject to any external oppression'.³¹ We can evaluate the Platonic–Socratic *parrhēsia* as a psychological extension of this meaning because it requires interlocutors not to be 'enslaved' to honour or victory but to be honest with themselves. If, conversely, we take as our contrast a civil person who chooses decent words and avoids unnecessary aggression, 'speaking all' would involve the use of vulgar or insulting language and a kind of shamelessness.³²

It is beyond question that the Cynic *parrhēsia* encompasses the latter connotation. According to Ammonius, the Cynics (literally the 'Doggish ones') were so named

²⁸ Pl. *La.* 187e–188a; see also Foucault (2009: 132–143).

²⁹ See Irani (2017).

³⁰ See also Foucault (2009: 11–12).

³¹ E.g. E. *Hipp.* 422; *Supp.* 433–441; *Ion* 670–675.

³² See Montanari (2015: s.v. παρρησία): 'licence, confidence, impudence'. *Parrhēsia*, in this sense, must be strictly distinguished from 'speaking what the hearer feels to be offensive'. In the *Meno* (94e–95a), for example,

‘because they were *parrhēsiastic* and fond of reproving’ (διὰ τὸ παρρησιαστικὸν τε καὶ ἐλεγκτικόν).³³ An Arabic gnomology also states, “Diogenes was called ‘Dog’ because of his provocative nature and the quarrels people had with him”.³⁴ Notably, these testimonies strongly associate the Cynic *parrhēsia* with dogs. While dogs had incredibly diverse symbolic value in ancient Greece,³⁵ we can interpret this kind of *parrhēsia* only in the second sense mentioned above:³⁶ the *parrhēsiastic* dog barks furiously and this barking is then easily identified with human abuse.³⁷ Indeed, numerous anecdotes substantiate the Cynic predilection for insults.³⁸ The Cynics occasionally resorted to pure invective or mockery without regard to the profound truth,³⁹ although they also engaged in the philosophical *parrhēsia* in the former sense.⁴⁰

Plato’s attitude is significantly different. Concerning the latter sense of *parrhēsia*, he was an uncompromising anti-*parrhēsiastēs*.⁴¹ Plato repeatedly objects to insults, abuse and ridicule⁴² throughout his dialogues. In the *Republic* (R. 555b–562a), for example, the Platonic Socrates trenchantly criticises democracy and the democratic populace, partly because of its excessive *parrhēsia*. Such people inevitably fall into decadence, disregarding the true virtues and calling insolence ‘good education’, anarchy ‘freedom’, prodigality ‘magnificence’ and shamelessness ‘courage’. More directly, in the *Laws* (Lg. 934e–935a), Plato’s spokesman, the Athenian Stranger, enacts a law forbidding slander. According to him, slanderous exchanges ultimately lead to hatred (μῖση) and enmity (ἔχθραι) between the participants, subsequently corrupting the right balance of their souls. In the following passage (Lg. 935a–936b), the Athenian Stranger combines slander with ridicule. Despite, or perhaps because of, his considerable comic talent,⁴³ Plato frequently warns against the dangers of such speech. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates demands that his interlocutors do not utter taunts or jokes because they can destroy philosophical inquiry.⁴⁴ In the *Republic* (R.

Socrates makes Anytus uncomfortable, but this is not his primary intention (although I am reluctant to eliminate the qualifier ‘primary’). Put another way, if the former sense of *parrhēsia* offends the listener, as in the case of Socrates and Anytus, this outcome is only incidental. The latter *parrhēsia*, on the other hand, expects from the outset to hurt the listener.

³³ Ammon. *In Cat.* 2, 2 = SSR I H 9 (ed. Busse 1895).

³⁴ Mun 4b (ed. Overwien 2005). The following quotation is based on the German translation by Overwien (2005: 128).

³⁵ See Terzaki (2023: 120–124).

³⁶ Neither civil liberties nor philosophical integrity apply to the dog, at least in the ordinary sense.

³⁷ E.g. Arist. [*Phgn.*] 808b36–37, 811a27, 811a31; Ath. XIII 611b.

³⁸ See Husson (2014: par. 16–36).

³⁹ E.g. SSR V B 202–206; see also Overwien (2005: 358–362). As the following discussion will show, we need not consider these deviations from the truth to reflect the ‘corruption’ of the later generations and to violate Cynic orthodoxies, if any.

⁴⁰ See Kennedy (1999: 33–37); Foucault (2009: 152–289).

⁴¹ See Husson (2014: par. 1–15).

⁴² While the Platonic Socrates was a skilled user of ‘ridicule’ (Rossetti 2011), its virulence was significantly alleviated by his friendliness or remedial mission (see Tanner 2017: 153–155). In this section, I am concerned exclusively with the hostile or destructive kind of ridicule.

⁴³ See Tanner (2017).

⁴⁴ Polus in *Grg.* 473e; Callicles in *Grg.* 500b–c.

394b–398b and 606c) and the *Laws* (Lg. 816d–e and 935d–936b), Plato’s representatives unanimously preach the strict regulation of comedy. Moreover, in the *Philebus* (*Phlb.* 48a–50a), comic laughter or mockery is proved to contain a kind of evil. John Morreall, thus, has no difficulty in calling Plato ‘the most influential critic of laughter’.⁴⁵

What is the root of this difference between the Cynics and Plato? As Suzanne Husson indicates,⁴⁶ the issue of ‘dialogue’ is crucial here. In principle, Platonic–Socratic philosophy develops through dialogue (or collaborative discussion). To maintain this exchange, Plato/Socrates must avoid insulting remarks as much as possible, because the interlocutor can withdraw from the dialogue whenever he feels uncomfortable and does not wish to continue the conversation. The fragility of cooperative dialogue is, thereby, exposed. Those supposedly in need of philosophical scrutiny can always cease a vexatious dialogue with a ‘gadfly’ or refuse to enter that dialogue from the outset. Plato/Socrates would then be at a loss. The interactive nature of dialogue is, thus, necessarily impotent against lazy people who are unwilling to listen, perhaps indeed the majority.⁴⁷ Such a lack of mass appeal seems even more pronounced in Plato than in his master. He spent most of his career as a philosopher in the ivory tower of the Academy (from 387/386 to 347 with some interruptions) and dealt only with talented students already oriented in philosophy. Moreover, his ideal state strictly selected those qualified to engage in philosophy.⁴⁸ This apparent elitism was ironically a blessing for the so-called *misologoi*, leaving them free to continue their unjust but peaceful lives in pleasant ignorance.

When we turn our attention to Diogenes, the situation changes drastically. He suddenly accosts passersby and hurls insults at them without hesitation. Such an approach is entirely coercive or one-sided and cannot, therefore, be avoided in advance. Unlike the case of Socrates, the consent of the interlocutor is not needed or sought. Instead, the critical point at which the dialogue ceases is the home territory of the Cynic *parrhēsia*. To appreciate this aspect, it may be useful to apply the traditional analogy between Cynicism and drama (especially comedy).⁴⁹ This analogy identifies the Cynic practice with public performance: it creates an unusual theatrical space amid the everyday world through the practitioner’s abrupt and bizarre eccentricities. What the Cynics perform in this space is an avant-garde improvisation that indiscriminately involves people who happen to be nearby. Unexpectedly compelled to ascend the virtual stage of the Cynics, these people are temporarily stripped of the veil of *nomos* that they have been wearing and unwill-

⁴⁵ Morreall 2024: sec. 1; see also Tanner (2017: xvii–xx) for the justifiable amendment to such an evaluation.

⁴⁶ Husson 2014: par. 15–16; see also Chapuis (2021: 139–51).

⁴⁷ We cannot overestimate the perilousness of this impotence, given that Socrates was ‘killed’ by such unwelcoming people.

⁴⁸ Pl. *R.* 412b–415c, 502c–541b. While not necessarily historically founded, later tradition attributes a kind of esotericism to Plato: see e.g. Pl. [*Ep.*] II 314a–c; D.L. III 63.

⁴⁹ Demetr. *Eloc.* 259 = SSR V H 70; Luc. *Bis Acc.* 33; M. Ant. XI 6.2 = SSR V B 474. See also Niehues-Pröbsting (2016: 208–210); Overwien (2005: 423–426); Bosman (2006); Hall (2019: 45–50). Of course, this analogy differs entirely from that between Plato’s dialogues and drama. For the Cynics, neither writings nor ideas but practices are the terms of the analogy.

ingly transformed into theatrical figures. They stand out from their surroundings and become objects of dramatic criticism for their audience (i.e. other passersby). In this way, abnormally insulting *parrhēsia* provides the Cynics with a convenient setting to subversively question conventional codes. The difference from the methodology of Socratic dialogue should now be noticeable. On the one side, Plato/Socrates can only fold his arms in front of the ‘foolish’ masses who do not listen to the philosophers’ wisdom; on the other, Diogenes easily targets those masses as the objects of his practice and does not allow them to remain safely on the sidelines.

Although the claim that “Plato never caused anyone pain” is somewhat overstated, it contains an informative implication. The limits of Platonic–Socratic philosophy are overcome in a surprisingly scandalous way by the merciless insults of the Cynics. The pain caused by the former always requires the interlocutor’s consent or active participation; that caused by the latter, in contrast, can be experienced purely passively by its target and is precisely a ‘suffering’. In this sense, we can say that Plato certainly did not inflict the kind of pain that Diogenes did.

Of course, this interpretation does not mean that Diogenes’ method is superior to Plato’s. The former is a kind of violence that stands on the brink of degenerating into harm. We should note here that Cynic insults only serve to propel the target into the virtual theatrical space that they create. Once the target has ascended the stage, the delivery of insults ends and *parrhēsia* in the sense of ‘telling the truth’ is spotlighted. Otherwise, we would lose the criterion to distinguish Cynic insults from those of the simply mad. Undoubtedly, Diogenes, like Plato/Socrates, also embarked on *parrhēsia* in the truth-telling sense, while the mocking sense was adopted only to ensure the former’s validity.

3. Cynic *Askēsis* and Physical Pain

Finally, I shall explain the second distinction between Diogenes’ and Plato’s ‘pain’: physical or mental. Our guide here is the following passages of Pseudo-Diogenes’ *Twenty-Ninth Epistle* (= SSR V B 559),⁵⁰ addressed to Dionysius the Tyrant:⁵¹

Since you think it is good to take care of yourself, I will send you a man who shares no similarities with Aristippus or Plato, by Zeus. He is one of the educators in Athens (of which I am also one), whose discernment is the keenest, whose steps are the most agile and who carries the

⁵⁰ I believe that this epistle, although written relatively late, is generally faithful to the essential spirit of the Cynics (see also Flores-Júnior 2021: 19–48). Whatever the case, I use it only as a clue to further arguments. For the epistles of Pseudo-Diogenes in general, see Malherbe (1977: 14–21).

⁵¹ Diogenes always condemns or scoffs at Dionysius as a debauched pleasure-seeker. See SSR V B 53–6; Plu. *An seni respublica gerenda sit* 783C–D = SSR V B 359; Diog. [*Ep.*] VIII = SSR V B 538; XXXII = SSR V B 562; XL 1 = SSR V B 570.

most painful whip. He will command you, by Zeus, to take no rest during the day and to rise early in the morning, and he will make you cease to be afraid or scared [...] (1).⁵²

You need a whip and a master, not someone who admires and flatters you. Indeed, who could ever be benefited by the latter kind of person? Or how could he benefit anyone? If he did not chastise the individual and simultaneously recall him to his senses, as one does with horses and oxen, and did not consider what is required, [that would not be possible]. But you are already far beyond depravity. Therefore, you need incision, cautery and the use of drugs (4–5).⁵³

In these passages, various elements correspond to the testimonies of Plutarch and Stobaeus: the contrast between the Cynics and Plato, the issue of pedagogy (as in Plutarch), the reference to beneficence (as in Stobaeus) and, most importantly, the close association of Cynicism with ‘pain’.

Based on these similarities, should we understand the ‘pain’ to which this epistle refers in the same way as the pain we have examined above? It seems not. The *Twenty-Ninth Epistle* consistently stresses the physical and corporeal character of ‘philosophical pain’ among the Cynics. This point is not mentioned, at least not explicitly, in Plutarch’s and Stobaeus’ versions: the ‘pain’ in their renderings is generally mental. By contrast, in the *Twenty-Ninth Epistle*, we find a repetition of physical and medical metaphors, such as ‘the most painful whip’ (σκύτος ἀλγεινότατον), ‘incision’ (τομή), ‘cautery’ (καυσίς) and ‘use of drugs’ (φαρμακεία). In my view, these are not merely rhetorical, standing in for mental pain; instead, there appears to be a positive reason for adopting physical metaphors. In this regard, the concepts of *askēsis* and *ponos* in Cynic thought are of decisive importance.

The Cynic doctrine of the ‘double *askēsis*’ recommends hybrid training, in which the body and the mind collaborate,⁵⁴ as opposed to the one-sided physical exertion of athletes or the one-sided mental labour of intellectuals. It is, in essence, a ‘corporeal *askēsis* directed to a moral purpose’.⁵⁵ As Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé explains,

⁵² Ἐπειδὴ δέδοκται σοι ἐπιμέλειαν ποιήσασθαι σεαυτοῦ, πέμψω σοι ἄνθρωπον οὐδὲν μὰ Δία Ἀριστίππῳ καὶ Πλάτῳ ὁμοιον, ἀλλ’ ἓνα τῶν Ἀθηνησὶ παιδαγωγῶν ἐξ ὧν ἔχω, δριμύτατα μὲν βλέποντα, ὀξύτατα δὲ βαδίζοντα, σκύτος δὲ ἀλγεινότατον φέροντα, ὃς σε μὰ Δία ἐπιτρέψει τὸ μὴ καθ’ ὥραν ἀναπαύεσθαι καὶ πρῶτ’ ἐγείρεσθαι, παύσας φόβων καὶ δειμάτων [...] (ed. Malherbe 1977).

⁵³ σκύτους οὖν δεῖ σοι καὶ σεσπότου [*sic*; I read δεσπότου], οὐχ ὅς σε θαυμάσει καὶ κολακεύσει· ὥς ὑπὸ γε τοιοῦτου ἀνθρώπου πῶς ἂν τίς ποτε ὠφελῇθῃ, ἢ πῶς ὁ τοιοῦτος ὠφελήσῃε τινα; εἰ μὴ ὥσπερ ἵππον ἢ βόυν κολάζει τε ἅμα καὶ σωφρονίζει, φροντίζει τε τῶν δεόντων. ἀλλὰ σύ γε πόρρω ἦκεις διαφθορᾶς, οὐκοῦν ἀναγκαῖον τομάς τε καὶ καύσεις καὶ φαρμακείας ποιῆσθαι.

⁵⁴ See D.L. VI 70 = SSR V B 291: διττὴν δὲ ἔλεγε [*sc. Diogenes*] εἶναι τὴν ἄσκησιν, τὴν μὲν ψυχικὴν, τὴν δὲ σωματικὴν ταύτην καθ’ ἣν ἐν γυμνασίᾳ συνεχεῖ γινόμεναι φαντασῖαι εὐλυσίαν πρὸς τὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἔργα παρέχονται. εἶναι δὲ ἀτελὴ τὴν ἑτέραν χωρὶς τῆς ἑτέρας, οὐδὲν ἦττον εὐεξίας καὶ ἰσχύος ἐν τοῖς προσήκουσι γενομένης, ὥς περὶ τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ περὶ τὸ σῶμα.

⁵⁵ Goulet-Cazé (1986: 54); translated from French.

Knowing that one must be indifferent to the blows of Fortune or Destiny is absolutely not enough to be really so. If such knowledge is not supported by voluntary and rigorous training to confront the *ponoi*, it remains a dead letter, incapable of producing a moral act on its own. [...] In this way, *askēsis* plays the role of an indispensable auxiliary of reason, ensuring its practical effectiveness; it also appears to be the very condition of virtue in action.⁵⁶

Diogenes' famous eccentricities, such as hugging a snow-covered statue or rolling around on hot sand,⁵⁷ can be understood as part of a physical *askēsis* to prepare for the threats of fate.⁵⁸ These acts are a kind of bodily self-injury. In this sense, Cynic philosophy requires its practitioners to undergo physical pain. For Cynics, philosophy without pain is a mere 'dead letter' that lacks efficacy.

Of course, we cannot say that Plato was not engaged in physical training in general. He was a gifted wrestler⁵⁹ and his ideal state imposed gymnastic training on philosophers (*R.* 403c–412a). Nonetheless, he recommended that exercise should be gentle and reasonable (or, to exaggerate somewhat, even 'pleasurable'). That is largely because, in Plato's scheme, physical exercise functions only as a preliminary to mental works, helping one's soul to be more well-ordered (*R.* 410b–412a). The Cynics, conversely, appear to have committed themselves to more directly 'painful' exercises, which deviated from the usual framework of gymnastics. Furthermore, such exercises are supposed not merely to prepare but to 'complete' the mental *askēsis* (cf. *D.L.* VI 70 = *SSR* V B 291). The Cynics presented their philosophy as a 'steep and troublesome' (προσάντη τε καὶ δύσκολον) but 'short' (σύντομος / ὀλίγη) path that leads to happiness or virtue; in contrast, Platonic philosophy was 'smooth and easy to follow' (λείαν τε καὶ ῥαδίαν), yet circuitous and 'long' (πολλή).⁶⁰ This analogical antithesis, although oversimplified, seems legitimate in the main. Plato and Diogenes differ significantly in the definition of the *ponoi* they impose upon themselves and their disciples. For the former, *ponos* only denotes 'mental work' or 'healthy exercise'. For the latter, it also means 'physical pain'.⁶¹ Plato certainly did not cause this kind of 'pain' for most of his disciples. Even when he seems to have approved of some bodily punishment for corrective purposes,⁶² Plato likely confined his

⁵⁶ Goulet-Cazé (1986: 151); translated from French.

⁵⁷ Plu. *Apophthegmata Laconica* 233A = *SSR* V B 177; *D.L.* VI 23 = *SSR* V B 174; 34 = *SSR* V B 176. See also Diog. [*Ep.*] XXX 3 = *SSR* V B 560: ἵνα σε [sc. Diogenes] πρὸς ἄμφω συνασκήσω [sc. a *hetairos* of Socrates, alluding to Antisthenes], καὶ καῦμα τὸ ἀπὸ θερμείας καὶ ψῦχος τὸ ἀπὸ χειμῶνος.

⁵⁸ For the connection between hugging statues and gymnastic training, see Borthwick (2001). It seems that Diogenes intentionally distorted the gymnastic convention and rendered it painful.

⁵⁹ See Riginos (1976: 41–42).

⁶⁰ Greek expressions are taken from Pseudo-Diogenes' *Thirtieth Epistle* 2 (= *SSR* V B 560). See e.g. *D.L.* VI 104 = *SSR* V A 135; VII 121 = *SSR* V A 136; Diog. [*Ep.*] XII = *SSR* V B 542; XXXVII 4–6 = *SSR* V B 567; Crates Theb. [*Ep.*] VI = *SSR* V H 93; XIII = *SSR* V H 100; Them. *Περὶ ἀρετῆς*. See Emeljanow (1965), Foucault (2009: 189–193) and Prince (2017) for further discussions.

⁶¹ See Montanari (2015: s.v. πόνος).

⁶² E.g. *Pl. Prt.* 325d–e; *Lg.* 764b, 879c–e, 881c–d, 882a–b. See also some anecdotes collected by Riginos (1976: 155–156).

concern to the matters of upbringing or criminal penalties. Therefore, whether we can rightly term it ‘philosophical pain’ is highly doubtful.

4. Conclusion

In the preceding analysis, I have assessed several hypotheses to explain the ‘philosophical pain’ that Diogenes refers to in the two testimonies presented. First, Plutarch interpreted this ‘pain’ purely psychologically as a mental trigger that drives the youth towards further philosophical activity. His view is unconvincing, however, because Plato, who ‘never caused anyone pain’, also seems to have recognised the motivational power of the mental pain associated with philosophy. If we were to follow Plutarch’s interpretation, then, Diogenes’ criticism of Plato would miss the point.

Second, Stobaeus approached the issue from the perspective of the close connection between *parrhēsia* and philosophy: telling the truth as a philosopher often results in hurting someone. Nevertheless, again, the difficulty emerges that Plato does not appear indifferent to *parrhēsia* in general. To examine this problem further, I introduced in Section 2 a distinction between two kinds of *parrhēsia*: ‘telling the truth’ and ‘openly making abusive remarks’. Plato and Socrates, while deeply committed to the former, were thoroughly opposed to the latter because their philosophy called for the maintenance of an interactive dialogue (or collaboration). In contrast, Diogenes, who had no philosophical reason to support dialogue, resorted to one-sided and unavoidable insults to drag the lukewarm masses into the arena of philosophical criticism. Diogenes, therefore, clearly differed from Plato in inflicting completely passive pain on his targets.

Third, I called attention to the Cynic doctrine of ‘double *askēsis*’, which demands that philosophers experience corporeal pain. While Plato also emphasised physical *ponoi*, that was only in the sense of ‘exercise’. In contrast, Diogenes recognised the significance of *ponoi* in the sense of ‘pain’. This approach offered him a harsh but economical shortcut to happiness, unlike Plato’s speculative philosophy, which was circuitous and required much time. To summarise, the ‘philosophical pain’ caused by each philosopher can be arranged into the following schema:⁶³

⁶³ Note that (1) the distinction between active and passive pain is based on the perspective of the sufferer and (2) this schema does not consider whether the philosopher himself is a sufferer (mainly because the experience of ‘philosophical pain’ could gradually transform the sufferer into a new philosopher who would, in turn, hurt another sufferer).

Classification of Philosophical Pain

	PARTLY ACTIVE	COMPLETELY PASSIVE
MENTAL	E.g. recognising one's ignorance	E.g. being dragged onto the Cynic stage
PHYSICAL	E.g. exercise/self-injury	E.g. bodily punishment/ injury done by others

The pain involved in Plato's philosophy is either active and mental (i.e. mental pain that sufferers somewhat voluntarily choose) or qualified and physical (i.e. healthy exercise and, if any, corrective chastisement; the former, however, is in a sense pleasurable and the latter is, at best, incidental). Contrarily, the pain caused by Diogenes covers at least three cells of the schema without qualification: active and mental, passive and mental (see Section 2 *supra*) and active and physical (see Section 3 *supra*). Concerning passive physical pain, some qualifications may be required. Certainly, Diogenes always exposed himself to assault by rogues;⁶⁴ it seems possible to call this 'passive physical pain'. However, we should note that he was deliberately trying to experience such pain, at least in part.⁶⁵ Therefore, in Diogenes' case, the distinction between active and passive physical pain is obscure and not overly enlightening.

In conclusion, the Cynic criticism of Plato reported in the two testimonies considered here has rightly (but elusively) highlighted a decisive point of contention between the two sides. While the Cynics' appeal to 'philosophical pain' might sound rather radical or violent, such dire paradoxicality enabled them to complement Plato and illuminate his blind spots from an idiosyncratic perspective. Therefore, even though (or even because) our moral standards can no longer be reconciled with Cynic vandalism, its philosophical importance remains today.

There are further considerations for future studies. First, this article has not assumed any substantial diachronic change in Plato's philosophy and referred to his diverse works as roughly unitary. In my view, and only within the scope of the preceding discussion, Plato's opinions did not fundamentally change throughout his career. However, this belief needs to be justified by specific research. Second, we cannot say that the various interpretations of 'philosophical pain' dealt with in this article exhaust all the possibilities. Several factors remain untouched and require further exploration. To give just one example, the Cynic claim of the necessity of 'pain' may have constituted a euphemistic critique

⁶⁴ See e.g. SSR V B 456–7; D.L. VI 33 = SSR V B 412; 41 = SSR V B 57; 42 = SSR V B 483; 43 = SSR V B 169; 89 = SSR V H 36; 90 = SSR V H 35; Diog. [Ep.] XX = SSR V B 550.

⁶⁵ See e.g. D.L. VI 54 = SSR V B 456: ἐρωτηθεὶς τί θέλοι κονδύλου λαβεῖν, 'περικεφαλαίαν,' ἔφη [sc. Diogenes].

of contemporaries other than Plato, especially the hedonistic Cyrenaics. Interestingly, the *Twenty-Ninth Epistle* 1, quoted in Section 3, refers to Plato alongside Aristippus, the founder of the Cyrenaic School.⁶⁶ Since the ‘Plato’ depicted in Cynic anecdotes is often a highly vulgarised figure,⁶⁷ we could regard him as the exact equivalent of Aristippus or the epitome of hedonism, his respectable dialogues notwithstanding.⁶⁸ In any case, however, the issue of ‘philosophical pain’ has such broad implications that these cannot be exhausted by such a facile interpretation alone.

⁶⁶ For Aristippus among the Cynic epistles, see Hock (1976: 48–53).

⁶⁷ The Cynic-caricatured Plato built an immoral relationship with tyrants. See *SSR* V B 55–56, 58–59, 559, 576.

⁶⁸ Aristippus and Plato were generally at loggerheads in the anecdotal tradition, as shown by various testimonies collated by Riginos (1976: 101–108). However, Cynic radicalism blurs the differences between them.

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The Pain of Philosophy: A Cynic Objection to Plato

According to the apophthegm reported by Plutarch and Stobaeus (SSR V B 61), Diogenes the Cynic accused Plato of ‘causing pain to no one’ during his long philosophical career. This article considers whether this critique of Plato is accurate by examining previous interpretations and proposing others. First, Plutarch understood the ‘pain’ required by Diogenes as a psychological motivator that drives the young to study hard. This interpretation, however, is implausible because Plato does not seem unfamiliar with this treatment of ‘pain’. Second, Stobaeus connected pain with *parrhēsia*, likely supposing that a philosopher should tell the truth even if it hurts his audience. Nevertheless, his account needs further clarification since Plato also emphasises the importance of *parrhēsia*. To resolve the problem, this article proposes a distinction between two kinds of *parrhēsia*: ‘telling the truth’ and ‘openly making abusive remarks’. Unlike Plato, the Cynics occasionally resort to the latter, which causes sufferers completely passive pain. This kind of pain is certainly alien to Plato’s philosophy, which presupposes some active participation by sufferers. Finally, the article introduces the Cynic concept of *askēsis* to illuminate another aspect of ‘philosophical pain’. While Plato confines his *askēsis* to mental labour or moderate physical exercise, the Cynics also demand that individuals undergo physical pain in the course of *askēsis*. In conclusion, the article argues that Diogenes’ objection to Plato is apt, at least in light of two antithetical natures of ‘pain’: passive/active and physical/mental.

KEY WORDS

Plato, Diogenes the Cynic, Cynicism, philosophical pain, *parrhēsia*, *askēsis*.

Amore del corpo e amore dell'anima in due testi platonici

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Per il compleanno di Livio Rossetti

Cerca di essere il più bello possibile
(*Alc. I* 131d4)

Curar molto la virtù, ognuno per sé,
sia l'amante che l'amato
(*Smp.* 185b7–c4)

Il tema in discussione

Confronto qui due passi, uno dell'*Alcibiade I*, uno del *Simposio*, sul rapporto da porre fra amore del corpo e amore dell'anima a parere, rispettivamente, del Socrate protagonista del primo dialogo e del retore Pausania, secondo fra quanti prendono la parola nell'altro testo. Problemi vari e rilevanti stanno dietro a questi passi, ma non riprenderò, per ragioni di spazio, l'ampio *status quaestionis* che già li ha riguardati. Non discuterò il rapporto fra il Socrate di Platone e quello storico, né, perciò, valuterò se quanto poi qui

dovesse risultarci vada ascritto al primo e non anche all'altro e, semmai, in che misura; non tratterò in generale l'*eros*, né per come emerge dai *Dialoghi* platonici che ne parlano (tutti, forse, da rimeditarsi), né per chiarire se e quanto il Socrate storico li anticipasse; non rivedrò il tratto storico-sociale dell'amore omosessuale e pederastico, di cui i due testi trattano, sia perché m'interessa meno del connesso suo tratto *filosofico*, sia appunto perché già assai discusso¹. Ultima, non meno importante questione che non tratterò è l'autenticità, da due secoli discussa, dell'*Alcibiade I*: gli antichi non solo mai dubitarono ch'esso fosse di Platone, ma lo valorizzarono fino a farne – forse per il sottotitolo *Sulla natura dell'uomo* – il primo da studiare nelle scuole di filosofia².

È stato proprio ri-traducendo e commentando l'*Alcibiade I*, che, fra le molte ragioni addotte a favore e contro l'autenticità, mi sono imbattuta in un interessante tentativo di sostenerla proprio accostando i due passi che sonderò: l'analogia fra essi rilevabile nel privilegiare l'amore rivolto *all'anima più che al corpo*, dunque fra un dialogo platonico sicuro e basilare come il *Simposio* e il discusso *Alcibiade I*, deporrebbe – insieme con altri dettagli – per la platonicità anche di questo³.

Un nesso fra i due dialoghi è certo a partire dalla figura di Alcibiade, presente in entrambi, e dal suo tormentato rapporto con Socrate: l'*Alcibiade I* mette in scena il primo scambio tra il filosofo e il giovane aristocratico ateniese, ricco, bello e soprattutto ambizioso, e si chiude con una promessa di vicinanza e reciprocità nel praticar la filosofia a cui il giovane s'impegna: "può darsi – dice – che noi stiamo per fare uno scambio delle parti, Socrate: io prendo la tua, tu la mia. Non ci sarà modo, da oggi in poi, che io non ti segua come se fossi il tuo maestro e tu l'allievo che impara da me... Vedrai, sarà proprio così: perché io da ora inizierò a darmi cura della giustizia"⁴. Il *Simposio* denuncia, per bocca dello stesso Alcibiade, un rapporto fra i due invece ormai finito e del cui fallimento il giovane si prende la responsabilità; confessando il turbamento sempre indottogli dai discorsi di Socrate, dice non aver nulla da opporre alla loro denuncia di una sua ambizione politica mal riposta: non riesce però, appena lontano dal maestro, a non farsi lusingare dal consenso popolare (*Smp.* 216b2–5).

Se dunque certo è il legame fra i due testi, m'interessa sì il problema dell'autenticità dell'*Alcibiade I*, ma, più ancora, sondare proprio lo snodo che la proverebbe: è vero, come si è appunto sostenuto, che Socrate nell'*Alcibiade I* e Pausania nel *Simposio* affermano *lo stesso* circa la priorità di amar l'anima rispetto al corpo? Oltre le indubbie analogie testuali che vedremo, è *lo stesso* il senso *filosofico* delle tesi del vecchio maestro e di quelle

¹ V. in merito, fra gli altri, Dover (2020), ma anche già Foucault (1976: 345–355; 575–618).

² Discuto più distesamente l'autenticità in Napolitano (2024: 215–230).

³ Tentativo p.es. di Pradeau (2000: 212, n. 135), rapidamente discusso già in Napolitano (2024: 360–361).

⁴ Pl. *Alc. I* 135d–e, la trad. italiana qui e in seguito è la mia in Napolitano (2024), così i corsivi nelle citazioni testuali. Subito Socrate ribatte di temere la forza della città, che potrebbe – contro le buone intenzioni ora espresse del giovane – sopraffare entrambi: amara profezia *post eventum* se l'*Alcibiade I* – chiunque ne sia l'autore – risulta scritto *dopo* che entrambi erano morti, Alcibiade nel 405 a.C. per mano persiana, e Socrate nel 399 per la forza giudiziaria di Atene.

del retore? Per capirlo partiamo ricostruendo in breve personaggi, contesti e contenuti dei due passi.

Pl. *Alc.* I 131c–e

L'*Alcibiade I* è un serrato scambio fra Socrate e il giovane, noto e anzi assai presto chiacchierato aristocratico ateniese, che programma, come il suo status sociale gli consente, di andare in assemblea a consigliar gli Ateniesi, dunque di darsi alla politica⁵. Lo scambio qui messo in scena e che Socrate precisa sia appunto il loro primo approccio (*Alc.* I 103a4) è da porsi prima delle campagne militari ateniesi di Potidea (432 a.C.) e di Delio (424 a.C.), dove i due si supportarono condividendo perfino la tenda e salvando l'uno all'altro la vita: dunque si parlano qui per la prima volta un Socrate poco più che quarantenne e un Alcibiade circa ventenne. Gli ambiziosi progetti del giovane di aver successo politico son subito smentiti dalle domande di Socrate: Alcibiade non sa infatti dire da chi, quando, dove abbia acquisito il sapere che dovrebbe abilitarlo a consigliar validamente gli Ateniesi e mostra un'imbarazzante ignoranza (*Alc.* I 109a), non sapendo neanche se e come si leghino bello e giusto, necessari invece in sede etico-politica (*Alc.* I 115a–116d)⁶. La sua è anzi "l'ignoranza più vergognosa" (*Alc.* I 118b5) poiché vuol far politica – cioè darsi cura degli altri – prima di esservi stato educato – cioè di aver curato se stesso: e dovrà misurarsi non solo coi concittadini, ma più ancora con nemici temibili, pieni di risorse, come Spartani e Persiani (*Alc.* I 121b–124a). Socrate gli argomenta allora che gli serva qualche *cura di se stesso* (*Alc.* I 127e) e che, per attuarla, debba anzitutto continuare a farsi domande e provar a rispondervi.

Il rapporto anima-corpo che c'interessa emerge proprio entro il tentativo di chiarire "cosa voglia dire prendersi cura di se stessi (τί ἐστὶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι)" (*Alc.* I 127e8), perché le forme di cura dirette a denaro e potere, tradizionali nell'Atene del tempo, sbagliano oggetto, non arrivando a curare e migliorare *il sé* (*heauton*) cui invece si vuol dar cura (*Alc.* I 128a)⁷. Certo infatti non cura il suo piede chi cura le scarpe che ad esso pertengono, né la sua mano chi ne cura gli anelli che son "cose della mano"; non sono calzoleria ed oreficeria a curar piedi e mani, bensì la ginnastica, specifica a tutelare la loro salute e funzionalità, essendo così essa sola la "giusta cura": questa è l'*epimeleia* che sa render migliore, come natura consente e vuole, il proprio specifico oggetto, non

⁵ L'impressione che tempra e bravate del giovane, orfano di padre e affidato a Pericle come tutore, fecero agli Ateniesi risulta dalle fonti biografiche, soprattutto dalla plutarchea *Vita Alcibiadis*: le sondo in Napolitano (2024: 203–315). Significativo è il giudizio che Aristofane mette in bocca al Dioniso delle sue *Rane* (Ar. *Ra.* 1425), secondo cui Atene stessa desidera Alcibiade "ma lo odia: però vuole averlo"; al che il poeta Eschilo ribatte che non va allevato in città "un cucciolo di leone", ma, se lo si fa, bisogna adattarsi ai suoi costumi.

⁶ Ho sondato questo passo, complesso e spesso visto anzi come fallacia e spia d'inautenticità, già in Napolitano (2021).

⁷ Lo snodo echeggia *Ap.* 29c2–30b4, dove Socrate dice perfino vergognoso, per chiunque, curarsi di denaro, fama e onore più che dell'anima, per renderla la migliore possibile. Anche su tale passo di *Ap.* devo rinviare a Napolitano (2018: 242–246).

altri (*Alc. I 128b*). Quindi, precisa Socrate ad Alcibiade, “non è quando ti dai cura delle cose che appartengono a te che ti dai cura di te stesso” (*Alc. I 128d4*).

Come però non migliora la scarpa chi non sa cosa una scarpa sia, così non si cura né si migliora chi ignori se stesso. Socrate incalza: “è forse facile conoscer se stessi ed era uno dappoco chi ha inciso quel motto sul tempio di Delfi, o è cosa difficile e non da tutti?”⁸; e prosegue che, facile o no che tale autoconoscenza sia, “*se sappiamo chi siamo, conosciamo subito anche quale sia la cura da darci di noi*” (γνόντες μὲν αὐτὸ τάχ’ ἄν γνοῖμεν τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν), invece, se non conosciamo noi stessi, non conosciamo neanche la cura” (*Alc. I 128e8–129a9*)⁹. Il problema diventa a questo punto come trovare l’*heauton* che ogni uomo è.

Esso viene reperito tramite un serrato argomento per esclusione: a una ricerca a tutto campo di cosa l’uomo sia si profilano quattro ipotesi, che sia anima, che sia corpo, che sia il loro insieme intero (συναμφότερον, τὸ ὅλον τοῦτο), o che non sia nulla (*Alc. I 130a*). L’ultima ipotesi non è neanche considerata, ma le prime tre son esaminate tramite un criterio basilare: la distinzione, già emersa, fra “chi si serve di qualcosa (ὁ χρώμενος)” e “ciò di cui si serve (ὃ χρήται)” (*Alc. I 129c*), col dettaglio, ora nettamente rilevato e condiviso, ch’essi sono, come tali, *sempre diversi*¹⁰. Il criterio è esteso anche all’uomo e al suo corpo: come il calzolaio *usa* non solo il trincetto per tagliare e il cuoio che taglia, ma anche gli occhi per guardar quanto taglia e le mani per tagliarlo, così *in ogni atto che compie l’uomo usa il suo corpo come strumento*; può perciò intanto dirsi “ciò che si serve del corpo (τὸ τῷ σώματι χρώμενον)” (*Alc. I 129e10*): ma ciò che si serve del corpo non è altro che l’anima (*Alc. I 130a1*). Anima e corpo allora costituiscono sì di certo un intero (συναμφότερον, τὸ ὅλον τοῦτο), dove non svolgono però le stesse funzioni, proprio perché l’una cura e dirige, l’altro è curato e diretto (*Alc. I 130b*). Se poi, come dialogando si è fin qui concordato, usante (curante, dirigente) e usato (curato, diretto) son *sempre diversi*, anche l’uomo è diverso dal suo corpo, nel senso che non si riduce ad esso ed è semmai la sua anima che usa il corpo ad agire “dirigendolo (ἄρχουσα)” (*Alc. I 130a2*). Allora è l’anima la parte “più propria” o “più direttiva” (κυριώτερον – *Alc. I 130d5*) dell’essere umano ed è essa che il ‘conosci te stesso’ delfico ci spinge a conoscere (*Alc. I 130e8–9*)¹¹. La serrata compattezza, qui, del dialogo è talora vista come spia d’inautenticità,

⁸ È una delle 2 o 3 occorrenze, nel testo, del celebre ‘conosci te stesso’ delfico: *Alc. I 129a*, *130e*, *132d*, che prendono peso filosofico rispetto alla significatività originaria, legata forse solo a un’autoconsapevolezza delle domande da fare all’oracolo.

⁹ Ancora v. trad italiana e commento in Napolitano (2024: 345–348). La conoscenza di sé è il primo passo di chi voglia curarsi di sé.

¹⁰ La distinzione figura in poche righe più volte (*Alc. I 129c4*, *d6*, *e5*) parendo dunque nuova e la si deduce dal dialogare visto esso stesso come “far uso di parole (τὸ λόγῳ χρῆσθαι)” (*Alc. I 129c1*). Per tali snodi, v. ancora Napolitano (2024: 348–350).

¹¹ Su ciò devo rinviare ancora Napolitano (2024: 350–357), dove tali passi son tradotti e commentati. Mi colpisce che tale direttività della *psyche* (ribadita in *Phd.* 79e–80a, e *Ti.* 44d) somigli all’odierna direttività del cervello, che, leso in uno dei centri corticali, rende impossibile l’agire di organi periferici pure intatti. La conclusione che l’uomo “non è altro che anima” (*Alc. I 130c3*) significa poi non – come spesso creduto – che l’uomo sia per Platone *solo* anima, ma che lo è *principalmente* (v. Pradeau (2000: 211–212, n.126): la *psyche*, proprio come l’attuale *mind*, è il suo vero sé che lo dirige appunto ad agire. Tale distinzione fra anima (curante, dirigente)

ma sortisce esiti filosofici chiari quanto rilevanti: la competenza dell'anima nel dirigere il corpo all'agire come uno strumento di cui si serve, il suo identificarsi con l'*heauton* cercato e la sua basilarità nel definire chi dunque ognuno di noi basilarmente sia (snodi con difficoltà credibili come non platonici).

A tali basi teoriche consegue la precisazione che c'interessa sull'amore rispettivamente del corpo e dell'anima:

SOCRATE: E allora se qualcuno s'innamora del corpo di Alcibiade, non è Alcibiade che ama, ma una delle cose che ad Alcibiade appartengono (...) *Ama [proprio] te, invece, chi ami la tua anima?* (ὅστις δέ σου τῆς ψυχῆς ἐρᾷ;) (...) Quindi chi ama il tuo corpo, quando la sua bellezza smette di fiorire se ne va e ti lascia? (...) Mentre invece *chi ama la tua anima non se ne va finché essa si muove verso il meglio?* (ὁ δέ γε τῆς ψυχῆς ἐρῶν οὐκ ἄπεισιν, ἕως ἂν ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον ᾗ;) (...) Allora quello che non se ne va, ma resta anche quando il tuo corpo sfiorisce, sono io, ora che gli altri se ne sono andati¹². ALCIBIADE: Fai bene, Socrate: e che tu non te ne vada! SOCRATE: E *tu cerca di essere il più bello possibile* (προθυμοῦ τοίνυν ὅτι κάλλιστος εἶναι)¹³. ALCIBIADE: Ci proverò... [Alc. I 131e9] SOCRATE: *uno solo ama proprio te, mentre gli altri amavano le cose appartenenti a te. Queste però sfioriscono: mentre tu proprio ora stai iniziando a fiorire* (μόνος ἐραστὴς ἦν σός, οἱ δ' ἄλλοι τῶν σῶν: τὰ δὲ σὰ λήγει ὥρας, σὺ δ' ἄρχῃ ἀνθεῖν) (Alc. I 131c3–d7; 131e9–10).

Il passo spicca in un dialogo dove – si è eccepito – Socrate, diversamente dal suo solito, sarebbe freddo, distante, mostrando poco amore per l'interlocutore. Echeggia però qui l'inizio del testo e dello scambio, che vedeva solo il filosofo fedele a un fin lì silenzioso amore per Alcibiade mentre gli altri suoi amanti l'avevano lasciato, forse però non per loro incostanza quanto a causa della sua superbia: Socrate può ora esplicitare le ragioni di quella sua pertinace fedeltà, tutte strettamente legate a tesi appena concordate dialogando e dunque *fondate filosoficamente*¹⁴. Se vero sé di ogni uomo è l'anima e se anche Alcibiade è anzitutto anima, ama *proprio lui* non chi ne ami il corpo, ma chi ne ama appunto l'anima; quando smette di fiorire la bellezza appartenente a ciò che, come il corpo, è non il vero sé, ma solo cosa del sé, chi ama quel corpo smette anche lui di amare e lascia l'amato; Socrate promette che invece – vero questo suo amore *diverso*,

e corpo (curato, diretto) è però detta per ora sufficiente ma non rigorosa (Alc. I 130c–131a): si è indicato infatti l'*heauton* di ogni uomo, l'anima appunto, ma ancora non la si è descritta nel dettaglio.

¹² I molti amanti del bell'Alcibiade l'han lasciato solo. Per brevità, lascio nella citazione i puntini di sospensione per gli assenti, ogni volta, di Alcibiade, non secondari, ma necessari perché Socrate sviluppi il suo argomento. V. la trad. italiana completa del passo in Napolitano (2024: 359), e il commento (Napolitano 2024: 360–361).

¹³ L'amore di Socrate, pur diverso da quello di tutti gli altri amanti del bell'Alcibiade, è però *sub condicione*: egli aveva esordito (Alc. I 104e–105a) dicendo che avrebbe smesso di amare il giovane se l'avesse visto accontentarsi di quanto già ha; similmente qui esplicita la sua attesa di una risposta *attiva* da parte dell'amato: egli non lo lascerà finché la sua anima (il suo vero sé) "vada verso il meglio" (Alc. I 131d1–2).

¹⁴ Fatico a credere che un *eros* filosoficamente fondato sia segno di freddezza o distanza da parte del Socrate di Platone: la cosa, legata forse al banalizzato luogo comune dell'amor platonico, andrebbe almeno rimeditata e verificata.

per un oggetto diverso e vero – non smetterà di amar l'anima di Alcibiade, cioè Alcibiade stesso, purché però la sua anima “vada verso il meglio” (ἔως ἂν ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον ἦ – *Alc. I* 131d1–2) e finché egli si sforzi “di essere il più bello possibile” (ὅτι κάλλιστος εἶναι – *Alc. I* 131d6).

L'autenticità di tale amore consegue allora al fatto ch'esso è diretto proprio alla *psyche* di Alcibiade, che si è appena mostrato dialogando essere il suo *heauton*, ciò ch'egli davvero e primariamente è; anche la pertinacia di tale amore consegue al suo dirigersi sul destinatario anima e non al corpo, che non solo è “cosa del sé”, ma, se fosse esso oggetto di quell'amore, indurrebbe l'amante, allo sfiorire della bellezza, ad abbandonar l'amato; questo di Socrate non è però un amore incondizionato, a prescindere da un'attiva risposta dell'amato: esso durerà finché l'anima di Alcibiade proceda verso il meglio ed egli miri appunto ad essere “il più bello possibile”, non nel corpo, ma in quello che dialogando si è appena mostrato essere il suo vero sé, nell'anima appunto¹⁵.

Pl. *Smp.* 180c3–185c3

La particolarità *filosofica* di tale *eros* risalta raffrontando il passo con uno simile del *Simposio*¹⁶: questo figura entro il tentativo di Pausania di motivare omosessualità e pederastia basando il rapporto amante/amato (*erastes/eromenos*) sul fine comune di acquisire e praticare virtù. Pausania è “retore politico, che parla con grandi abilità doxastiche e pedagogiche”¹⁷; è però semi-sconosciuto: fu amante del bel drammaturgo Agatone, cui lo legò un rapporto duraturo, e non si può stabilire se fu autore di uno scritto su *eros*, che proprio questo intervento nel *Simposio* imiterebbe¹⁸. La torsione etico-pedagogica che vuol dare a una pratica sociale corrente si radica nell'impianto educativo del *sym-pothēin*, del bere insieme, sfondo importante anche di questo testo platonico¹⁹: all'inizio è proprio Pausania a invitare i simposiasti a bere “con misura” (*Smp.* 176a5), pur motivando il consiglio col dirsi provato dalla bevuta della sera prima, il che lo conferma *habituée* di quelle riunioni.

Apri poi il suo discorso notando che il tema in discussione, cioè lodare amore, non è ben posto: la scelta del medico Erisimaco sulla scia di Fedro (*Smp.* 177a2–d5) gli pare

¹⁵ “Non abbellire il tuo aspetto, ma sii bello nelle cose che fai” era raccomandazione già di Talete di Mileto (DK 10, 3, d3), non supportata ancora, però e come qui, da una teoria della *psyche*. La condizione posta qui all'amore di Socrate spiega forse il fallimento del rapporto fra lui ed Alcibiade: il giovane, antepoendo – come confessa nel *Simposio* – consenso e potere ai discorsi di Socrate, certo non si è sforzato di “andare verso il meglio”, né di essere – nell'anima – “il più bello possibile”.

¹⁶ Come detto, lo fa Pradeau (2000: 213, n.135). Non è il solo tentativo di trovar paralleli dell'*Alcibiade I* non coi dialoghi giovanili, ma con quelli della maturità: è in effetti vari indizi smentiscono la lettura corrente che l'*Alcibiade I*, se è di Platone, sia un dialogo giovanile (su cui v. ancora Napolitano (2024: 215–230).

¹⁷ Così Reale (1993: 6).

¹⁸ Così Susanetti (1995³: 51). Per il rapporto con Agatone v. *Smp.* 193b; *Prt.* 315d–e, e anche il *Simposio* senofonteo (VIII 32); per l'ipotesi dello scritto su *eros*, v. Dover (1965: 11).

¹⁹ In merito v. già Rossetti (1976).

vada “raddrizzata”, dicendo “*prima* quale sia l’amore da lodare” (*Smp.* 180d2–3) e che solo poi lo si lodi come a quel dio conviene. Distingue perciò due diversi Eros²⁰: vero infatti che Afrodite, dea della bellezza, non è senza amore, se ella fosse una, uno sarebbe anche Eros; due invece sono le Afroditi, la più antica, celeste o urania, generata dallo sperma di Urano, il Cielo, staccato dalla sposa Terra tramite una cruenta evirazione e nata quindi senza madre (ἀμήτωρ, 180d7), e un’Afrodite più giovane, *pandemos*, figlia invece di Zeus e Dione²¹. Vanno allora distinti anche due Eros, dove ciascuno è “compagno” (συνεργόν – *Smp.* 180e2) di ognuna delle due dee e ne riproduce gli effetti.

Pausania qualifica però anzitutto le azioni, non solo quelle amorose: secondo lui nessuna cosa è in sé buona o bella, ma diviene tale o no “nell’atto, nel modo in cui la si fa (ἐν τῇ πράξει, ὡς ἂνπραχθῇ)”, dunque bella “se la facciamo in modo bello e retto (καλῶς μὲν γὰρ πραττόμενον καὶ ὀρθῶς καλὸν γίγνεται)”, brutta se fatta “non rettamente (μὴ ὀρθῶς δὲ αἰσχρόν)” (*Smp.* 181a2–4). Perciò bello e lodevole è solo l’amore “che induce ad amare *in modo bello* (ὁ [ἴ]Ερως) καλῶς προτρέπων ἐρᾶν)” (*Smp.* 181a5–6)²².

Ora, l’Eros *pandemos* pare lo sia proprio perché “davvero è esteso a tutto (ἀληθῶς πάνδημός ἐστι) e agisce come capita (καὶ ἐξεργάζεται ὅτι ἂν τύχη)”²³: quest’Eros fa infatti amare *a caso*, “donne non meno che ragazzi” (*Smp.* 181b2–4), “*i corpi più delle anime* (ἐρῶσι τῶν σωμάτων μᾶλλον ἢ τῶν ψυχῶν)” (*Smp.* 181b4), cercar gl’interlocutori “meno intelligenti (ἀνοητοτάτων)” badando solo al rapporto fisico, senza curarsi se sia bello o no (*Smp.* 181b5–6). Questo amore si lega all’Afrodite più giovane, che “nella generazione partecipa sia della natura femminile sia della maschile” (*Smp.* 181b9–c2). Il secondo dei tratti qui ascritti a Eros *pandemos* lo pretende dedito “più ai corpi che alle anime”, dettaglio effettivamente avvicinabile a quanto letto sopra nell’*Alcibiade. I*: gli altri particolari, cioè amar donne come giovani maschi, sceglierli fra i meno intelligenti e mirar a un rapporto fisico purchessia, paiono, almeno fin qui, derivare dal suo tratto *estensivo* (*‘pandemico’*) e *appunto casuale* e non hanno riscontri puntuali nell’altro testo in esame.

Diverso è secondo Pausania l’Eros indotto dall’Afrodite Urania; anzitutto ella, proprio perché nata senza madre, non partecipa, come l’altra, della natura femminile – perciò il suo Eros si dirige ai giovani maschi – e, oltre che più antica, è anche “senza dismisura (ὑβρεως ἀμοίρου)”: gl’ispirati dal suo Eros non amano perciò a caso,

²⁰ *Symp.* 180c-185b, con le notazioni di Susanetti (1995³: 21, e 193–194, n. 30), nonché di Reale (1993: 9–11).

²¹ Per il legame Afrodite-Eros, v. la *Teogonia* esiodea (vv. 201–202); per le due Afroditi, rispettivamente ancora la *Teogonia* (vv. 188–206), e l’*Iliade* (V 370). Anche per il *Simposio* senofonteo (VIII 9) Afrodite *pandemos* indurrebbe amore per i corpi, Afrodite Urania amore per l’anima, l’amicizia e le belle opere (Susanetti (1995³: 194, n. 32).

²² Chiaro già da qui l’interesse etico-pedagogico, benché da definire siano questi pur insistiti *kalon* e *aischron*: forse Pausania, retore e non filosofo, non giunge a definirli. Interessante sarebbe un raffronto col difficile *Alc. I* 115a–116d, proprio su giusto, bello e buono, su cui v., come detto, Napolitano (2021).

²³ L’aggettivo *pandemos* (v. Liddell, Scott 1968, *ad v.*) vale “with the all people, in a mass or body”, ha cioè senso *estensivo* (qualifica una città, il consenso politico, o – ovviamente – una malattia) e così lo traduco: il senso però pare non in origine ma solo mediatamente *negativo*, come invece danno per scontato tutte le traduzioni che lo rendono con ‘volgare’. Che quest’Eros si estenda *indifferentemente su tutti* pare significhi per Pausania anzitutto *casualità* dell’oggetto d’amore e del modo in cui lo si ama.

ma “si volgono al maschio, nutrendo amore per chi è per natura più forte e dotato di più intelletto (ἐπὶ τὸ ἄρρεν τρέπονται οἱ ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ἔρωτος ἔπινοι, τὸ φύσει ἔρρωμενέστερον καὶ νοῦν μᾶλλον ἔχον ἀγαπῶντες)” (*Smp.* 181c5–6)²⁴. Quanti sono mossi solo da questo Eros si riconoscono “dall’amore pederastico stesso (ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ παιδεραστίᾳ)”: non lo rivolgono però a bambini ma a “quantità già iniziano ad aver intelletto (ἐπειδὴν ἤδη ἄρχονται νοῦν ἴσχειν)”, segnalato dalla prima barba, forse perché solo allora capaci di un corrispondere consapevole²⁵. Quanti amano così sono spinti infatti dal “voler condividere tutta la vita e vivere insieme (ἐρᾶν ὡς τὸν βίον ἅπαντα συνεσόμενοι καὶ κοινῇ συμβιωσόμενοι)”, non dalla spinta ad approfittare dell’ingenuità di un giovane, per ingannarlo e passar poi subito a insidiarne un altro (*Smp.* 181d3–7): sarebbe l’Eros *ouranios* a valere quindi la fedeltà amorosa che anche il Socrate dell’*Alcibiade I* teorizza e pratica verso il giovane interlocutore²⁶. Pausania pensa perfino a una legge – come quella che vieta di amar le donne libere (*Smp.* 181e6) – che impedisca di amare un bambino, per non darsi cura di chi ancora non si sa se sarà virtuoso “sia nell’anima che nel corpo (κακίας καὶ ἀρετῆς ψυχῆς τε πέρι καὶ σώματος)” (*Smp.* 181e2–3): è anzi questa una sorta di legge non scritta che i buoni si darebbero già da sé (*Smp.* 181e3–4)²⁷. Gli amanti pandemici invece, in assenza di tale legge, vanno diffondendo l’idea che sia brutto corrispondere chi ama: che sia meglio compiacere chi *non* ama era forse un’idea allora circolante, che figura in effetti nel discorso del retore Lisia letto a Socrate nel *Fedro* (*Phdr.* 230e–234c) e che il filosofo poi smonta, sostenendo, d’accordo con Pausania ma – ancora – con ragioni *filosofiche*, che degno di Eros sia semmai corrispondere chi davvero ama (*Phdr.* 242d–243b).

Pausania fa poi una deviazione socio-etnografica, per noi meno interessante, sui vari modi correnti della pederastia (*Smp.* 182a–d): in Elide, nella Beozia e a Sparta vige gran libertà di costumi, in assenza però di *logoi* che ispirino condotte diverse; sulla costa turca invece il regime tirannico persiano vieta la pederastia (insieme con filosofia e ginnastica), temendo il rischio rivoluzionario dei forti legami indotti da tali prati-

²⁴ Per la prima volta l’oratore segnala, riflettendo un sentire corrente all’epoca, una *superiorità maschile* come maggior forza fisica e intellettuale e una correlata superiorità dell’*eros* per i maschi: prima aveva qualificato la bisessualità, comune all’epoca, come effetto dell’estensività casuale dell’Eros *pandemos*. Non aveva, per esso, parlato prima neppure di *hybris*, cioè di violenza ed eccesso, pur possibile ricaduta dell’incurante “come capita”. La *hybris* era esclusa dal galateo dell’amore pederastico: p.es. i guai dei Labdacidi tebani, cioè della famiglia di Edipo, iniziarono perché – com’è noto – suo padre Laio, sposo di Giocasta, possedette con la forza un giovane Crisippo (v. Kerényi (1989: 315–316).

²⁵ Se l’Alcibiade del dialogo omonimo ha 18–20 anni, è perfino oltre la prima barba, maturo, come qui da Pausania precisato quale merito per ricevere interesse amoroso; sull’iniziare, poi, ad aver intelletto, il Socrate dell’*Alcibiade I* dice di non aver parlato prima al giovane anzitutto per il “divieto demonico” (*Alc. I* 103a5–6), ma anche perché prima Alcibiade non l’avrebbe ascoltato (*Alc. I* 105e), non avendo forse ancora, per farlo, abbastanza “intelletto”.

²⁶ Nota questo parallelo con l’*Alcibiade I* già Susanetti (1995³: 195, n. 34).

²⁷ Il rinvio di Susanetti della nota precedente è motivato proprio da questa precisazione su un *nomos* che gli *agathoi* si darebbero da sé, di non amareggiare con bambini: il Socrate dell’*Alcibiade I* certo ha fatto questo fin lì astenendosi dal parlare con Alcibiade, forse però per ragioni solo in parte simili a quelle addotte da Pausania (v. *supra* n. 24).

che²⁸. Ad Atene pare viga un costume migliore, ch'è però poco chiaro (*Smp.* 182d4–5): l'amore palese è creduto sì migliore di quello furtivo, pur diretto ai brutti ma più nobili e virtuosi, è apprezzato poi “lo straordinario incoraggiamento da tutti dato all'amato (ἡ παρακέλυσσις τῷ ἐρῶντι παρὰ πάντων θαυμαστί)” (*Smp.* 182d8) e si dà a chi ama gran libertà di fare e dire qualunque cosa per ottenere il suo fine (*Smp.* 182e–183c). Tutto ciò fa credere *comunque* bella la risposta amorosa, ma contrasta poi con restrizioni e divieti sociali imposti ai giovani *eromenoi* (*Smp.* 183c–d): in tale quadro contraddittorio Pausania vuol allora stabilire – veri i principi iniziali posti – che la risposta amorosa è brutta se concessa in modo cattivo a chi è cattivo, bella se data in modo buono a chi è buono (*Smp.* 183d4–8). Proprio qui figurano i dettagli testuali più avvicinabili all'*Alcibiade I*:

cattivo è quindi l'*erastes* pandemico che *ami il corpo più dell'anima* (ὁ τοῦ σώματος μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐρῶν) e non risulta neanche costante se *ama cosa che, come il corpo, costante non è* (καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ μόνιμός ἐστιν, ἅτε οὐδὲ μονίμου ἐρῶν πράγματος); allo sfiorire della bellezza fisica (ἅμα γὰρ τῷ τοῦ σώματος ἄνθει λήγοντι), oggetto del suo amore, infatti “si dilegua al volo” [Hom. *Il.* II 71]), smentendo con vergogna i molti discorsi e le promesse fatte. Al contrario, l'amante di un carattere che sia buono resta per la vita intera (ὁ δὲ τοῦ ἡθους χρηστοῦ ὄντος ἐραστῆς διὰ βίου μένει), poiché ama un che di costante (ἅτε μονίμῳ συντακεῖς) (*Smp.* 183d8–e7)²⁹.

Un raffronto verso la conclusione

I paralleli testuali fra i due dialoghi sono dunque evidenti e molteplici: anzitutto “il fiore della bellezza” fisica quale oggetto esclusivo d'amore in entrambi attira il cattivo *erastes* e però, quando inizia a sfiorire, lo spinge a tradire le promesse fatte e ad abbandonare l'amato. Già abbiamo trovato altre analogie: Socrate ha atteso ad avvicinare Alcibiade quando lo vede capace di ascolto e Pausania vuole che l'*eromenos* sia abbastanza maturo da rispondere all'amore con intelletto. Socrate sollecita in Alcibiade un'attiva “bellezza interiore” e Pausania pare perfino ossessionato da quanto – anche e forse soprattutto l'amore – sia da agire solo “in modo retto”. Scopo del rapporto erotico è per il Socrate dell'*Alcibiade I* acquisire virtù e anche per Pausania bello è ogni amore purché alla virtù miri (*Smp.* 185b4–5): secondo lui però non un impegno personale del proprio sé ma l'Eros celeste “costringe ad aver gran cura della virtù, ognuno per sé di sé, sia l'amante sia l'amato (πολλὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἀναγκάζων ποιεῖσθαι πρὸς ἀρετὴν τὸν τε ἐρῶντα αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν ἐρώμενον)” (*Smp.* 185b8–c1)³⁰.

²⁸ La forza antitirannica dell'amore pederastico sarebbe provata dall'uccisione, ad Atene nel 514 a.C., di Ipparco, fratello del tiranno Ippia, da parte dei tradizionalmente celebrati amanti Armodio e Aristogitone (*Smp.* 182c4–7). V. Reale (1993: 175, n. 48), e Susanetti (1995³, 195–196, nn. 36 e 37).

²⁹ Susanetti (1995³: 196, n. 44), cita proprio i passi paralleli di *Alc.* I 131e–132a, e quello del *Simposio* senofonteo (VIII 14).

³⁰ Ho messo – non per caso – i due passi in esergo.

Per indubbie che siano queste analogie, vi sono però fra i due passi anche delle differenze, non secondarie e anzi secondo me rilevanti soprattutto in sede filosofica. Pausania fa, sull'amore diretto a corpo o ad anima, una questione di *quantità*, perché il cattivo *erastes* ama "più" (μᾶλλον) il corpo dell'anima, dettaglio che ripete due volte e che proprio la ripetizione attesta sia per lui centrale³¹. Il Socrate dell'*Alcibiade I* non appare invece interessarsi a *quanto* amore sia rivolto al corpo o all'anima e a quale dei due di *più*: egli piuttosto nega recisamente che si volga *proprio* all'amato l'amore diretto al suo corpo, vero che – come prima ha argomentato con l'assenso di Alcibiade – l'*heauton* dell'amato, come di ogni essere umano, stia invece basilarmente nell'anima. Pausania parla sì di *psyche* e *soma*, ma nell'ultimo passo citato, il più determinante a sostenere il parallelismo fra i due testi, usa invece *ethos* (carattere), non *psyche*, termine che non è neanche tenuto a conoscere nel peso filosofico che assume in Platone³². Del resto, vero che già per Eraclito il dèmone dell'uomo stia nel suo *ethos*, cioè – forse – nell'anima (fr. 119), un ἦθος χρηστός può, secondo Pausania (come secondo Alcibiade), venire tradizionalmente da una nascita aristocratica, non dall'innovativa cura filosofica della bellezza interiore argomentata e consigliata qui da Socrate. Del resto, per quanto chiaro sia sulla virtù e su un rapporto duraturo come fine degli amanti, Pausania nulla dice su *che cosa* di preciso fondi tale auspicata virtù o renda *kalon* ogni cosa e azione e quindi – se non soprattutto – l'amare. L'appello di Socrate a una bellezza dell'anima che Alcibiade dovrebbe coltivare come risposta personale e attiva al suo amore consegue invece a ben precisi *argomenti filosofici* sulla conoscenza e cura di quell'*heauton* che è – soltanto ora fondatamente come esito del loro dialogare – la *psyche*: Pausania invece, che pure voleva fosse definita la *natura* di Eros prima di lodarlo, nulla sa dirne oltre a legarlo miticamente all'Afrodite Urania, priva di madre ed esente perciò da limiti creduti tradizionalmente femminili quali minor forza e intelligenza. Il suo discorso rispecchia forse un dato sociale, che avallava il legame erotico fra maschi a fini prestazionali, super-erogatori, politici e militari, come quelli poi pretesi dagli amanti combattenti nel battaglione sacro tebano, motivati a non mostrarsi vili sul campo sotto gli occhi dell'amato³³. La presenza del suo discorso nel *Simposio* mostra che Platone aveva presente quel dato sociale e non credeva inutile lavorarvi sopra filosoficamente con esiti differenti.

Per il Socrate dell'*Alcibiade I* è infatti l'impegno continuo a far fiorire l'anima, ch'è appunto nostro vero *heauton*, opposto al decadere della bellezza e giovinezza fisiche, a garantire un'amabilità durevole del suo portatore; è questo il cuore *filosofico* del passo dell'*Alcibiade I*, oltre ad analogie testuali pur innegabili col *Simposio*. Quell'intenso ed enigmatico "cerca di essere il più bello possibile", con cui Socrate esorta Alcibiade, suppone cura attenta e costante e – prima ancora – la spinta erotica radicale e filosoficamente declinata proposta nel *Simposio* dalla sacerdotessa Diotima, non dal retore Pausa-

³¹ V. Pl. *Smp.* 181b4; 183e1.

³² Anche se Carlo Diano, nella trad. italiana figurante in Susanetti (1995³: 87), ridà *ethos* di *Smp.* 183e3 proprio con "anima": "chi invece ama l'anima, ch'egli vede gentile [...]".

³³ V. p.es., su varie fonti antiche e fra altri, Compton (1994).

nia. Un simile *eros* è di certo platonico e figura non solo nel *Simposio* ma anche nel *Fedro*, dove l'amore dell'*erastes* diviene forma di cura all'*eromenos*, che, durando nel tempo, lo coinvolge in un consimile amore di risposta: il suo esito è, per i due amanti, anche qui pratica costante della virtù³⁴. Paiono allora non i dettagli testuali concernenti un simile *eros*, ma la proposta filosofica forte che lo riguarda a fondare – forse – l'autenticità dell'*Alcibiade I* e a rilanciare un interesse a comprendere meglio, oggi, senso e valore del tanto discusso e troppo spesso banalizzato amor platonico.

³⁴ V. Pl. *Phdr.* 255a–b; 256b; 256d–e.

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Love for the Body and Love for the Soul in Two Platonic Texts

In the Platonic *Symposium* the rhetorician Pausanias celebrates celestial love, directed *to a greater degree* to the soul rather than the body and which involves the lover and the beloved in the practice of a common virtue. This passage has been put in parallel with *Alcibiades I*, where Socrates maintains that authentic love is directed *not* towards the body but the soul. He says he loves Alcibiades with such a love: therefore he urges the young man to correspond to him by seeking to be "as beautiful as possible", with an inner beauty that, unlike that of the body, will not fade. Undoubted textual analogies allow us to link the two texts: nevertheless the meaning of Socrates' argument in *Alcibiades I* seems much deeper than that of Pausanias. It is based on the demonstration that man's true self is the soul, capable of love and lovable only if is the object of constant care (*epimeleia heautou*). If anything, it is this philosophical thesis – as also the *Phaedrus* demonstrates as Platonic – that can establish the authenticity of *Alcibiades I*.

KEY WORDS

Plato; Socrates-Alcibiades; Pausanias; body-soul; physical beauty-inner beauty; self-care-virtue

The Sight-Lovers of *Republic V* and Plato's Critique of their Ontology

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I. Introduction:

At the end of *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13), Plato initiates a discussion which is intended to ultimately ‘define’ (διορίσασθαι) who the ‘philosophers’ (φιλόσοφοι) are that Socrates has just suggested in 473c11–e4 that must rule the city.¹ Briefly, the argument in this stretch of text is the following.² Socrates begins with the claim that the philosopher is the ‘lover of learning’ (φιλομαθής). He is a person who has an insatiable appetite for every kind of learning. Glaucon counters that if this proposal is accepted, then the definition seems to encompass many ‘strange people’ (ἄτοποι). It will, for instance, include the ‘sight-lovers’ (φιλοθεάμονες) as they take pleasure in ‘learning’ (καταμανθάνειν)

¹ I agree with Nehamas (2024) that it would be a mistake to assume that in R. V 474b3–480a13 Plato offers a complete picture of the philosopher. Rather, in this stretch of text he launches the project of explaining who the philosopher is, and he goes on to complete it in books VI and VII.

² What follows is only a rough outline of the overall argument in R. 474b3–480a13. For some detailed treatments of it, see e.g., Annas 1981: ch. 8; Baltzly 1997; Fine 1978; Gosling 1968. In more recent literature the focus is usually on R. 477c1–478b2 which contains Plato’s ‘powers argument.’ On this argument, see e.g., Moss 2021: ch. 2, esp. pp. 52–61; Smith 2019: ch. 3.

things.³ The rest of the ensuing argument, in 475e2 ff, leads up gradually to a particular final conclusion: ‘knowledge’ (γνῶσις) is directed towards ‘what is’ (τῷ ὄντι); on the other hand, ‘opinion’ (δόξα) is directed towards that which lies between ‘what purely is’ (τοῦ εἰλικρινῶς ὄντος) and ‘what in every way is not’ (τοῦ πάντως μὴ ὄντος);⁴ some thinkers, such as the sight-lovers, deny the existence of Forms, e.g., that of the ‘Beautiful itself’ (αὐτὸ καλόν), where these are understood to remain always the same in every respect;⁵ the Forms, then, are the things which purely are; hence, the object of knowledge are the unchanging Forms; people like the sight-lovers admit only the existence of sensible objects such as the ‘many beautiful things’ (τὰ πολλὰ καλὰ); but, these things, unlike the Form of Beauty, ‘appear’ (φανῆναι) to be beautiful ‘in a way’ (πῶς) and also to be ugly in a way; these things are to be placed between ‘being’ (οὐσίας) and ‘not being’ (μὴ εἶναι); it follows that those who contemplate these objects, as, for instance, the sight-lovers do, are only lovers of opinion; philosophers contemplate those things which are always the same in every respect, the Forms; therefore, it is the philosophers who are the true lovers of knowledge.⁶

The argument sketched out above gives rise to a number of familiar and closely related puzzles, e.g., ‘What does Plato have in mind when he asserts that ‘ignorance’ (ἄγνοια)

³ As we will see in part II, some clarifications are required about who Plato considers to be the potential claimants to the title of the philosopher. For the time being though, it suffices to note that the subsequent discussion, see esp. *R.* 478e7–479e8, seems to focus on the sight-lover’s claim.

⁴ There is an ongoing debate over whether Plato’s epistemological concerns in the middle dialogues, e.g., in the *Republic*, are the same as ours; see, for instance, Moss 2021; Fine 2004. I am sympathetic to Moss’ (2021: esp. 234–242) view that in these works ἐπιστήμη/γνῶσις is not the same as knowledge as this is understood by contemporary epistemology, and δόξα is different from our opinion/belief. However, I cannot broach this thorny issue here. For the sake of convenience, I adopt the standard translations of ‘ἐπιστήμη’/‘γνῶσις’ and ‘δόξα’ as ‘knowledge’ and ‘opinion’, respectively, but without making any assumptions about their epistemological significations. I also steer clear of questions regarding Plato’s use of some related terms, such as ‘μανθάνω’ and ‘γινώσκω’.

⁵ I follow the convention of capitalizing the term ‘Form’, and I refer to a particular Form, e.g., that of beauty, as ‘the Form of Beauty’ or ‘Beauty itself’/‘The Beautiful itself’.

⁶ In the analysis above, I assume, along with other interpreters, e.g., Annas 1981: 195; Cross, Woolley 1966: 140 ff; Smith 2012: 68, that in *Republic* V (*R.* 474b3–480a13) Plato uses expressions such as ‘what (purely) is’ and ‘X itself’ to refer to Forms. As is well known, however, other interpreters, e.g., Fine 1978, Nehamas 2024, take it that to make such an assumption is to saddle Plato with a blatant mistake. If he does appeal to the Forms in our passage, then he clearly begs the question against his opponents, the sight-lovers. A discussion of this interpretive conundrum would be a project in itself; it cannot be undertaken here. Nonetheless, it is only fair that I sketch out my argument against the opposing view, that in book V Plato does not appeal to the Forms. This argument is based on three points. First, there is evidence in *Republic* V 474b3–480a13, see esp. *R.* 476b9–d3, which strongly suggests that the Forms do feature in it. Second, it is certainly true that in our passage Plato does not assume that his audience is familiar with the full-blown theory of the Forms; he presents elements of this version of the theory later on, in books VI and VII. And third, the charge that if he does refer to the theory of Forms then he begs the question against his adversaries may be readily deflected. We need to acknowledge that Plato’s goal in *Republic* V 474b3–480a13 is not to present a decisive argument against the sight-lovers. He is only trying to make the first steps towards specifying who the philosophers are. Thus, he simply assumes that there is a distinction to be made between those who admit the existence of Forms, the philosophers, and those who deny their existence, e.g., the sight-lovers (*R.* 476a10–d3). And, on the basis of this distinction, the foundations of which the sight-lover would naturally want to challenge, he proceeds to argue that thinkers like the sight-lovers have no knowledge but only opinion. Yet, as we will see in the main body of the paper, there is no point in *Republic* V (*R.* 474b3–480a13) where Plato engages in a direct and systematic attempt to determinately discredit the sight-lovers’ (ontological) position. This is something that he does in book VII, or so I argue in part IV.

is directed towards 'what is not' (μὴ ὄν)?', and 'How exactly are we to parse the claim that knowledge is directed towards what is?'⁷ The objective of this paper, however, is to address a different set of questions: 'Who are the sight-lovers of *Republic V*?'; 'Do they maintain some kind of coherent ontological position?'; and, 'If they do, then what exactly is its content, and how does Plato attempt to discredit it?'.

To anticipate briefly, in what follows I intend to do four things. First, it will be argued that, despite some indications to the contrary, *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13) shows that the sight-lovers cannot be straightforwardly identified with some group of non-philosophers or laypersons who refuse to accept the theory of Forms. They advocate a position which is quite sophisticated. Specifically, they maintain that the objects of our everyday experience are clusters or bundles of things such as sounds, colors, shapes, and sizes. Second, we have just seen that in *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13) Plato supposes that the sight-lovers reject the existence of Forms, and they accept that the things which do exist are the objects of our ordinary experience. As has been noted, such an object may appear to be in a way big and in a way small, or in a way beautiful and in a way ugly. It will be shown that Plato presents his own approach to this issue, that of how a sensible thing may admit 'opposites' (ἐναντία), in the *Phaedo* (Phd. 102a11–103a3). Third, we will see that this discussion in the *Phaedo* may facilitate our effort to (a) place the sight-lovers' theory in its proper setting, and (b) parse its finer details. Plato assumes that his adversaries uphold a view about the nature of sensible objects that is very different from the one he develops in the *Phaedo*. In particular, the sight-lovers adopt a view which merges (1) a naïve understanding of reality, whereby there are no abstract entities and the objects of our perceptual experience are clusters of mere things, with (2) the Heraclitean postulate for the compresence of opposites, or so it will be argued here. Furthermore, the collective textual evidence suggests that this is a thesis that Plato himself builds up, and ascribes to a certain group of people he tags as the 'sight-lovers', so that he may scrutinize it and eventually rebut it. Finally, it will be shown that his actual critique of the sight-lovers' ontology comes in an unexpected place. He spells out the main problem facing this kind of position in *Republic VII* (R. 523a5–524d4), in the context of explicating his thesis on how the consideration of 'summoners' (τὰ παρακαλοῦντα) compels the 'soul' (ψυχή) to appeal to 'understanding' (νόησις) and thus draws it to 'reality' (οὐσία), the realm of the Forms.

II. A First Look at the Sight-Lovers' Ontology:

As was pointed out above, in *Republic V* Plato asserts that the sight-lovers refuse to accept the existence of Forms, and they maintain that the things that do exist are the objects of our ordinary perceptual experience. One may suppose that this is not a thesis

⁷ On these questions, see, for instance, Moss 2021: esp. ch. 3; Smith 2019: e.g., pp. 47–52.

held by some organized school of thought in philosophy. That is to say, one may take it that the sight-lovers' view, as this is described in our text, is just a statement of the layperson's reaction to the theory of Forms. I intend to show that: (a) Some of the evidence in *Republic* 474b3–480a13 indicates that this could be a plausible conjecture about the identity of the sight-lovers; but (b) The very same text suggests that regardless of who the sight-lovers are, the fact is that they advocate a position that is an ontological theory in its own right.

Before we proceed with our discussion we need to clarify one important preliminary point. In *Republic* 475d1–e1 Glaucon points out that if we accept Socrates' initial proposal, that the philosopher is the lover of learning, then we will be forced to count among the ranks of philosophers all sorts of people. We will have to admit that the sight-lovers, the “sound-lovers” (φιλήκοοι) and all “those who learn similar things or petty crafts are philosophers” (R. 475d8–e1). Yet, as the effort to specify who the real philosophers are progresses (see e.g. R. 476b4–7) Plato focusses his attention on just the sight-lovers and the sound-lovers. What is also worth noting is that in 478e7–479e8, which contains the main thrust of his argument against the false pretenders to the title of the philosopher, even the sound-lovers drop out of the picture. Immediately afterwards, in 479e9–480a8, Plato states that the preceding discussion, in 478e7–479e8, has shown that those who love sounds and colors “and other such things” (καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα) are not philosophers. Nevertheless, the argument of 478e7–479e8 itself seems to be directed only against the sight-lovers. It is fair then to make two assumptions. First, Plato supposes that the main pretenders to the title of the philosopher are the sight-lovers, the sound-lovers, and all the other lovers of perceptions, where these are the people who maintain that knowledge/learning is to be derived from the evidence of the senses, e.g., from things seen and heard. And second, in 478e7–479e8 he takes it that to undermine the claim to the title of the philosopher made by the lovers of perceptions it suffices to argue against the sight-lovers' claim. In light of the above, it should be understood that throughout this paper the label ‘sight-lovers’ is intended to cover all lovers of perceptions, i.e., all those who hold that perception is the source of knowledge/learning.^{8,9}

What is Plato's quarrel with the sight-lovers? In *Republic* 478e7–479e8 he sketches out his objection to their claim to the title of the philosopher. The sight-lover does not admit the existence of Forms, e.g., those of Beauty and Justice, and he “would not allow anyone to say that the Beautiful itself is one or that the Just is one or any of the rest” (οὐδαμῇ ἀνεχόμενος ἄν τις ἐν τῷ καλὸν φῆ εἶναι καὶ δίκαιον καὶ τᾶλλα οὕτως – R. 479a3–5). He

⁸ As has already been noted, I assume that in *Republic* 478e7 ff Plato's intention is not to offer a definitive argument against the sight-lovers' view. His argument is based on a number of assumptions, e.g., that the Forms do exist and that they are the object of ‘knowledge’ (γνῶσις), which the sight-lover may, at this stage of the discussion, readily challenge. Rather, Plato's primary aim in our text is to begin his account of who the (real) philosophers are. In part IV, we will see that his critique of thinkers such as the sight-lovers is presented in *Republic* VII (R. 523a–524d4).

⁹ For an alternative approach to the same issue, the relation between the sight-lovers and the other pretenders to the title of the philosopher in *Republic* V (R. 474b3–480a13), see Nehamas 2024.

takes it that there are only the many beautiful and just things of our perceptual experience (R. 479a3).¹⁰ But, Plato points out, the sight-lover acknowledges that there is not even one of these many sensible beautiful objects which does not, in a way, also appear to be ugly (R. 479a5-b1). Such an object is thus 'ambiguous' (ἐπαμφοτερίζει). It is not possible for one to 'understand' (νοῆσαι) it to be 'fixedly' (παγίως) beautiful, or fixedly ugly, or (fixedly) both or neither of these things (R. 479b10-c5). Hence, Plato tells us, it transpires that "the many conventions of the many (τῶν πολλῶν) about beauty (...) are rolling around (κυλινδεῖται) as intermediates between what is not and what purely is" (R. 479d2-4).¹¹ Moreover, in the next few lines, in 479d6-e4, he asserts that those who study the many beautiful things, where these are presumably the sight-lovers, are not really concerned with the 'knowable' (γνώστον), the object of philosophy, but just with the 'opinable' (δοξαστόν).

In *Republic* 479d2-e4 Plato does in effect identify the sight-lovers with 'the many' (οἱ πολλοί), where these may be assumed to be the aggregate of the thinking non-philosophers who refuse to accept the theory of Forms. It should also be noted that the fact that he is in open debate with these people would not in itself justify the claim that they are associated with any particular school of thought in philosophy. Having stated this much, we ought to carefully consider *Republic* 476b4-7:

The lovers of sights and sounds like (ἀσπάζονται) beautiful sounds (φωνάς), colors (χρόας), shapes (σχήματα), and everything constructed/fashioned out of them (καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων δημιουργούμενα), but their thought (διάνοια) is unable to see and embrace the nature (φύσιν) of the Beautiful itself.

In these lines Plato records his familiar point of disagreement with the sight-lovers, that they deny the existence of Forms. Nevertheless, what is important to notice is the first part of the statement above. Plato asserts that his adversaries like sounds, colors, shapes and all the things that are constructed out of them. Given this claim, I would like to submit that he ascribes to them a particular kind of theory. In *Republic* 476b4-5 Plato states that his opponents admit the existence of things such as (beautiful) sounds, colors and shapes. These are some of the various attributes we associate with the concrete particulars or the objects of our everyday experience.¹² Furthermore, it is clear that the assumption made is that all of these attributes are accessible to us via our senses. Most notably, however, the sight-lover seems to be making a philosophically significant claim

¹⁰ For the sake of convenience, in what follows I confine the discussion to Plato's usual example, that of Beauty itself and the many beautiful sensible things.

¹¹ The obvious and interesting question which we cannot, and need not, address here is that regarding the sense or the senses of the Greek verb 'to be' Plato employs in *Republic* 474b3-480a13. On this issue, see the discussion and the references provided in Moss 2021: 94.

¹² In what follows I use the terms 'object' and 'concrete particular' interchangeably. I assume that they refer to the things we encounter in ordinary life, e.g., individual statues, human beings and houses. Furthermore, I assume that these are the sensible things towards which, Plato tells us, opinion is directed.

about the nature of concrete particulars. He holds that there is a distinction to be made between such items and the attributes they have or possess. Concrete particulars and the attributes associated with them belong to distinct ontological categories. As we are told in 476b5–6, the sight-lover takes it that an object has some kind of structure or complexity. It is an item that has been constructed out of other more fundamental or more fine-grained entities. To be more specific, we are told that the sight-lover maintains that sounds, colors and shapes are the things out of which other entities are ‘constructed/fashioned’ (δημιουργούμενα), where, it is only plausible to assume, these are the objects of our sensory experience.¹³ Hence, I would like to suggest that our text warrants the claim that in the sight-lovers’ ontology the objects of our everyday experience are collections or clusters of attributes, namely, things such as sounds and shapes. To give an example, in this kind of ontology Helen of Troy is the cluster of, let us say, paleness, tallness and facial symmetry.¹⁴

The thesis Plato attributes to the sight-lovers is reminiscent of a certain type of approach to a well-known and persistent puzzle in metaphysics. The issue in question is that of providing a credible ontological analysis of familiar concrete particulars, e.g., entities such as Helen of Troy or the desk right in front of me. Most philosophers suppose that an object is a whole made up of more basic or fundamental constituents.¹⁵ Thus, some of them, the ‘substratum theorists’, take it that such a whole has two kinds of constituents. These are the various attributes which are associated with the specific concrete particular, along with a bare substratum which serves as the bearer of these attributes.¹⁶ On the other hand, we have the ‘bundle theorists’ who suppose that an object is nothing more than a bundle, or a cluster, or a collection of attributes. Thus, according to this view, a particular ball is nothing more than a bundle of attributes such as the color blue, the spherical

¹³ I take it that Plato’s choice of phraseology at *Republic* 476b5–6, “... χρώας καὶ σχήματα καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων δημιουργούμενα”, instead of a construction such as “... χρώας καὶ σχήματα καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔχοντα αὐτά”, is deliberate. As is proposed above, it is intended to show that things such as shapes and sounds are the ontological building blocks out of which concrete particulars are constructed.

¹⁴ To anticipate a possible objection, one could protest that this is not a fair reading of *Republic* 476b4–7, and that the view Plato ascribes to the sight-lovers is not, so to speak, ontologically loaded. That is to say, one could assume that the claim in our passage is something along the following lines. The sight-lover likes, let us say, certain beautiful colored paints as well as the items a skilled ‘craftsman’ (δημιουργός), a painter, may fashion out of them, e.g., a beautifully painted statue of Zeus. Yet, the sight-lover is utterly incapable of engaging in a philosophically meaningful discussion that may help him grasp the nature of Beauty itself. There are several difficulties with this suggestion. I will outline what I think is the most obvious one. This reading of the text could accommodate some cases of artefacts. Nonetheless, it is evident from the overall discussion at the end of *Republic* V, see esp. 478e7–479a8, that the sight-lover’s view encompasses both artefacts and persons. In light of this, it is hard to see how one could understand the assertion that a person is ‘constructed’ (δημιουργούμενο) out of things such as colors and shapes, as well as things such as tallness, justice and piety, in an ontologically innocuous manner. Therefore, I assume that the interpretation suggested above, whereby the sight-lover upholds the particular ontological theory, is the one that best fits all of these cases. For further (indirect) support of the claim that this is indeed the sight-lovers’ position, see the discussion in part III.

¹⁵ One exception to this view is austere nominalism which assumes that concrete particulars are completely unstructured wholes; see e.g., Quine 1954.

¹⁶ Versions of this position have been suggested by J. Locke, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and in the last century by B. Russell (1956), and G. Bergmann (1967).

shape, and the weight of 40 kilograms.¹⁷ And, the suggestion made here is that the sight-lovers of *Republic V* adopt a thesis which is akin to what a contemporary metaphysician would label as a 'bundle theory'.¹⁸

Bundle theorists are notoriously divided over the issue about the nature of the constituents of a concrete particular. Some of them (e.g. Russell 1940), assume that the objects of our experience are bundles of universals. Some others (e.g. Williams 1967), take it that they are bundles of tropes. The question that is of interest here though, is that concerning the nature of the constituents of an object in the sight-lovers' ontology. What kind of entities are they? And, why do they give rise to objects which are, as Plato tells us, ambiguous? The textual evidence in *Republic V* appears too slim to allow any judgment on these issues. At the same time, I believe that it is still possible to shed some light on them.

III. The Finer Details of the Sight-Lovers' Ontology:

In *Republic V* (R. 478e7–479e8), Plato suggests that there is a difficulty with the sight-lovers' view. They reject the theory of Forms and they accept the existence of the objects of our perceptual experience, e.g., the many sensible beautiful things. Yet, Plato points out, the sight-lover admits that an individual beautiful thing is also in a way ugly. It is "not any more" (μή τι μᾶλλον) what we say it is, beautiful, than its "opposite" (ἐναντίον), ugly (R. 479b5–6). It seems to "participate in both" (ἀμφοτέρων ἔξεται) opposites (R. 479b7). Furthermore, Plato tells us, such an object in the sight-lovers' ontology is ambiguous. We cannot understand it to be fixedly beautiful, or fixedly ugly, or (fixedly) both or neither of these things (R. 479c3–5). It rolls around between being beautiful and being ugly (R. 479d3–4). Is Plato's complaint here simply that the sight-lovers deny the existence of Forms and accept only the existence of concrete particulars, where the latter are assumed to admit opposites and thus cannot be the object of knowledge? To properly address this question, we need to begin by taking a look at how Plato himself deals with the same issue, the fact that a sensible object *x* may admit opposite attributes.

In *Republic V* 476c6–d3 Plato makes an important admission. The philosopher is somebody who believes in the existence of the Form of Beauty, but he can 'see' (καθορᾶν) both the Form and the various objects which 'participate' (μετέχοντα) in it, and he does not confuse the two. In other words, the philosopher accepts the existence of Forms, the objects of knowledge, as well as the existence of the sensible concrete particulars, the objects of opinion. Moreover, we are told, since the philosopher acknowledges that both kinds of entities exist he does not live in a dream but in reality (R. 476d2–3).

¹⁷ Versions of the bundle theory have been advocated by e.g., D. Hume, in his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, B. Russell (1940), and D.C. Williams (1953).

¹⁸ For further details on both kinds of theories, substratum and bundle theories, and their diverse variants, see the discussions in Loux, Crisp 2017: ch. 3 and Koslicki 2018: 12–19.

In *Phaedo* 100c9–e3 Plato asserts that what makes a sensible object beautiful is the fact that it bears some kind of relation to the Form of Beauty. He concedes that he is not confident about what the nature of this relation is.¹⁹ Nonetheless, he states, he is certain that “it is through Beauty that beautiful things are made beautiful” (τῷ καλῷ τὰ καλὰ γίνονται καλά – *Phd.* 100e2–3). Following a discussion in *Phaedo* 100e8–102a10 which is aimed at providing further support for this last claim, Plato proceeds to tackle the issue of how an object may be said to admit opposite attributes.²⁰

Phaedo 102b4–d4 makes a series of related points. Socrates invites his interlocutors to consider the example of Simmias, Phaedo and himself, where Simmias is taller than he is but is shorter than Phaedo. In this case, we are told, it would seem that “there is both tallness and shortness in Simmias” (εἶναι ἐν τῷ Σιμμίᾳ ἀμφοτέρω, καὶ μέγεθος καὶ σμικρότητα – *Phd.* 102b5–6). Furthermore, Socrates adds, one may suppose that:

1. Simmias is not taller than Socrates because he is Simmias. That is to say, “it is not the nature” (οὐ πεφυκέναι) of Simmias to be taller than Socrates (*Phd.* 102c1–2). Nor is he taller than Socrates because this is the nature of Socrates, namely, to be shorter than Simmias. Rather, Simmias is taller than Socrates “because of the tallness he happens to have” (τῷ μεγέθει ὃ τυγχάνει ἔχων), and “because Socrates has shortness compared with the tallness of the other [i.e., of Simmias]” (ὅτι σμικρότητα ἔχει ὁ Σωκράτης πρὸς τὸ ἐκείνου μέγεθος – *Phd.* 102b8–c4).
2. Likewise, it is not the nature of Simmias to be shorter than Phaedo. He is shorter than Phaedo “because Phaedo has tallness compared with the shortness of Simmias” (ὅτι μέγεθος ἔχει ὁ Φαίδων πρὸς τὴν Σιμμίου σμικρότητα – *Phd.* 102c7–9).
3. Simmias “is called both short and tall” (ἐπωνυμίαν ἔχει σμικρὸς τε καὶ μέγας – *Phd.* 102c11–12). He “is [situated] between” (εἶναι ἐν μέσῳ) Socrates and Phaedo, “presenting his shortness to be overcome by the tallness of one, and his tallness to overcome the shortness of the other” (τοῦ μὲν τῷ μεγέθει ὑπερέχειν τὴν σμικρότητα ὑπέχων, τῷ δὲ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς σμικρότητος παρέχων ὑπερέχων – *Phd.* 102c12–d2).

The claim Plato is striving to establish here is that there is a coherent way in which Simmias may be said to be both tall and short. In *Phaedo* 102d5–103a2 Plato goes on to complete this task by elaborating on some key aspects of the points recorded above. He asserts that the Form of Tallness, being tall, cannot be short. It cannot ever be tall and short “at the same time” (ἄμα) (*Phd.* 102d6–7; e5–6). In a similar manner, he continues, “the tallness in us” (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος) will never “admit” (προσδέχεσθαι) the short or “be overcome” (ὑπερέχεσθαι) by it (*Phd.* 102d6–9). The tallness an individual man has, by

¹⁹ In *Phaedo* 100d4–6 he notes that he is prepared to entertain at least two possibilities: what makes a particular sensible object beautiful may be the ‘presence’ (παρουσία) of the Form of Beauty in it, or its ‘sharing’ (κοινωνία) in this Form.

²⁰ He proposes to do so, to deal with the issue of opposites, as part of his effort to show that the soul is immortal.

being in some kind of relation to Tallness itself, is “not willing to endure and admit shortness and be other than it was” (ὑπομένον δὲ καὶ δεξάμενον τὴν σμικρότητα οὐκ ἐθέλειν εἶναι ἕτερον ἢ ὅπερ ἦν – *Phd.* 102e2–3). As is further noted in 102e6–103a1, the tallness in us cannot ever “become” (γίγνεσθαι) or “be” (εἶναι) its opposite “while still being what it was” (ἔτι ὃν ὅπερ ἦν). In cases such as that of comparing Simmias to Phaedo, after we have first compared him to Socrates, what does happen is that the tallness in the particular individual “either flees and retreats when its opposite, the short, approaches, or it is destroyed by its approach” (ἢ φεύγειν καὶ ὑπεκχωρεῖν ὅταν αὐτῷ προσίῃ τὸ ἐναντίον, τὸ σμικρόν, ἢ προσελθόντος ἐκείνου ἀπολωλέναι – *Phd.* 102d9–e2; 103a1–2). Finally, and most importantly, Plato has Socrates make the following assertion: evidently, the tallness in an individual cannot admit shortness; yet, “... I admit and endure shortness and still remain the same person and am this short man” (ἐγὼ δεξάμενος καὶ ὑπομείνας τὴν σμικρότητα, καὶ ἔτι ὢν ὅσπερ εἰμί, οὗτος ὁ αὐτὸς σμικρὸς εἰμι – *Phd.* 102e3–5).

The overall thesis Plato argues for in *Phaedo* 102a11–103a2 seems to be the following. His fundamental underlying assumption is that a sensible object x has an attribute Φ because it bears some type of relation to Φ -ness itself, the Form of Φ . As we are told in 102a11–d4, the puzzle of explaining how an object may admit opposite attributes arises in contexts where we have to compare it to other things, e.g., cases such as that of Simmias, Socrates and Phaedo. Plato rejects the idea that Simmias is taller than Socrates and shorter than Phaedo due to the natures of the individuals involved.²¹ He maintains that: Simmias is taller than Socrates because of the tallness he happens to have compared to the shortness Socrates has; and, Simmias is shorter than Phaedo because of the shortness he happens to have compared to the tallness Phaedo has.

The metaphysical toolkit for explaining how a sensible object may unproblematically admit opposites is actually presented in *Phaedo* 102d5–103a2. Plato, we have just seen, holds that the Form of Tallness cannot admit its opposite. Likewise, he tells us, the tallness in a particular person cannot ever admit its opposite. It cannot become or be its opposite. To illustrate the intended point, let us consider the case of Simmias. Simmias is said to be taller than Socrates because he has the attribute of tallness when he is compared to Socrates who, in the particular context, has the attribute of shortness. But, what happens when we then compare Simmias to Phaedo, where Phaedo is taller than Simmias? Plato's claim is that the attribute of tallness Simmias has when he is compared to Socrates does not change or transform into shortness when he is compared to Phaedo. The attribute of shortness does not come out of tallness, and, for that matter, neither does tallness come out shortness. As we are told, when Simmias is compared to Phaedo, his attribute of tallness either goes away or is destroyed upon the arrival of its opposite, shortness, which replaces it.

²¹ I believe that the assertion here is that Simmias is neither essentially taller than Socrates nor essentially shorter than Phaedo. However, I will not attempt to defend this reading of the text on this occasion.

The crucial claim Plato makes is the one in *Phaedo* 102e3–5. He reiterates the point that an attribute such as tallness does not change/transform into its opposite, shortness. Subsequently, he suggests that the concrete particular which is Socrates is a persistent subject which undergoes change in the attributes it ‘happens’ (τυγχάνει) to have, namely, its accidental attributes. Socrates, who, let us say, is taller than Xanthippe, exchanges his attribute of being tall with its opposite, that of being short, when he is compared to Simmias. To spell things out a bit, it seems that Plato’s thesis is this. Suppose that Socrates is standing between Xanthippe and Simmias. Socrates is an underlying and persistent subject which may admit a number of different accidental attributes or properties.²² Thus, he admits the property of tallness when he is compared to Xanthippe. Specifically, he is taller than Xanthippe. When Socrates is then compared to Simmias, however, he loses the property of tallness which is replaced by that of shortness. In the particular context he is shorter than Simmias. It is an integral element of this view that it is not tallness which changes or transforms into shortness. Attributes do not come out of or do not change into their opposites.²³ Rather, it is the underlying and persistent subject, e.g., a human being, which undergoes change by exchanging one of its accidental properties with its opposite.²⁴

The issue we need to address next is that of how *Phaedo* 102a11–103e2 may shed light on the finer details of the sight-lover’s position. As we have seen, in *Republic* V (esp. *R.* 478e7–480a13), Plato does not make the effort to thoroughly parse his adversaries’ view. Yet, he does tell us, that a concrete particular x in their ontology is somehow both Φ and not- Φ , and it is thus ambiguous (e.g. *R.* 479b7 and b10).²⁵ *Republic* V 479b10–c5 is intended to clarify this claim. An object x in the sight-lovers’ ontology is such that: it is not fixedly Φ or fixedly not- Φ ; it is not possible to assert that x is clearly/determinately Φ , or that x is clearly/determinately not- Φ ; moreover, it cannot be said to be fixedly both Φ and not- Φ , e.g., in the sense that one part of it is determinately Φ whereas another part of it is determinately not- Φ ; nor can it be said to be (fixedly) neither of these two things; x is both Φ and not- Φ in a manner similar to that in which, for instance, a eunuch may be said to be both a man and not a man.²⁶ Finally, in *Republic* V 479c6–d5 we are effectively told that since x participates in both opposites, or, to use the terminology of *Phaedo* 102b5–6, since both of these opposites are present in it, x rolls around between (being) Φ and (being) not- Φ . And putatively, this is the reason x cannot be said to be determinately Φ or determinately not- Φ .²⁷

²² In what follows I use the terms ‘attribute’, ‘quality’ and ‘property’ interchangeably.

²³ Plato reiterates the same point in *Phaedo* 103a11–c4.

²⁴ It is worth noting that there are some obvious similarities between the thesis of *Phaedo* 102a11–103a2 and Aristotle’s views on qualified or non-substantial coming to be in *Physics* I (7–9) and *De Generatione et Corruptione* I (1–5).

²⁵ I use ‘ Φ ’ and ‘not- Φ ’ to refer to a pair of opposite attributes.

²⁶ I take it that this is the overall point of the riddle in *Republic* 479b10–c5.

²⁷ The material in *Republic* 479b7–d5 does not quite specify what the sight-lover’s position is, or what the fault Plato detects in it is. It only shows that a particular object x in the sight-lovers’ ontology is *somehow* both Φ

Given the material in *Phaedo* 102a11–103e2, we may assume that Plato has a way to overcome the kind of difficulty facing the sight-lovers' thesis, as this is sketched out in *Republic* 479b7–d5. If one accepts that there is an underlying and persistent subject, e.g., a human being, which admits an accidental attribute at one time or in one context, but then, at a different time or in a different context, loses it and admits its opposite, then one would not have to concede that such an entity is ambiguous. One would not have to concede that an object x is somehow both Φ and not- Φ , or that it cannot be said to be either determinately Φ or determinately not- Φ . Specifically, Plato may assert that x is determinately Φ at one time or in one context, and x is determinately not- Φ at another time or in a different context.

Let us now place these two views on concrete particulars, the Platonic one and that of the sight-lovers, in their proper setting. In *Republic* VII (R. 514a1–521c4) Plato presents his well-known allegory of the cave. Very briefly, he tells us that the philosopher is a certain kind of person: he was once enchained in the cave where all he could see were the shadows cast on the cave's wall; he was then released from his chains and made his way out of the cave and into the light of the Sun; thus, he acquired knowledge of the Forms; and now he is asked to return to the cave; he is required to give up philosophical activity, the contemplation of the Forms, in order to rule the city. To spell things out a bit, the philosopher is the type of person described in *Republic* V 476c6–d3. He admits the existence of the items in the cave, where these are the objects of our ordinary experience, the objects of opinion, as well as the existence of Forms, the unchanging objects of knowledge which occupy a realm distinct from that of the senses. He is asked to rule the city because he has a grasp of the whole of reality, the realm of the sensibles as well as the realm of the Forms (R. 476d2). Apparently, his knowledge of the entities in the latter domain allows him to do a number of things. For instance, in *Republic* VII 520c3–5 we are told that he can use the Forms as standards by which to properly understand and assess the true nature of their 'images' (εἰδωλα), where these are the concrete particulars of our perceptual experience. We may then assume that in *Phaedo* 102a11–103a3 Plato in effect presents what he takes to be the ontologically sound view about the nature of sensible objects. Evidently, this is the philosopher's position regarding such items. On the other hand, the sight-lover of *Republic* V, who refuses to accept the existence of Forms, is bound to have a defective or distorted grasp of the nature of these objects.²⁸ What remains to be specified is the difference between these two views on concrete particulars.

The collective textual evidence suggests that there is a sharp difference of approach between Plato and the sight-lovers when it comes to the structure of sensible objects.

and not- Φ , and thus it cannot be said to be fixedly or determinately either one of these two things. The remainder of this part of the paper attempts to further clarify the content of the sight-lovers' thesis, and in part IV it is argued that in *Republic* VII (R. 523a1–524d4) Plato gives us a far more lucid statement of the issue facing their ontology.

²⁸ Although the sight-lovers do not feature in the allegory of the cave, the fact is that in *Republic* VII (R. 520c3–d5) Plato does state that the philosopher-ruler, the person who admits the existence of both the sensible objects of our everyday experience and the Forms, has a distinct advantage over all cave-dwellers, where, it is plausible to assume, these include the sight-lovers. Unlike those who are unaware of the existence of the Forms,

To put the matter in contemporary philosophical parlance, Plato adopts some kind of substratum theory which is informed by his underlying theory of the Forms, whereas, as we have seen, the sight-lover adopts some type of bundle theory. For Plato there is a coherent way in which x may be said to be both Φ and not- Φ . In particular, x is an underlying and persistent subject which is qualified or modified by various accidental properties at different times and/or in different contexts by means of being related to the appropriate Forms. Hence, in *Phaedo* 102b4–103a2 we are told that: x is said to be (determinately) Φ in the sense that it has the property Φ in the context of being compared to y ; and, x is said to be (determinately) not- Φ in the sense that it has the property not- Φ in a different context, that of being compared to z .²⁹ But, why is it that the sight-lover, in contrast to Plato's philosopher, is assumed to have difficulties in coping with the issue of opposites within the confines of his preferred theory? A contemporary bundle theorist would be prepared to admit that a particular object, where this is nothing more than a bundle of attributes, may exchange one of these attributes for its opposite. To return to the *Phaedo* example, it would seem that on the basis of such a (modern) theory one could assert that a bundle of attributes such as Simmias encompasses tallness when he is compared to Socrates, but he loses tallness and acquires shortness when he is compared to Phaedo.³⁰ What is it about the sight-lovers' ontology which, according to Plato, renders its objects ambiguous?

Given the limited evidence in *Republic* V (474b3–480a13) it is difficult to see what the answer to this question could be. I would like to submit, however, that we have a plausible conjecture available to us which is in line with the reconstructions of *Republic* 476b4–7 and 478e7–480a13 suggested earlier on. A. Mourelatos (1973; 2008) has argued that Heraclitus' work is the first important reaction to a view commonly held by early Greek thinkers which he tags as the 'NMT = Naïve Metaphysics of Things'.³¹ This interpretive thesis assumes that many early Presocratic figures subscribed to an ontology in which there are "no abstract or dependent entities – no qualities, or attributes, or kinds, or modes of reality" (Mourelatos 2008: 300). According to the NMT, there are only items that satisfy the following postulates or requirements:

or who simply refuse to accept their existence, the philosopher-ruler is in a position to clearly grasp the nature of the objects in the cave, i.e., the concrete particulars. For an interesting discussion which directly relates to this theme, the philosopher's capacity to understand the true nature of concrete particulars by virtue of having knowledge of the Forms, see Moss 2021: 122–131.

²⁹ In light of this, I take it to be evident that Plato supposes that concrete particulars are subject to some type of tempered flux. I come back to the issue of flux, albeit briefly, in what follows.

³⁰ This is not to suggest that an object changing its properties does not give rise to problems for a modern bundle theory. On this matter, see the discussion in Loux, Crisp 2017: 90–94.

³¹ Mourelatos' article was first published in 1973. I will here refer to its 2008 revised version. Mourelatos actually argues that the philosophies of both Heraclitus and Parmenides are best understood as reactions to the NMT. For our purposes though, we need only consider the case of Heraclitus. It should also be noted that a similar interpretive thesis, for a Presocratic naïve metaphysics of things, was first suggested by W.A. Heidel (1906).

1. The *thinghood* requirement. A thing is that which presents itself "in physical (or perceptual) space" (Mourelatos 2008: 300).
2. The *equality of status and independence* requirement. Each thing is ontologically independent. It does not have any ontological dependency relations to anything else. Moreover, it is as real as every other thing in the world.
3. The *affinity and polarity* requirement. Some pairs of things cannot occupy the same region; they tend to exclude one another. On the other hand, some other things tend to go together.³²

Mourelatos (2008: 314–316) supposes that there are at least two clear examples of the NMT in the works of Presocratic figures. The first one is from Hesiod's *Theogony* and the second one is in Anaximander's fragment. Let us briefly consider the first one. In *Theogony* 748–754 Hesiod describes Day and Night as two distinct persons who share the same house. Moreover, he holds that they are never both present in the house at the same time. While Night is out of the house faring around the world, Day remains in it awaiting for the time of her own journey. When Night returns to the house, to wait for the time of her new journey, Day departs for her journey in the world. Mourelatos (2008: 314–315) supposes that Hesiod's Day and Night satisfy the requirements of the NMT. They are two separate persons who are presented in physical space. Hence, they satisfy requirement (1). They are independent of each other and have the same status. That is to say, they are two distinct persons who have equal access to the house and the earth. Hence, they satisfy requirement (2). Hesiod also acknowledges the polarity of Night and Day. They are never both present in the house at the same time. Hence, they satisfy requirement (3).

There are two more things we ought to point out. First, Mourelatos acknowledges that the NMT should also take into account that some entities are quite complex. Thus, he suggests that under this worldview an entity such a man is made up of a great number of component things or "character powers", e.g., "color, gait, warmth, courage, fears, passions, and many others" (Mourelatos 2008: 301).³³ And second, Mourelatos (2008: 317) argues that Heraclitus' reaction to the NMT consists in rejecting the requirement of thinghood, and preserving the requirement of polarity. In DK 22 B 57 Heraclitus responds to Hesiod's treatment of Day and Night as follows:

³² For more details on (1)–(3), see Mourelatos 2008: 300–306.

³³ Mourelatos (2008: e.g., 304–305) argues, I think effectively, that there is some linguistic evidence in support of such a claim; e.g., even today we make statements such as 'There is courage in the man'.

Most men's teacher is Hesiod. They are sure he knew most things – a man who could not recognize day and night; for they are one (McKirahan's (1994: 123) translation).

Apparently, his criticism of Hesiod is that Night and Day are not two distinct things or persons who cannot occupy the same house at the same time. Rather, they are “complementary moments, aspects, or phases of a single phenomenon” (Mourelatos 2008: 318).

Putatively, Heraclitus was the first thinker to realize that opposites such as Hesiod's Day and Night are not two distinct things, as per the requirements of the NMT. They are one in the sense that they “are internally or conceptually related by being opposed determinations within a single field” (Mourelatos 2008: 318). Thus, Mourelatos (2008: 317–324) takes it that Heraclitus made a break from the NMT and he advanced the discussion in the critical direction of recognizing the existence of abstract or dependent entities. It is not my intention, however, to scrutinize Mourelatos' reading of Heraclitus or his conviction that the Presocratic philosopher in effect sowed the seeds for a revolution in Greek metaphysics. For our present purposes we need only note that there is credible textual evidence in support of two claims. First, there was a commonly held view among early Greek thinkers that this is a world merely of things. Early Greeks adopted the NMT whereby there are no abstract or dependent entities. Every item in the world is a thing presented in physical space. Moreover, complex entities are collections/clusters of such things or character-powers. And second, Heraclitus recorded his reaction to this kind of view by arguing that opposites are not two distinct things which exclude each other. They are in fact one. Specifically, he supposes that opposites are somehow compresent, e.g., in the way that (Hesiod's) Day and Night are compresent in the entity which is a 24-hour day.

What is also worth noticing at this juncture is a claim Plato makes in the *Theaetetus*, which is again related to Heraclitus. In this dialogue Plato examines, among other things, flux, where this is a theory customarily associated with Heraclitus.³⁴ Roughly speaking, this is a thesis to the effect that everything is always in motion, or that everything is constantly undergoing change. In *Theaetetus* 179d6–8 Plato ascribes a flux thesis not to Heraclitus himself, but to a group of thinkers he labels as ‘Heraclitus' companions’ (Ἡρακλείτου ἑταῖροι). Furthermore, in the same dialogue (see *Tht.* 180c5–6), he states that given the unwillingness of these thinkers to engage in any kind of philosophical discussion, he is prepared to consider the view in question as a ‘problem’ (πρόβλημα). As M. Colvin (2007: 765–766) argues, Plato's proposal is to consider (this kind of) flux not as a thesis advocated by any particular figure or school of thought, but as a position of philosophical interest he will flesh out and then scrutinize on his own.

³⁴ It is often supposed, see e.g., Kirk 1962 and Kahn 1979: 147–153, that Heraclitus' adoption of (some form or another of) the theory of flux is substantiated by the evidence in DK 22 B 12: “Upon those who step into the same rivers, different and again different waters flow” (McKirahan's [1994: 122] translation).

Once more, my intention here is not to address the host of important puzzles that the *Theaetetus* gives rise to as far as flux is concerned.³⁵ As we have seen, in *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13) Plato does not identify the sight-lovers' view with any specific figure or philosophical school. Thus, I would like to submit, we may suppose that he considers it to be just another 'problem' (πρόβλημα). That is to say, it is not necessarily a thesis held by any actual person or school of thought. Yet, it is a philosophical position which, for Plato, merits attention.³⁶

We may now return to our initial questions. What is the nature of the constituents of a concrete particular in the sight-lovers' ontology, and why do they give rise to entities which are ambiguous? The proposal I would like to make is that Plato supposes that the sight-lovers uphold a view which combines elements of the NMT with the Heraclitean thesis for the compresence of opposites.

As we have seen, in *Republic* 476b5–6 Plato claims that the sight-lover supposes that sensible objects, let us say, statues and balls, are constructed out of other items, e.g., sounds, weights, and shapes. If this much is accepted, then it is only natural to assume that Plato's adversaries maintain that attributes such as tallness, piety and justice are some of the items out of which a person is constructed. Hence, their view looks very much like that ascribed to the naïve metaphysicians by Mourelatos, whereby a complex entity, a concrete particular, is the cluster of other things or character-powers.

Isn't it possible that the items that make up a sensible object are abstract entities, as has been argued by (some of) the sight-lover's modern counterparts? There are at least two factors which seem to tell against such a construal of the sight-lover's position. If the proposed reading of *Republic* 476b4–7 is correct, then we can make a couple of related assumptions. The sight-lovers admit the existence of distinct items such as particular colors, shapes and sounds where these are accessible through our senses. Moreover, we are told explicitly that these are the foundational entities in their ontology. They are the ontological building blocks out of which other (complex) things are compounded. Thus, one may assume that they are ontologically independent of or ontologically prior to any complex entity they come to compose. These things can exist without the particular complex entity they constitute existing, whereas the converse does not hold true.³⁷ In sum, it seems that for the sight-lover things like particular colors, shapes and sounds are such that: they are foundational entities; they are distinct from each other, and they are presented to us in perceptual space; and, they are ontologically independent of the

³⁵ Some of the relevant puzzles would be: 'What is the content of Heraclitus' own theory of flux?'; 'Is this the same as the theory of flux Plato discusses in the *Theaetetus*?'; 'Does Plato ever give us a historically accurate account of Heraclitean flux?'. For two interesting discussions of these and other related issues, see Irwin 1977; Colvin 2007.

³⁶ Although it may be possible to argue that the sight-lover's position is akin to the ontological theory held by some actual Greek thinker or thinkers, I believe that such a suggestion should be approached with due caution. As is indicated above, I take it that it is exegetically prudent to assume that this is a theory that Plato considers to be, in the terminology of the *Theaetetus*, a 'problem'.

³⁷ For the notion of ontological priority in Plato, see Peramatzis 2011: esp. 203–208; Panayides 1999.

complex entities they come to constitute. Therefore, it is fair to assert that the entities in question, e.g., particular colors, shapes and sounds, lack one of the characteristics of abstract entities. They don't seem to have any ontological dependency relations to any other things.

In addition to the above, Mourelatos has made a convincing case for the claim that the prevailing ontological position in the philosophical milieu of the time was that the world is one of mere things. Moreover, he has correctly pointed out that Plato was the first philosopher to argue for a world "pervaded by abstract entities" (Mourelatos 2008: 299). In fact, in *Phaedo* 102d5–103a2 he makes the first clear statement in Greek philosophy for the existence of abstract or dependent entities, e.g., properties such as tallness or beauty, which characterize or modify an underlying subject. In other words, I suggest that there are good reasons to suppose that abstract entities are a Platonic discovery. Thus, we may plausibly suppose that Plato's adversary in *Republic* 474b3–480a13, the sight-lover, who supposes that concrete particulars are clusters of items such as particular colors, shapes and sounds, is a naïve metaphysician. The sensible objects of his ontology are clusters or bundles of things or character-powers.

Given the textual evidence in *Republic* V (esp. *R.* 478e7–479d4), we may also assume that the sight-lover combines his naïve approach to metaphysics with the apparently Heraclitean thesis for the compresence of opposites. Plato repeatedly states that according to the sight-lovers' view: (a) There is not a single beautiful perceptible object which does not also appear to be ugly (*R.* 479a5–6); (b) Such an object is not any more beautiful than it is ugly (*R.* 479b5–6); (c) A sensible object rolls around between being beautiful and being ugly (*R.* 479d2–4); and (d) A sensible object partakes of both opposites, e.g., the beautiful and the ugly (*R.* 479b7). All of the above seem to suggest that the sight-lover holds that opposites, where these are understood to be things or character powers, are literally compresent in concrete particulars.

One could, of course, protest that the sight-lover's view is not that such opposites are compresent in an object. Rather, the opposites an object may have or possess succeed one another over time and/or in different contexts. That is to say, it might just be the case that the sight-lover maintains that the world is in some kind of flux or change.³⁸ To adopt this claim, however, is to make the following assumption. The sight-lover admits some elements of the NMT, namely, the thesis that a concrete particular *x* is a cluster of character-powers or things, and he also supposes that *x* may exchange one of its constituents for its opposite. It seems to me that this suggestion is exegetically untenable. If this is indeed the nature of a concrete particular in the sight-lover's ontology, then it could not be said to be ambiguous. To get back to the *Phaedo* example, Plato could not object that the sight-lover maintains a position whereby Simmias is an ambiguous entity because he is neither determinately tall nor determinately short, or because he is no more what we say

³⁸ This would be a mild or non-Cratylan form of flux which is tempered by the parameters of time and/or context.

he is, i.e., tall, than its opposite. Rather, Simmias would be determinately tall in a certain context/at a certain time, and he would be determinately short in a different context/at a different time. The specific charge, of the ambiguity of a concrete particular, is available to Plato only if the sight-lovers subscribe to the view that opposites are compresent, e.g., that Simmias somehow has both tallness and shortness in him.

To sum up, the interpretation suggested so far is the following. The sight-lovers of *Republic V* advocate a sophisticated ontology in which concrete particulars are clusters of things such as colors and shapes. Yet, they are not identified with any particular school of thought. The reason might be that they are not actually members of any such school. It is plausible to assume that they are just a vehicle for Plato to consider a thesis or a 'problem' (πρόβλημα) which, he believes, is of some significance. This is the kind of thesis which could be adopted by a sophisticated cave-dweller, a thinker who believes only in the existence of the realm of the sensibles. Furthermore, it has been argued that the overall textual evidence indicates that the sight-lovers uphold a position which combines two theories that were current at the time. In particular, it merges elements of the NMT, namely, the thesis that concrete particulars are clusters of things or character powers, with the Heraclitean postulate for the compresence of opposites. In *Republic V* (R. 478e7 ff) Plato complains that under this approach to the nature of concrete particulars, unlike the one he presents in the *Phaedo* (Phd. 102a11–103a3), which is the philosopher's view on the matter, these entities turn out to be ambiguous. Such an object cannot, for instance, be said to be determinately beautiful or determinately ugly. It is both beautiful and ugly in the sense that the two opposites are compresent in it. It is clear, then, that his objection to the sight-lovers' view does not have to do with the mere fact that they assume that concrete particulars admit opposites. As we have seen, he is prepared to concede this much: that there is a (coherent) way in which the objects of our perceptual experience may be said to admit opposite attributes. I take it to be also evident that in *Republic V* 478e7–479e8 Plato supposes that the sight-lover's account of the nature of concrete particulars, which is putatively the consequence of his failure to acknowledge the existence of Forms, is plainly problematic.³⁹ He suggests that there is a certain difficulty with the sight-lover's thesis whereby concrete particulars are rendered ambiguous. Yet, in our text (R. V 474b3–480a13), he never spells out what he believes the problem is with this position. In the next part of the paper I intend to argue that his actual critique of the sight-lovers' ontology is presented in a different place, in *Republic VII* 523a1–524d4.

³⁹ As was indicated earlier on, Plato's assumption in both *Republic V* and *VII* is that the sight-lovers' problematic view of concrete particulars is the outcome of their failure to grasp the Forms. The issue of how, according to Plato, knowledge of the Forms ensures a correct understanding of the nature of sensible objects will not be dealt with on this occasion. As has already been noted, such a discussion would take us too far afield.

IV. Plato's Summoners and the Sight-Lovers:

In *Republic* VII (R. 521c1 ff) Plato considers the following question: 'What studies should we include in the curriculum of the (prospective) philosopher-rulers?'. He assumes that philosopher-rulers must undergo the kind of studies which can "draw the soul" (ψυχῆς ὀλκόν) from the realm "of becoming" (τοῦ γιγνομένου), the world of the mutable objects of perception, to the realm of "what is" (τὸ ὄν), the world of the unchanging Forms (R. 521d4–5). The first candidate topic is that of number and calculation (R. 522c6–7). Plato supposes that this is one of those subjects of study that may naturally lead to 'understanding' (νόησις) and thus can draw the soul towards the Forms. Yet, he notes, it seems that nobody uses it correctly, namely, as a subject of study that may draw one towards 'being' (οὐσίαν) (R. 523a1–3). Thus, in *Republic* 523a5–524d5 he proceeds to explain how we may distinguish the things that do in fact lead to understanding, the things he labels as 'the summoners' (τὰ παρακαλοῦντα), from those that fail to do so. His ultimate aim in doing so is to show how the study of number and calculation may be used correctly.⁴⁰ In what follows I begin with an analysis of *Republic* 523a5–524d5, and I then proceed to explain how its content is related to the sight-lovers' view.

In our text Socrates asserts that there are some sense perceptions that 'do not summon' (οὐ παρακαλοῦντα) understanding to look into them because in these cases the judgement of sense perception is itself sufficient. On the other hand, there are some other sense perceptions that do call upon understanding to consider them because in these cases sense perception itself cannot yield a sound result (R. 523a10–b4). Subsequently, in 523b9–524d4, Plato goes on to analyze these claims. Utilizing language which is reminiscent of the discussion in *Republic* V 478e7–479a8, he states that the objects that 'summon' (παρακαλοῦντα) understanding to consider them are those which sense perception cannot declare to be "one thing any more than its opposite" (μᾶλλον τοῦτο ἢ τὸ ἐναντίον) (R. 523c1–3). What is even more interesting, however, is the statement Plato has Socrates make in 523b9–c1. Socrates asserts that the objects that do not summon understanding to consider them are the ones that do not give rise to opposing perceptions 'at the same time' (ἅμα). Thus, it transpires that the objects that do summon understanding are the ones that, according to the senses, have opposite attributes at the same time.⁴¹

In 523c3–524b2 Plato further clarifies the thesis outlined above by appealing to an example which, in its turn, is reminiscent of the one appealed to in the *Phaedo* (*Phd.* 102a11–103a2). In 523c3–5 Socrates invites his interlocutors to consider the case of (a hand's) three fingers, the little finger, the ring finger, and the middle finger. As he points out, the soul of 'the many' (τῶν πολλῶν) is not in any way compelled to summon understanding to determine what a finger is. It is clear to such a soul what a finger is since

⁴⁰ Plato does this in *Republic* 524d6–526c6.

⁴¹ Plato makes the same point, but in a much clearer fashion, in *Republic* 524d1–4, where he summarizes his discussion of the summoners.

sense perception does not indicate to it that a finger is at the 'same time' (ἅμα) the opposite of a finger (R. 523c10–d6). Yet, this is not the case when this soul turns its attention to the attributes of the fingers. Socrates states that when it comes to the 'bigness' (μέγεθος) and/or the 'smallness' (σμικρότητα) of a finger the relevant sense, sight, reports that it is both big and small.⁴² In more detail, the claim in 523e1–524a9 seems to be the following. Sight declares to the soul that the ring finger is big when it is compared to the small finger. But, when it is compared to the middle finger, which is also right next to it, it is small. Hence, sense perception indicates to the soul that 'the same thing' (τὸ αὐτό), the ring finger in our example, is both big and small (524a3). In fact, *Republic* 524d2–3, where Plato summarizes his discussion of the summoners, shows that the intended claim here is that sight indicates to the soul that the ring finger is both big and small 'at the same time' (ἅμα). As a result, in 524b1–2 Glaucon concurs with Socrates' observation at 524a5–9 that this is a case in which the soul is 'puzzled' (ἀπορεῖν) by the 'reports' (ἐρμηνεῖαι) provided by perception, whereby the same thing is both big and small at the same time, and realizes that it needs to summon understanding to look into them.

In 524b3–d4 Plato completes the discussion of the objects of perception he tags as 'summoners'. Since the soul is puzzled by cases such as that of the three fingers, it summons understanding to help it resolve the 'difficulty'/'puzzle' (ἀπορία). With the aid of understanding, the soul tries to determine whether the things presented to it by sight, e.g., the bigness and the smallness of the ring finger, are one or two. If they are two, then the soul will be in a position to grasp them as things which are 'separate' (κεχωρισμένα) from each other. If they are one and 'inseparable' (ἀχώριστα) from each other, however, then the soul will not be able to do so (R. 524b3–c2). The fact of the matter is that sight declares that bigness and smallness are not separate from each other but are 'mixed up together' (συγκεχυμένα) (R. 524c3–4). Thus, Plato tells us, to resolve the puzzle at hand the soul is compelled to see the two opposites not as mixed up together, as sight declares to it, but as two separate things (R. 524c6–8). To spell things out a bit, his thesis here seems to be the following. Sight indicates to the soul that bigness and smallness are all mixed up together in the ring finger. This is a source of puzzlement for the soul: 'How can one thing be both big and small at the very same time?'. Thus, it calls upon understanding which manages to grasp or conceive bigness and smallness as two separate things. Moreover, Plato goes on to assert that it is from cases of summoners such as the fingers, namely, sensible objects which the senses indicate that they have opposite attributes at the same time, that it occurs to us to ask what, for instance, the big (itself) is and what the small (itself) is (R. 524c10–d4).

To sum up, in *Republic* 523a5–524d5 Plato supposes that some sensible objects are summoners in the sense that they call upon understanding to consider them. To be more specific, he takes it that when we have to compare things to each other, as in the case of

⁴² In our passage (R. 523e1–524a9), Plato shifts the discussion from the bigness and the smallness of a finger to other examples, e.g., the softness and the hardness of a certain object. For the sake of continuity I here focus on his initial example.

the three fingers, the relevant sense, sight, indicates to the soul of the many that one and the same thing, the ring finger, is both big and small at the very same time. This is a case where the soul summons understanding as it is faced with a difficulty. Sight declares to it that bigness and smallness are all mixed up together in the ring finger. With the aid of understanding, the soul comes to realize that bigness and smallness are not, as perception dictates, mixed up. The soul is in a position to grasp them in separation from each other. Hence, it may go on to inquire what bigness and smallness are, and thus it may eventually be drawn from the realm of the perceptibles to that of the intelligibles, i.e., the realm of the Forms.⁴³

As has already been indicated, the summoners passage in *Republic* VII seems to be closely connected to the discussions in *Republic* V 474b3–480a13 and *Phaedo* 102a11–103a3. The first thing we need to observe is that in *Republic* VII 523a5–524d5 Plato is trying to establish a particular thesis: through the study of certain subjects within a world as this is understood by ‘the many’ (οἱ πολλοί), one’s soul may yet be drawn to the realm of the Forms. What is imperative to highlight here is that Plato assumes that the ascent of the soul to the realm of the Forms is to be achieved by overcoming the limitations of the worldview espoused by the many. But, what exactly is this worldview? I take it that Plato is clear on this issue. The soul of the many may find the reports of sight in, let us say, the case of the fingers to be puzzling. It may even go as far as realizing that bigness may be grasped to be separate from its opposite, smallness. Nonetheless, the many still hold that the ring finger gives rise to opposing perceptions. They adopt the evidence (putatively) provided by sight: that the ring finger is both small and big at the same time. It is only a few people, namely, the philosopher-rulers, who will pursue questions such as ‘what is the big?’ and ‘what is the small?’ to what Plato assumes to be their natural conclusion: that the Forms do exist, and that a sensible persistent subject x is (determinately) big at one time or in one context by bearing some kind of relation to the Form of the Big, and it is (determinately) small at a different time or in another context by bearing some kind of relation to the Form of the Small.⁴⁴ In light of the above, it appears that the many of *Republic* VII (R. 523a5–524d5) maintain a position which is very similar to that of the sight-lovers of *Republic* V. What is more, we should not ignore the similarities between these two views, the sight-lovers’ ontology and the worldview of the many, that Plato himself alludes to.

In *Republic* VII (R. 523a5–524d5) Plato supposes that in the world as this is understood by the many a sense such as sight declares to the soul that an object x is ‘not any more’ (οὐ μᾶλλον) Φ than it is the opposite of Φ , not- Φ (R. 523c1–3). It is important to note that this is the very same way in which Plato describes the sight-lovers’ view of concrete

⁴³ I will not attempt a treatment of this issue, i.e., of how, according to Plato, the soul may make the actual move from the realm of the perceptibles to that of the Forms, on this occasion.

⁴⁴ As we have seen, this thesis is clearly spelled out in the *Phaedo* (*Phd.* 100c ff.).

particulars in *Republic V* (R. 479b5–6). Such an object, according to the sight-lover, is ‘not any more’ (οὐ μᾶλλον) what we say it is, e.g., beautiful, than its opposite, ugly.

We have also seen that in *Republic V* (R. 478e7–479d4) Plato tells us that the concrete particulars in the sight-lovers’ ontology are ambiguous. For instance, a concrete particular x cannot be understood to be determinately beautiful or determinately ugly. It rolls around between being beautiful and being ugly. It is clear enough that Plato assumes that the sight-lovers of *Republic V*, like the many of *Republic VII*, maintain that x is somehow both ugly and beautiful. If we admit the suggestion made here, that the sight-lovers of *Republic V* hold a view which is very much akin if not identical to that of the many of *Republic VII*, then we can now better grasp the issue facing their view. It turns out that the sight-lover holds that any concrete particular x is, as we are told multiple times in *Republic VII* (R. 523a5–524d5), both Φ and not- Φ ‘at the same time’ (ἅμα).⁴⁵ Hence, it is because x is both Φ and not- Φ at the same time, i.e., the two opposites are compresent in it, that x is said to be ambiguous. Since the two opposites are compresent and all mixed up together in x , it is impossible to assert that x is determinately Φ or that it is determinately not- Φ ; x rolls around between being Φ and being not- Φ .

The last thing we need to notice is that in *Republic VII* (R. 523a5–524d5) Plato in effect explains how one may come to adopt a view of reality where an object x is both Φ and not- Φ at the same time. Very much like in *Phaedo* 102d5–103a2, he tells us that it is in the context of comparing things like the three fingers that one may admit such a claim. In *Phaedo* 102c11–d4, Plato tells us that Simmias, being between Phaedo and Socrates, is called both short and tall. As we have seen, in the *Phaedo* he explains how a concrete particular may coherently admit opposites. It seems, however, that the sight-lovers of *Republic V* as well as the many of *Republic VII* have no way to do so. To return to the example of 523c4–524a3, this kind of thinker takes it that the ring finger, which is between the small and the middle finger, appears to sight to be both big and small at the same time. The two opposites seem to be compresent in the ring finger.

There is, then, some textual evidence which suggests that the views held by the sight-lovers of *Republic V* and by the many of *Republic VII* are very similar. Erring on the side of caution, I will not venture the claim that they are the same thinkers. After all, at no point in *Republic VII* (523a5–524d5) does Plato explicitly identify these two groups. In fact, the sight-lovers are not mentioned at all in *Republic VII* (R. 523a5–524d5). Nonetheless, the claim made here is that if we take into account both of these two texts, along with *Phaedo* 102a11–103a3, then we can gain a better understanding of the sight-lovers’ position. These are people who maintain that the exclusive source of knowledge/learning are the senses. Thus, they assert that when we have to compare objects such as the fingers of *Republic VII* or the three men in the *Phaedo*, we putatively have no option but to admit that they are

⁴⁵ It is worth pointing out that there is also one place in *Republic V*, see R. 478d5–9, where Plato states that the objects in the domain of opinion may be shown “to be and not to be at the same time” (ἅμα ὄν τε καὶ μὴ ὄν). Yet, I take it that the reconstruction of these lines, unlike that of *Republic VII* 523b9–c1 and 524d1–4, could be contentious.

ambiguous in the sense that they admit opposites at the very same time. In the terminology Plato uses in *Republic VII*, Φ and not- Φ are all mixed up together in an object x . If this much is accepted, then two issues seem to arise. First, what are the discernible differences, if there are any, between the sight-lovers' position and the worldview of the many in *Republic VII*? And second, what exactly is Plato's objection to this kind of ontology, beyond the fact that it rejects the existence of Forms?

In *Republic V* Plato indicates that he considers the sight-lovers' view on the nature of particulars to be problematic. Moreover, we have seen that in *Phaedo* 102d5–103a2 he presents his own alternative to this kind of ontology. Nonetheless, in *Republic V* Plato does not spell out for us what he takes to be the great fault in the sight-lovers' understanding of the nature of sensible objects. What I would like to submit is that this is something that he does in *Republic VII*.

In *Republic VII* Plato assumes that in the worldview of the many a sense such as sight declares that a concrete particular x is Φ and not- Φ at the same time. Furthermore, we have seen that this causes 'puzzlement' (ἀπορία) for the soul of the many. Finally, as has already been noted, in *Republic VII* (R. 523a5–524d5) Plato does not ever identify the many with the sight-lovers of *Republic V*. In light of the discussion in parts II and III, I believe that there is a discernible difference between the positions held by these two groups. The sight-lovers, very much like the many of *Republic VII*, hold that the evidence of the senses shows that x is Φ and not- Φ at the same time; the two opposites are compresent in x . Nonetheless, in *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13) there is no indication that this is the source of puzzlement for the sight-lover. What I would like to submit is that the sight-lovers of *Republic V*, unlike the many of *Republic VII*, are not puzzled because they are committed to a certain kind of underlying ontology. As we have seen, they are naïve metaphysicians. They maintain that a concrete particular x is a bundle of things or character powers such as colors, sounds and shapes. At the same time, they embrace the seemingly paradoxical Heraclitean postulate for the compresence of opposites.⁴⁶ In other words, they maintain that a concrete particular such as Helen of Troy is a cluster of things or character powers, and that it encompasses at the same time both beauty and ugliness.

In *Republic V* Plato tells us that such a view gives rise to concrete particulars which are ambiguous. According to this position, Helen of Troy cannot be said to be determinately beautiful or determinately ugly. Yet, the actual critique of the sight-lovers' view seems to come in *Republic VII*. To be more specific, in *Republic VII* Plato asserts that to uncritically admit the evidence of the senses leads the soul to puzzlement. Evidently, the source of the puzzlement is the fact that the senses declare to the soul that opposites are all mixed up together in a certain concrete particular. For instance, Helen of Troy appears to be both beautiful and ugly at the very same time. To put the matter in Aristotelian terms, it would seem that to accept the evidence of the senses uncritically, which

⁴⁶ The Heraclitean view is indeed paradoxical, unless it is supplemented with the claim that there are abstract entities.

seems to be the main tenet of the sight-lovers' ontology, is to land oneself in puzzlement and in fact in contradiction. In *Republic* VII, however, Plato presses the epistemological issue that arises from such an ontology. If Φ and not- Φ are compresent and all mixed up together in x , then we can have no knowledge or clear understanding of what Φ -ness and its opposite are. Hence, we cannot possibly grasp what it is for something to be Φ or what it is for something to be not- Φ . It is only when the soul is forced to see the opposites as separate from each other that the first step may be taken towards recognizing the existence of Forms, e.g., entities such as Φ -ness itself. It is the ascent to the realm of the Forms that may provide one with an understanding of what Φ -ness is. And, in the *Phaedo* Plato explains how the theory of Forms may be utilized to explain how a concrete particular may unproblematically admit opposites. Briefly, we are told that there is an underlying subject x which is Φ by participating in Φ -ness itself at a particular time or in a particular context. Yet, the same subject, x , may lose this property at another time or context and acquire its opposite, not- Φ , by participating in the relevant Form.

To wrap up the discussion, the suggestion made in this part of the paper is the following. In *Republic* V (R. 474b3–480a13) Plato suggests that the sight-lover's view is problematic. They reject the theory of Forms and they accept only the existence of sensible objects. But, a sensible object x in their ontology is ambiguous as it cannot be said to be determinately Φ or determinately not- Φ . Apparently, they espouse such a position because they admit elements of the NMT along with the Heraclitean thesis for the compresence of opposites. The fact of the matter, however, is that in *Republic* V (R. 474b3–480a13) Plato never spells out what he considers to be the problem with the sight-lover's ontology. In *Phaedo* (Phd. 102a11–103a3) he presents the ontologically sound or the philosopher's thesis about the structure of concrete particulars, where this presupposes the existence of Forms. As has been shown, in *Republic* VII (R. 523a5–524d4) Plato argues that the many suppose that sensible objects such as a hand's fingers have opposite attributes at the same time. For instance, the ring-finger appears to be both small and big at one and the same time. It has been argued that if we accept that the many of *Republic* VII and the sight-lovers of *Republic* V adopt similar (if not identical) ontologies, then we can specify the problem Plato detects in the sight-lovers' ontology. If one accepts, like the sight-lover does, that a concrete particular x is both Φ and not- Φ at one and the same time, then one is inevitably led to puzzlement. How can one and the same thing, x , be both Φ and not- Φ at the same time? As has been shown, however, Plato does not press the metaphysical aspect of the problem. He argues that if one accepts this view about the nature of concrete particulars, then one is puzzled. That is, one has no clear understanding of what things such as smallness and bigness are, as these seem to be all mixed up in concrete particulars. Yet, one may put the puzzlement that such a view causes to good use. One may inquire what, for instance, bigness itself is, and thus one may initiate the process that could lead one to the Forms, namely, entities such as the Form of the Big. Furthermore, the discovery of the Forms is what may guide one to the ontologically sound view about the structure of concrete particulars, which is the one presented in *Phaedo* 102a11–103a3.

Conclusion:

This paper claims to have done at least three things. First, it has been argued that the textual evidence in *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13) suggests that Plato’s adversaries, the sight-lovers, uphold a particular kind of view. They are naïve metaphysicians. They maintain that concrete particulars are bundles of things or character powers such as sounds and shapes. Moreover, they combine this view with the Heraclitean postulate for the compresence of opposites. Thus, they maintain that concrete particulars are ambiguous, i.e., they admit opposite attributes at the same time. Second, it has been shown that in the *Phaedo* (Phd. 102a11–103a3) Plato presents what he takes to be the ontologically sound view of the nature of sensible objects. He argues that there is a coherent way in which a concrete particular may be said to admit opposites. And finally, it has been shown that in *Republic VII* (R. 523a1–524d4) Plato does a number of things. He in effect makes an effort to clarify the thesis held by thinkers such as the sight-lovers of *Republic V* (R. 474b3–480a13), where this is not necessarily a theory held by any actual Greek thinker or thinkers. Furthermore, he spells out the problem facing their ontology, in which objects are assumed to admit opposite attributes at the same time, and he sketches out the route which may lead one to an ontologically sound understanding of the structure of objects.⁴⁷

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The Sight-Lovers of *Republic V* and Plato's Critique of their Ontology

In *Republic V* 474b3–480a13, Plato initiates a discussion that is intended to define who the philosophers are that must rule the city. In the context of this discussion, we are told that the sight-lovers are among the pretenders to the title of the philosopher. This paper addresses the following questions about the sight-lovers: “Who are the sight-lovers of *Republic V*?”; “Do they maintain some kind of coherent ontological position?”; and, “If they do, then what is its content, and how does Plato attempt to rebut it?”. In particular, it is argued that: (1) The sight-lovers of *Republic V* maintain that the objects of our everyday experience are bundles of things such as colors and shapes; (2) Plato presents his own position about the nature of concrete particulars in the *Phaedo* (*Phd.* 102a11–103a3); (3) This discussion in the *Phaedo* may facilitate our effort to place the sight-lovers thesis in its proper setting and also parse its finer details; and (4) Plato spells out his critique of the sight-lovers’ position in *Republic VII* (*R.* 523a5–524d4) in the context of his treatment of the summoners.

KEY WORDS

Plato, Sight-Lovers, Forms, Bundle Theories, Compresence of Opposites, Heraclitus, A. Mourelatos, Summoners.

Pleasure in the Fragments of Aristotle's Lost Writings

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The literary legacy of Aristotle is generally divided into two groups. The first contains the works which were carefully edited and published by Aristotle. Their target were the educated Greeks who were not connected with the Peripatetic school. These works (called also *exoteric* on the account of their purpose) have not survived and they are only known from quotations, excerpts, paraphrases and testimonies. The reading public of the second group of writings was only the members of Lykeion. These treatises were probably used by Aristotle for his lectures, and they were not published until the first century B.C. by Andronicus of Rhodes. The fragments of the 'exoteric' works were not always viewed as genuine and there are also some doubts regarding the testimonies, as well as the first edition of the passages from ancient literature concerning Aristotle's philosophy made by Valentine Rose, which was not without reason entitled *Aristoteles pseudepigraphus* (Rose 1863). But there were also researchers such as Jacob Bernays (1863) who did not have any doubt regarding their authenticity.¹ The middle view, according to which some of Aristotle's works mentioned in ancient literature are original, while some are of questionable authenticity, was expressed, for example, by Eduard Zeller. This researcher has

¹ See also e.g. Heitz 1865.

also accepted the hypothesis that some of the lost works were written by Aristotle during his stay in Plato's Academy, and that the doctrine contained in these writings was closely affiliated with Platonism. Later on, this hypothesis was accepted by Werner Jaeger, who has claimed that Aristotle's philosophy has evolved and has gradually departed from Platonism to form an original Aristotelian system.¹ Since Rose's compilation, there have been published several collections of the fragments and testimonies. Furthermore, the individual lost works have been variously and separately reconstructed and edited.² The newest and the most extensive edition (Gigon 1987) divides the reports from ancient literature into the testimonies and fragments. The latter is divided in turn into the fragments of the works whose titles appear in Diogenes Laertius' catalogue, works whose titles are not in this catalogue, and the fragments which cannot be attributed to any of Aristotle's known works. The aim of this paper is to present the statements about pleasure [*hēdonē*] which appear in the fragments and to analyse them with reference to the teaching about pleasure found in the surviving works. Passages in which *hēdonē* seems not to have a specific philosophical meaning are discussed in the first part of the article and the rest in the second.³

I

A remark on pleasure can be found in the one of the fragments attributed to Aristotle's dialogue *Symposium*. Pondering the merits of the Rhodian cups from which wine is drunk, the Peripatetic philosopher notes that they strengthen the pleasure of drinking [*hēdonēn eis tas methas pareispherontai*].⁴ The remark seems to have a technical rather than a philosophical meaning, but it shows that Aristotle was engaged with the empirical aspect of *hēdonē*. He used such observations in the philosophical argumentation. Considering the question of moderation in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he states that pleasure from the taste can in some cases be excluded from intemperance. A tester of wine and a head chef are examples of those who because of their activities are not exposed to the danger of intemperance. In other cases, the pleasure of drinking wine is caused by the

¹ Zeller (1879: 57 ff.); Jaeger 1923.

² See e.g. Walzer 1934; Ross 1955; Düring 1961; Untersteiner 1963. On the reconstructions of the treatise *On philosophy* and the translations of the fragments see Pacewicz 2012: 169–197.

³ Because of the critical attitude of some researchers towards Gigon's edition (it is considered to be too extensive and to contain many irrelevant references to Aristotle – Gottschalk 1991), I will limit myself in this study to Rose's and Ross's editions. Two fragments are omitted here. The first is Clem. Al. *Paed.* III 12, 84 (= fr. 183 [Rose 1886]), and it is taken into consideration only in Rose's collection. The second is Ath. *Deipnosophistae*, XV 523E (= fr. 557 Rose [1886] = 565, 1 Gigon [1984]) because the reference to *hēdonē* probably does not come from Aristotle; see Hose 2002: 212.

⁴ Ath. *Deipnosophistae*, XI 464c (fr. 111 Rose [1886] = fr. 11 Ross [1955] = fr. 676 Gigon [1987]). In the Polish translation (Bartol, Danielewicz 2010), it is interpreted that the jars have a nice smell. The verb *pareispherein* seems to mean 'to add', 'to improve', and *hēdonē* can denote both the taste and bouquet of the wine.

sense of touch and it can take the form of the vice called intemperance in drinking (*EN* 1118a23–b 1).

The second remark can be found in the scholia to Homer's *Odyssey*. The scholium is related to the famous scene where the old dog Argos recognizes his previous master Odysseus and dies (*Od.* XVII 299–327). Aristotle has to say that the cause of dog's death is *hēdonē* because violent and intense pleasures are destructive [*sphodrai kai ischurai hēdonai dialousai*].⁵ I did not find much the same view in the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, but it is worth noting that the Stagirite uses the adjectives *sphodros* and *ischuros* with regard to pleasure (*GA* 723b32–33; *EN* 1150b7). It is also probable that he has shown in the example of Argos that a lack of self-control – quite a natural state for animals because they have no ability to reason – can even cause death in extreme cases.⁶

II

It is known from the afore-mentioned catalogue of Diogenes Laertius (V 22) that there was a one-volume work of Aristotle entitled *On pleasure* [*Peri hēdonēs*]. Unfortunately, no quotation, excerpt or paraphrase has been preserved, and there is no consensus among researchers as to which references in ancient literature refer to this text, because several of them are attributed to the other work – *On Justice*.⁷ As Cicero confirms, in *On Pleasure* Aristotle criticised a type of life based solely on the bodily pleasures associated with food [*edere*] and sex [*exsaturata libido*]. The king of Syria, Sardanapalus, was to admit to such way of life and to find it praiseworthy (as he mentions it in his tombstone inscription).⁸ A key argument to reject such types of pleasure as good things is that they are “animal” in nature, as well as being short-lived and elusive.⁹ The king of Syria

⁵ *Scholia Vindobonenses* on *Odyssey* XVII 337 (= fr. 177 Rose [1886] = fr. 400 Gigon [1987]).

⁶ The moral interpretation of this scene from *Odyssey* can be found in Seneca's *De tranquillitate animi* (475A).

⁷ Heitz (1869: 58–59) accepts two fragments: (1) Ath. *Deipnosophistae*, 6D, (2) (a) Ath. *Deipnosophistae*, 335F, (b) Cic. *Tusculanes disputationes*, V 35; (c) *De finibus*, II 32, 106; Rose (1886) believes that these passages come from *On justice*; Ross (1955) approves only (1); Laurenti (1987: 825–826) gives his assent to (2). He adds also the passage from Strabo (XIV 5, 9) and acknowledges (1) dubious. In contrast, Gigon (1987) does not take Strabo's fragment into consideration at all; according to him the passages (1), (2b) and (2c) cannot be ascribed to any known title. The passage (2a) is taken into account wider (335E–336B) it is regarded as the fragment of *On justice*.

⁸ There is no certainty that Sardanapalus was the historical person. A description of his hedonistic way of life can be found in the *Historical library* of Diodorus of Sicilia (II 23–27). The source of it is probably Ctesias of Cnidus (V/IV century B.C.).

⁹ See Cic. *Tusculanae disputationes*, V 35, 101: „quo modo igitur iucunda vita potest esse, a qua absit prudentia, absit moderatio? ex quo Sardanapalli, opulentissimi Syriae regis, error adgnoscur, qui incidi iussit in busto: »Haec habeo, quae edi, quaeque exsaturata libido / Hausit; at illa iacent multa et praeclara relictæ.« »quid aliud« inquit Aristoteles »in bovis, non in regis sepulcro inscriberes? haec habere se mortuum dicit, quae ne vivus quidem diutius habebat quam fruebatur«; »De finibus, II 32, 106: »corporis autem voluptas si etiam praeterita delectat, non intellego, cur Aristoteles Sardanapalli epigramma tantopere derideat, in quo ille rex Syriae gloriatur se omnis secum libidinum voluptates abstulisse. Quod enim ne vivus quidem, inquit, diutius sentire poterat, quam dum fruebatur, quo modo id potuit mortuo permanere? effluit igitur voluptas corporis et prima quaeque avolat saepiusque relinquit causam paenitendi quam recordandi».

is mentioned twice in the works of Aristotle. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, this is used to rebuff one of the wrong concepts of happiness [*eudaimonia*], that is to say, to identify happiness with pleasure. The reasoning is very succinct: if someone chooses this type of life, he or she is in favour of a submissive existence, of which the life of cattle is an example.¹⁰ Naturally, the servility means in this case not only a lack of freedom in the political and legal sense (the opposite of the slave is a free man [*eleutheros anēr*] who is able to manage the polis and to run his or her life according to their own preferences), but also a dearth of proper intellectual abilities and character manifested in the lack of *paideia* (EN 1128a19–22), an inability to show a suitable emotional reaction in various moral situations (*Rh.* 1387b4–15; EN 1126a3–8; EE 1231b5–13), or an inclination to intemperance and to find pleasure in the sense of touch (EN 1118a26–30). In the *Eudemian Ethics* (EE 1216a16–18), Sardanapalos and one of the very rich inhabitants of Sibaris, named Smyndirides,¹¹ serve as examples of people who recognize the identification of happiness with joy [*chairein*], which is the result of a life devoted to joy [*apolaustikos*]. But this way of life has no positive overtones. On the contrary, it is a joy which, if accompanied by those in power, exposes them to contempt on the part of citizens and threatens them with another coup d'état (*Pol.* 1312b21–25). It is worth noting that the interpretations of the way of life of Sardanapalos in both treatises differ in terminology; the term 'pleasure' [*hēdonē*] is used once, as is the verb 'to rejoice' [*chairein*]. Maybe it is just an ostensible difference, and the relationship between the two concepts simply indicates which pleasures and joys are at stake. In *On the generation of animals*, both terms are clearly used synonymously: pleasure/joy is what accompanies sexual intercourse (GA 723b32–724a1).

The problem of pleasure is also raised in the *Protrepticus*. The best reconstruction of the work is that of Ingemar Düring who distinguishes eleven themes.¹² Pondering the role of philosophy in human life, Aristotle points out that it does not require any special tools or space because it can be taken up everywhere. What is more, philosophy enables people to put everyday matters aside and willingly engage in this type of intellectual activity. It is supposed to prove that one philosophizes with pleasure [*meth' hēdonēs*],¹³ because – it seems – people choose philosophy of their own accord [*boulesthai*], so its practice would be a sign of a free man, who is not forced to work. It is work and daily duties that are somehow pushed into the background to deal with philosophy, and since it seems to be

¹⁰ See also Arist. EN 1118b16–21: τὸ γὰρ ἐσθίειν τὰ τυχόντα ἢ πίνειν ἕως ἂν ὑπερπλησθῇ, ὑπερβάλλειν ἐστὶ τὸ κατὰ φύσιν τῷ πλήθει: ἀναπλήρωσις γὰρ τῆς ἐνδείας ἢ φυσικὴ ἐπιθυμία. διὸ λέγονται οὗτοι γαστρίμαργοι, ὡς παρὰ τὸ δέον πληροῦντες αὐτήν. τοιοῦτοι δὲ γίνονται οἱ λίαν ἀνδραποδώδεις; EE 1215b30–35: ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ διὰ τὴν τῆς τροφῆς μόνον ἡδονὴν ἢ τὴν τῶν ἀφροδισίων, ἀφαιρεθεισῶν τῶν ἄλλων ἡδονῶν, ἃς τὸ γινώσκειν ἢ βλέπειν ἢ τῶν ἄλλων τις αἰσθήσεων πορίζει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, οὐδ' ἂν εἰς προτιμήσειε τὸ ζῆν, μὴ παντελῶς ὧν ἀνδράποδον.

¹¹ See Hdt. *Historiae*, VI 127; D.S. *Bibliotheca historica*, VIII 18–19; Ath. *Deipnosophistae*, VI 105; Ael. *VH*, IX 24.

¹² Düring 1961; Düring 2005.

¹³ As Düring (1961) rightly observes, a similar thought appears already in Platonic *Eutydemus*, where joy (*charien*) is mentioned.

the opposite of labour, it can be dealt with for a long time and without being exhausted.¹⁴ This attitude towards pleasure can also be found in the *Rhetoric*:

What is not compulsory also [is pleasurable]; for compulsion is contrary to nature. (...) Duties and studies and exertions are painful; for these too are necessarily compulsions unless they become habitual; then habit [*to ethos*] makes them pleasurable. And their opposites are pleasurable; thus, ease and freedom from toil and carefreeness and games and recreations and sleep belong among pleasures; for none of these is a matter of necessity. And everything is pleasurable for which there is longing [*epithumia*]; for longing is a desire [*oreksis*] for pleasure.¹⁵

The correlation between pleasure and philosophy is close not only because of freedom and human will. Aristotle formulated in the *Protreptic* a few arguments in favour of the above relationship, although due to the state of the reconstruction of this work, we do not always find a full justification for this. In analyzing fragments 87–92 in Düring's edition, one can clearly see that the terms 'pleasure' [*hēdonē*, *hēdesthai*] and 'joy' [*chairēin*] are synonymous. The similar closeness in meaning can be found in the analysis of the relationship of virtue with pleasure in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (EN 1104b 3 ff.)¹⁶ and in *Poetics* (Po. 1460a 17–18), when it comes to the role of surprise in the structure of a literary expression. In encouraging a reader of his work to practice philosophy, the Stagirite points out where the greatest pleasure appears and what are the conditions for it. The condition is to achieve the state called *energeia* and to obtain it in a fully developed, perfect [*teleia*] way, with freedom from obstacles [*akōlutos*] (fr. 87 Düring [1961]). The only place in the *Corpus Aristotelicum* where the phrase *teleia energeia* appears is in the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and it is in the discussion on pleasure (EN 1174b16–17). It is indicated there that a complete action implies a well-developed working factor and a suitably valuable object to which the action is directed. And if the action is perfect, then both the working factor and the object must be the best. In *Protrepticus*' fragment 87 (Düring 1961) it is suggested that this type of action is *theōrētikē energeia*, which of course is justified by the assumption that there is a certain natural hierarchy on the one hand, and there is also a difference between an accidental action and an essential one on the other.

In the *Protrepticus*, philosophizing is also described as an activity [*kinēsis*], which, because it is performed on its own account and not on that of something else, is essentially (and not accidentally – *sumbainein*) pleasant, i.e. it can be acknowledged as rejoicing

¹⁴ Arist. *Protrepticus*, fr. 56 Düring (1961) (= fr. 5 Ross [1955]). Werner Jaeger (1923: 98) believes that in this passage Aristotle refers to the ideal of a contemplative life of which model could be found in Plato's Academy. This is likely to be the case if it is taken into account a passage from another lost work of Aristotle entitled *Corinthian Dialogue*, which mentions the story of a farmer who, after reading Plato's *Gorgias*, left his job and turned to philosophy; see fr. 658 Gigon (1987).

¹⁵ Arist. *Rh.* 1370a9–18, transl. Kennedy 2007 (the addition of Greek terms is mine).

¹⁶ It should be noted, however, that in the course of further deliberation on the *aretē* (Arist. EN 1005b20–23), joy [*chara*] is an experience [*pathos*] and something that is accompanied by pleasure.

[*chairein*].¹⁷ Activities can be carried out at different levels – one can drink more or less and learn more or less, for example – and the level of activity influences the degree of pleasure and joy experienced. If the action meets two conditions: (1) it represents a *teleia energeia*, and (2) it is carried out without any obstacles, then pleasure and happiness are revealed to the highest level.¹⁸ Philosophy as an activity belongs to a person whose soul works properly [*orthōs*] and perfectly [*teleōs*] when it performs two sub-activities – *phronein* and *theōrein*.¹⁹ Therefore, philosophizing is an actualisation of life in the form of a soul's exercise through thinking and the attainment of theoretical knowledge, and gives a man the greatest pleasure and joy.²⁰

It can be pointed out that the *Protrepticus* contains elements of the theory of pleasure characteristic of the so-called 'esoteric' writings of Aristotle. And so it is worth paying attention to the concept of *kinesis*, which in *Physics* 201a10–11 is defined as the "*entelecheia* of what is potentially in so far as it is potentially".²¹ The analysis of this notion was presented, among others, by Aryeh Kosman, who points out that the term *entelecheia* should be understood here as 'actuality' (and not 'actualization').²² In the case of the *Protrepticus*, however, there is a reference to *teleia energeia* and it means that it is about a special type of action in which "actuality is de-motionalized being not by virtue of having brought to quiescence, but by virtue of having become entelic, having become its own end" (Kosman 1960: 59). In the twelfth book of *Metaphysics*, Aristotle describes the god-mind (an eternal and immovable entity, which thinks about itself), and he states that *theōria* is something most pleasant and the best. The Unmoved Mover experiences eternal well-being [*eu echein*], which is available to man only occasionally (*Metaph.* 1072b22–26). In the *Nicomachean Ethics* we also find the condition that there should be no obstacle in the performance of the activity so that this activity is accompanied by pleasure: it must occur as "the unimpeded activity of the natural state [*energeia tēs kata phusin hekseōs (...)* *anempodiston*]" (*EN* 1153a14–15; see also *EN* 1153b9–12).

A brief mention of pleasure was also included among the testimonies probably concerning the lost work *On Justice*. It is cited by Plutarch in the *De stoicorum repugnantiis* in the context of the criticism that Chrysippus applied to Aristotle's theory. The Stoic philosopher stated that the Peripatetic one mistakenly believed that if pleasure were considered a goal [*telos*], it would be impossible to formulate an appropriate view of justice, or even

¹⁷ Arist. *Protrepticus*, fr. 88 Düring (1961) (= *partim* fr. 14 Walzer [1934] = *partim* fr. 14 Ross [1955]).

¹⁸ Arist. *Protrepticus*, fr. 87 Düring (1961) (= *partim* fr. 14 Walzer [1934] = *partim* fr. 14 Ross [1955]). It should also be noted that in certain contexts, Aristotle recognizes the terms of *kinēsis* and *energeia* as synonymous; see e.g. Arist. *Metaph.* 1047a32; *EE* 1218b36; *GA* 743a28.

¹⁹ Arist. *Protrepticus*, fr. 85 Düring (1961) (= *partim* fr. 14 Walzer [1934] = *partim* fr. 14 Ross [1955]).

²⁰ Arist. *Protrepticus*, fr. 89–91 Düring (1961) (= *partim* fr. 14 Walzer [1934] = *partim* fr. 14 Ross [1955]).

²¹ In *Rhetoric*, in turn, Aristotle describes pleasure as "a certain movement of the soul and the full and discernible resettlement into the original nature" (Arist. *Rh.* 1369b33–35). It is not certain whether Aristotle acknowledged this definition, since attention is drawn to a possible inconsistency with statements made in his other works (especially in the fifth chapter of the tenth book of the *EN*). This was already pointed out by Friedrich A. Trendelenburg (1883: 177 ff.). See also Grimaldi 1980, 244 ff.

²² Kosman 1960: 43; cf. Gosling, Taylor 1982: 301–318.

of any theory of virtue.²³ If in *On justice* there has been an identification of pleasure with purpose, it seems that this should be considered inconsistent with the theory of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Sandbach 1985: 14.), because

If, then, there is some end of things doable in action [*prakta*] that we wish for because of itself, and the others because of it, and we do not choose everything because of something else (...), it is clear that this will be the good – that is, the best good.²⁴

Next, Aristotle accepts that this goal is happiness [*eudaimonia*]²⁵ but rejects the possibility that *hēdonē* expresses the content of the concept of ‘happiness’ (and thus ‘the best’). To do this, he uses the aforementioned argument regarding enslavement and the example of Sardanapalus (*EN* 1095b14–22; 1174a8–9). In this context, this would mean that the purpose of life would certainly not be a bodily pleasure. Is there, however, any other explanation justifying Chrysippus’ critique which is related to the ethical writings of the *Corpus aristotelicum*? The answer demands analysis of three questions: (1) whether it is possible to identify a good thing with pleasure in the Stagirite’s view, (2) whether pleasure as a goal threatens to some extent the concept of justice; and (3) whether it is possible to find a dependence on justice of the individual virtues. It is easy to point out that (3) is present in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle says that justice is not part of virtue, but the whole virtue, when it is considered not relatively [*pros*], but absolutely [*haplōs*] (*EN* 1130a8–13). As far as (1) is concerned, the closest belief to this can be found in the 10th book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where the Philosopher states that pleasure is something that complements the activity [*energeian telein*] as *epiginomenon ti telos* (*EN* 1174b31–33).²⁶ Naturally, the use of the undefined pronoun *ti* is important in this statement, as it indicates that the Stagirite only allows pleasure to be a goal. And because a good thing is what everything (i.e., inter alia, art, investigation, practical pursuit, action and choice) achie-

²³ Plu. *De stoicorum repugnantis*, 1040E 1–6: Ἀριστοτέλει περὶ δικαιοσύνης ἀντιγράφων οὐ φησιν αὐτὸν ὁρθῶς λέγειν, ὅτι τῆς ἡδονῆς οὐσης τέλους ἀναιρεῖται μὲν ἡ δικαιοσύνη, συναναιρεῖται δὲ τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀρετῶν ἑκάστη (= fr. 96 Rose [1886] = fr. 4 Ross [1955] = fr. 6 Gigon [1987] = von Arnim [1964] SVF III 24. Walzer (1934) ascribes this passage to the *Protrepticus* [fr. 17]). More see Moraux 1957; Chroust 1966: 249–263. Various reconstructions and interpretations of this lost work of Aristotle and criticism of Mouraux’s hypotheses are presented by Pattantyus 1970: 82–85.

²⁴ Arist. *EN* 1094a18–22, transl. Reeve 2014; see also *MM* 1184a3–14. In the translation of the passage from *EN*, it is worth pointing out two linguistic difficulties: the first (A) concerns the word *prakton*, which is used in the plural (for an elucidation see Reeve 2014: note 9, 199); and the second (B) concerns the conjunction *kai*, which occurs almost at the end of sentence and can have a copulative (‘and’) or explanative meaning (‘that is’). For the other translations see f.i. (A) “things we do” – (B) “and” (Ross 1925); (A) „ends” – (B) „and indeed” (Rackham 1956); (A) “actions” – (B) “et” (Gomez-Muller 1992); (A) “cose che si possono compiere” – (B) “ossia” (Caiani 1996); (A) “działanie” – (B) “i” (Gromska 1996); (A) “practical projects” – (B) “i.e.” (Broadie, Rowe 2002); (A) “azioni” – (B) “e” (Stelli 2009); (A) „das Tun” – (B) „ja sogar” (Krapinger 2017).

²⁵ Arist., *EN* 1095a17–20; see also *MM* 1184a16–18; 1084b7–8.

²⁶ Again, it is worth paying attention to the translation problem in relation to the participle *epiginomenon*: „an end which supervenes” (Ross 1925); “a supervening perfection” (Rackham 1956); “cel, który się do niej [i.e. czynności – A.P.] dołącza” (Gromska 1996); “un perfezionamento che vi si aggiunge, come ad es” (Stelli 2009); „a sort of supervenient end” (Reeve 2014).

ves, so that pleasure can also be considered a good thing (*EN* 1094a3; 1172b35–36.). What does it mean? Most likely, pleasure can be considered a goal/a good thing in a relative sense, i.e. related to another goal/good thing in itself. An example could be theoretical contemplation, which is a proper goal, resulting in a state of happiness. It is accompanied by pleasure as a good thing/relative goal (*EN* 1152b35–1153a2; 1177a22–27). Thus, the two components can be found in Aristotle's thought, but it does not seem that in this interpretation they can be easily connected with the reasoning presented in Plutarch's work. Perhaps Aristotle's reasoning was as follows: if pleasure, which is not a (settled) disposition to choose/a virtue, is considered as a goal/a good thing/happiness (in itself), it is possible to be happy without a (settled) ethical disposition to choose/a virtue. A justice is a (settled) disposition to choose and it is the whole virtue (i.e. it involves every other virtue), so it is possible to be happy without justice, and thus also without other (settled) dispositions/virtues. But this conclusion is unacceptable, because it may mean that it is possible to be happy by being unjust, cowardly, unwise, and so on.

III

So it can be seen that among the preserved fragments and testimonies of Aristotle's lost writings, there are not many references to pleasure. But almost all remarks about it can be connected to the statements in the esoteric writings of this philosopher. The only exception seems to be the fragment from *On justice* preserved in Plutarch's work, but in this case, the problem may lie in tradition. The thesis formulated by Aristotle is criticised (and thus interpreted) by Chrysippus, and this critique is reported on by the medioplatonic philosopher. The hypothetical reconstruction presented shows the possibility that it was a Stoic philosopher who over-interpreted the Peripatetic's view in order to subject it to criticism in this new form. But there is still the possibility that Aristotle's thesis is quoted accurately and would be in disagreement with his teaching in the esoteric writings. The fact that most references to pleasure can to some extent be aligned with the concepts contained in esoteric writings is above all of historical significance. It allows the formulation of another argument against Jaeger's hypothesis (1923) that the Stagirite's philosophy was subject to evolution. This hypothesis was rejected from differing perspectives by such researchers as Hans-Georg Gadamer (1928), Pierre Aubenque (1963: 15 ff.), Giovanni Reale (1988: 383–387) or Jonathan Barnes (1995).

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Pleasure in the Fragments of Aristotle's Lost Writings

It is well known that Aristotle's philosophical legacy has not survived in its entirety to our time. A large part of it has been lost, and only scattered fragments, paraphrases and testimonies cited by other ancient philosophers have survived. The analyses carried out in the article focus on what the Stagirite says about pleasure in fragments of lost writings, especially in the *Symposium*, *On Pleasure*, *Protrepticus* and *On Justice*. The aim of the analyses is to establish whether or not the statements in these fragments can be correlated with statements from Aristotle's surviving works, and whether or not they are compatible with them. Thanks to the analyses, it is also possible to show that the hypothesis that Aristotle's philosophy may have been subject to evolution is not tenable at least as far as the doctrine of pleasure is concerned.

KEY WORDS

Aristotle, pleasure, *Symposium*, *On Pleasure*, *Protrepticus*, *On Justice*

Aristotle's Metaphysics of Matter

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Many people are not sure whether god(s), angels, spirits, ghosts or souls really exist; yet, they have little hesitation about the objects that surround them. Tables and rocks, drops of rain, mountains, and cars... surely, all these things must be real since we act, react, and interact with them every day. It is as if pointing to the material stuff around us was a sufficient warrant to guarantee their reality. Even people who are not committed to materialism – i.e., to the claim that if something is real then it must be material – readily admit the converse: if it is material then it must be real. In other words, the class of what is real may be larger than what is material but, for sure, what is material has to be real.

All this seems perfectly satisfactory until one asks a further question: “So, what is matter?” From the fact that we commonly take its reality for granted, it does not follow that we know what it is. We might then want to enlist science, but the question “what is matter?” is one that the so-called material sciences, do not ask. Indeed, they cannot, at best, they can reduce it to another question (what is energy?). “What is matter?” is a question that remains at the level of the scientifically inaccessible assumptions of science. Our best theories for how matter *behaves* still tells us very little about what matter *is*. Yet, what science cannot answer is not necessarily meaningless. The properly philosophical ques-

tion takes the following form: how can we say that something that is no “thing” (i.e., no determinate thing) still *is*? And this is a metaphysical but not a scientific question.

Consider a bronze statue such as the Artemision Zeus preserved in Athens’ Archeological Museum. The shape of the god belongs accidentally to its matter which is its substratum (*hupokeimenon*) since bronze can exist apart from the statue and it possesses its own properties that are not properties of the god himself (bronze is an alloy, Zeus is not). The bronze can itself be submitted to a further hylomorphic analysis since bronze is composed of copper and tin. Do these have a better claim to be the true substratum? What is at the bottom of it all? If we remove the layers of forms which belong accidentally to the matter either the stripping continues indefinitely because at each stage, we find a substratum that has an intrinsic form that belongs accidentally to the matter below or we finally encounter a substratum that is in its own right but is not a composite.

Prime matter would be the ultimate underlying substratum that is, ontologically, more basic than the elements (earth, air, water, and fire) and the primary contraries (hot/cold, wet/dry). It is supposed to constitute the elements (since the elements are themselves hylomorphic bodies, thus instances of substances) and it is assumed to persist through elemental changes since all changes require two opposites – a form, a corresponding privation, and something that underlies them.

The status of prime matter divides modern commentators on two issues: (a) whether Aristotle was truly committed to it (b) whether the notion is even coherent. By combination we get four possible default positions. Asking whether Aristotle believed in prime matter really comes down to the question: is it demanded by his ontology? The second issue is clearly the most fundamental (we wouldn’t wonder about Aristotle’s commitment unless we had doubts about its consistency).

Those who declare prime matter incoherent (e.g., Graham) do so on the ground that what is deprived of characteristics or properties is simply nothing. Those who try to salvage the notion claim that it must have some essential characteristics (Cohen and Byrne, for instance, appeal to extension, movability, and corporeality). As it stands, the debate turns on the soundness or expandability of prime matter and the possibility of reifying it.

This paper proposes a functional alternative: the concept of prime (or ultimate) matter is not simply an *ad hoc* response to the threat of infinite regress; it harbors the possibility of another ontology, one that is an alternative to substantialism (the view that posits substances underlying their properties as ontological primitives). This suggests that within Aristotle’s corpus lurk conceptual possibilities that can take us beyond substantialism.

I. Hylomorphism, Analysis, and Stripping Away

If we read Aristotle as a proto-phenomenologist, then hylomorphism constitutes our starting point. Whether natural or artificial, the entities that populate our daily surroundings present a duality of form and matter. We can ask about anything we encounter

two distinct questions: what is it? (a question concerning form) and what is it made of? (a question concerning matter). If we know the answer to only one of these questions, we may still be unable to answer the other: that this is a table does not tell us what it is made of since a table could be made of wood or marble, glass or metal; likewise, that an object is made of clay and silica does not tell us whether it is a pitcher, a vase or a goblet.

To say that hylomorphism constitutes Aristotle's *starting point* is to stress that Aristotle does not posit forms existing by themselves that would subsequently be joined with matter or vice versa. As Falcon observes "matter is an existentially inseparable, but definitionally separable, potential being" (Falcon 2022: 6). Rather, the starting point is the recognition of informed matter as it occurs in all individual substances around us. Forms are always encountered as enmattered and matter is always encountered as informed. The unity of form and matter is phenomenologically primary; their distinction is posterior.

Substance is so spoken of in three ways, as we have said, and of these cases one is form, another matter, and the third the product of the two; and of these, matter is potentiality and form actuality. And since the product of the two is an ensouled thing, the body is not the actuality of the soul, but the latter is the actuality of a certain kind of body" (Arist. *DA* II 1, 414a14–18).¹

There are different levels of matter and at each level, matter is substratum for the next increment of form that lies above it. What serves as the matter of something at all levels of complexity (for instance, in biology from cells to tissues, to organs, to the whole organism) cannot exist outside the complete substance of the animal. Aristotle defines an element of bodies as "the first constituent out of which something is composed, indivisible in form into another form" (Arist. *Metaph.* IV 3, 1014a26). In turn, the individual substance is itself the substratum for its various subsequent accidents.

What then is matter? Before becoming a metaphysical concept, *hulē* was an ordinary word for lumber and construction material in general.² This is probably why Aristotle often combines in the same passage instances of organisms and instances of artifacts to suggest that what is true in one case also applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the other.

Yet, the analogy between construction material in the case of artifacts and the material components of natural things remains an approximation. The flesh of an animal and the constituents of an artifact are not truly similar. The organs that constitute an animal (liver, lungs, brain, heart...) and the kinds that constitute its proximate matter (bone, sinew, muscle, skin, blood, and so forth) do not preexist the animal while bricks, stones,

¹ All translations mine unless otherwise mentioned.

² The Liddell, Scott, Jones *Greek-English Lexicon* lists the following senses of *hulē*: "forest" and "forest tree" in Herodotus; "timber" in Plato and Theophrastus; "material" in Plutarch, then the more technical sense of "matter" in Aristotle and Proclus.

lumber, nails preexist the house. Furthermore, *living* matter presents features that are unlike anything we find in inorganic materials.

Aristotle is fully aware of the difference since he argues that a corpse is not really a body anymore. “For it is not a finger in any and every state that is the finger of an animal, rather a dead finger is a finger only by equivocation” (Arist. *Metaph.* VII 10, 1035b9–25). Thus, to call a corpse (*nekros*) a body (*sōma*) is to equivocate on the ground of a likeness of the former with a truly living body. This suggests that in death, the destruction of the soul (the form) is tantamount to the destruction of its proper matter. As Koslicki puts it:

The uniqueness in the material composition of living things is not only created from the top down, through very specific functional requirements, but also from the bottom up, through a receptiveness on the part of living matter that is directed only toward a single natural form” (Koslicki 1997: 92).

The organic body – the animal proximate matter – is essentially alive; flesh has a form by nature and not by accident. By contrast, the construction materials of a house retain a certain integrity both before the construction and after the destruction of the house; they were and still are bricks, lumber, nails, or stones and with some ingenuity they could be reused. Thus, they are not called so by equivocation, for when it comes to artifacts, matter has a form contingently.

Furthermore, in the case of artifacts, *hulē* reveals a feature that is not visible in natural things. In an artifact, what is numerically one and the same can be used as the matter of another: the stone from one building could be used as material for another one, the wood of a table could be used to make a door just as the Wellington statue in Aldershot (Hampshire, England) was cast with melted down cannons used in the battle of Waterloo. Such a literal trans-formation seems impossible with living tissues.³

Matter may seem ontologically inferior to form since it serves as its receptacle; yet it outlives it. Thus, in the case of what is generated by nature (in particular, in the case of living beings) not only is the principle of generation internal (a seed) while in the case of what is generated by *technē* the principle of generation is external (the builder or craftsman) but the kind of material to which the principle of generation applies has a different function.

Finally, the relation between the material substratum and its form in the case of artifacts is accidental. A table is still a table whether it is made of wood, stone, glass and metal and the statue of Zeus is still formally the same thing whether it is made of bronze or marble. The substratum is none of its accidental properties. In the case of living beings, however, the substratum must already have some determinate properties to contract the soul/form substantial unity.

³ Organ transplant is, of course, possible, but the transplanted organ retains the same form and is intended to perform the same function in another body.

As is often the case, Aristotle's conceptual vocabulary is multifarious, the same term takes on different senses depending on the context. This is the case not only with *hulē*, as we saw, but also with form (*morphē*):

1. In some cases, form has the ordinary sense of the outline of the shape or figure (as in the example of a "bronze sphere" where sphericity is the form in the sense of the shape that happens to be filled by bronze but could as well be filled by any other material).
2. *Morphē* takes on a more conceptual sense when it stands for the functional organization of something (thus, linking it to the notion of final cause – in which case, to ask about the "form" of a thing is to ask what the thing is for, its function or purpose). For instance, the soul is the form of a body potentially having life; it is what identifies as "alive" anything that grows, moves, perceives, or thinks of its own accord. In this instance, *morphē* is the essence that any proper definition must state; it functions as a principle that orders and organizes matter. Stressing this dynamic and organizational sense of *morphē* in relation to matter, Alexander of Aphrodisias writes:

To [show] that form is not in matter as in a substrate, it was said that soul is not in body either, since the form is the cause for the matter's being in actuality (for it is not possible for it to be in [real] existence apart from the form (Alex.Aphr. *Qaest.* 1.8, 117, 8–11; transl. Sharples 1992: 43).

3. Finally, *morphē* is the essence and actuality of something. In a political context, for instance, the constitution is the form of a political community, it unifies the body politics and makes it be what it is (e.g., a democracy, an oligarchy, a monarchy, or a tyranny). At this level, what a thing is under the guise of its proximate matter does not substantially differ from what it is under the guise of the form except for the fact that the former is in potency.

To begin with hylomorphism is then to begin with a unified pair; there is no radical heterogeneity of matter and form. What is informed cannot be without what informs it and vice versa. As Byrne observes: "The potentiality of the material cause, then, is not just a privative concept; it implies as well that the material cause already possesses, in its own right, certain attributes that are required to produce a complete substance" (Byrne 2001: 102). The material cause possesses the potentiality to be a substance of a certain kind only if it already possesses certain features that makes it suitable for receiving a certain form. If we cannot make a sword out of wool, it is because wool already possesses a form. There is something about the nature of wool that prevents it from becoming a blade. In this instance, the notion of "form" cannot just refer to a geometric shape. The conflict is between two already informed hylomorphic substances rather than simply between some abstract form and matter. The potency of matter in a hylomorphic compound refers to its capacity to accept or reject a formal cause. This is possible only if matter already has a certain determinate nature (thus is already informed qua proximate matter).

For a compound to count as a true unity (for instance, for the matter "clay" and the form "pitcher" to coalesce into *one* genuine object), the form must be the telos of matter.

Thus, a hypothetical necessity between material and formal causes rules the generative process (*if* a sword, then bronze or iron but not wool, *if* a garment, then wool, or linen but not clay). Hylomorphism is dynamic and genetic: it provides an account of the coming to be of entities. Teleology is at work in hylomorphism; as Sentesy observes, “it explains how material and form (i.e., parts and whole) can be unified; *telos* explains how hylomorphic compounds can be at all” (Sentesy 2016: 111).

So long as matter has some determinate characteristics (as is the case in hylomorphic entities) its capacity expresses a certain desire to obtain completion; it is a (feminine) longing for the (masculine) form that would complete it. Matter desires form “it is the matter that does the yearning, like the female desires the male and the ugly desires the beautiful” (*Ph.* I 9, 192a24). Proximate matter, insofar as it has a determinate character, is naturally oriented toward the final and formal causes. As Morel observes: “We now understand better that matter can be called the *ousia* of a determinate thing: it is not itself a substance, but it is one *in re* with the form in the constitution of a composite substance” (Morel 2016:168). From an explanatory standpoint (and by contrast with the ancient pluralists and atomists), the matter that contributes to a causal account and must be mentioned in a complete definition is the most appropriate matter and to be appropriate entails that it is already informed. Thus, matter cannot be *ousia* in the proper sense (otherwise, it would be the substance of a substance composed of matter and form); yet it is not fully excluded from substantiality either.

It is tempting to see in *Metaphysics* Z 3, 1029a20–23 Aristotle’s “more developed definition of matter.”⁴

By matter, I mean that which is in its own right neither a specific thing nor any other specific predicate by which being is determined. For there exists something of which each of these is predicated, the being of which is different from each of its predicates.

Yet, is this a definition? The definition of a term is supposed to delineate what a thing is while this only tells us what it is not. Matter as such has no definition because it has no essence. To understand matter, we must ask not for its definition but for its function. The method of analysis, which is indispensable when approaching the concept of matter, is further pursued in *Metaphysics* Z 3 with a thought experiment that I shall refer to as the method of stripping away.

It has now been said in outline what substance is, namely what is not said of an underlying substratum but of which the other things are said. But we should not say only this, since it is not enough. For it itself is unclear, and furthermore, matter becomes substance. For if this is not substance, what else it escapes us. For when the other are stripped away, we do not see anything remaining. For whereas the other are affections (*pathē*), products (*poiēmata*), capac-

⁴ This is, for instance, how Jerry Green reads it (Green 2014: 328).

ities (*dunameis*) – length, breadth and depth are quantities and not substances (for quantity is not substance). But when length, breadth and depth are stripped away, we see nothing left, unless it be something that is determined by these, so that the matter alone must appear to be substance for those who investigate in this way (Arist. *Metaph.* VII 3, 1029a7–18).

It is first to be noted that in the stripping away argument of Z 3 even *dunamis* is removed. When the properties of a material object are stripped away, we should be left with the object itself. In that case, there is a parallel between matter understood as substratum in the grammatical sense of the term (i.e., what is subject of predication) and the ontological sense (what underlies by receiving properties).⁵ The only thing that remains when we strip away the predicates from the object is whatever is determined by them, and this would be matter.

The target of Z 3 is not so much the claim that matter is substance, but the claim that substances are primary substrata. The substratum is understood here in terms of what Jerry Green calls “asymmetrical predication” (i.e., being subject of predicates but not being predicate of anything else) (Green 2014: 325). The asymmetrical predication argument leads (erroneously) to the claim that matter is substance. Thus, in Z 3 Aristotle rejects the idea that asymmetrical predication (the logical sense of *hupokeimenon*) is sufficient to claim that substances underlie.

There are three conditions for substance: (1) It must be a *separate* thing; (2) It must be a “*this*”; (3) It must have *priority*. But matter is neither separable nor a *this* and it cannot be prior to form since actuality has ontological priority over potentiality. The stripping away argument fails to meet the criteria for substantiality. Matter cannot be substance if substance is subject (*hupokeimenon*). The dependency of matter on form explains why matter fails the separateness criterion. But what does “separate” (*chōriston*) mean when it is attributed to form? How could a form be separable from the very matter it informs?

Chen argues that *chōrismos* means separability from the secondary categories which the concrete individual substance possesses by virtue of its form. It is impossible to talk of secondary categories (for instance, a quality or a quantity) without assuming substance (a quality or a quantity can only be *of* a substance) so we have a case of definition by addition (as in snub nose, for instance) (Chen: 1957: 56). When a substance is defined, no secondary category should enter in the definition. A definition corresponds to an essence; it is an essence put into words. The separability of the concrete thing consists in its persistence amid the changes of its accidental attributes. The subsistence of the concrete individual substance is due to the fact that its accidental attributes contribute nothing to its essence.

As for matter, it has no separate existence – its existence cannot be independent of the existence of anything else. The stripping away argument works only for what Lewis calls

⁵ This is of course to be taken as a *parallel*. Aristotle's term *hupokeimenon* is ambiguous and I do not mean to identify the two senses.

the “received criterion” of *hupokeimenon* as subject of predication (Lewis 2013: 63). Yet, Aristotle distinguishes two senses: “things underlie in two ways, either by being a *this* (as an animal is to its attributes), or as matter to actuality” (VII 13, 1038b6). For the stripping away argument to function, the relation between the substratum and its predicates must be accidental.

II. Beyond the Elemental

If we must start with hylomorphism, it does not follow that the analysis must remain at this level. The material component of a sensible substance can again be analyzed further down in terms of the same duality. If bricks are the matter of the house, they can themselves be analyzed in terms of their matter (clay, sand or lime) and in terms of their form (here in the sense of shape, namely, a rectangular cuboid). Again, clay can be understood as a certain ratio (“form” then takes the sense of proportion) of minerals and plant detritus. If we continue the analysis, we encounter the elements. According to Empedocles, the things we encounter in the sublunary world are made up of different ratios of earth, water, fire, and air.⁶ If we continue further toward the bottom of it all lurks *prôtē hulē* or prime matter.

The Aristotelian account of matter is hierarchical: we start from the material substratum of a particular substance, then we consider its recognizable elements (for instance the construction material used to build a house or the organs of an animal), then further down to their determinate generic components (wood and bricks, flesh and bones), then further to elemental matter. How much further can we go? One could be tempted to opt for pluralism and assume, with Empedocles, a limited number of indestructible “roots” whose association (*philia*) and separation (*neikos*) give rise to all things. An element is a primary constituent into which a body is divided. But it is to be noted that Aristotle talks of “so-called elements (*ta legomena stoikeia* or *ta kaloumena stoikeia*)” (Arist. *Ph.* III 4, 203a17), the phrase also appears three times in *De generatione et corruptione* II 1.

⁶ The case of the fifth element, ether, raises difficulties that I cannot go into here. Alexander of Aphrodisias posits a cosmological material duality: celestial bodies do not have the same matter as corruptible bodies for their materiality is without potency. This would suggest then that ether is not itself further analyzable to some ultimate matter because the celestial bodies, while corporeal, escape generation and destruction. “It is clear that the matter which is the substrate of the things subject to coming-to-be and passing-away will be different from that which is the substrate of the divine [celestial spheres].” Alex.Aphr. *Qaest.* 1.15, 27, 2–4, 60. See Lavaud 2008: 399–414.

This does not cast doubt on their being *elemental*, as Crowley has argued, but it does not follow that they are *ultimate*.⁷

The elements are themselves bodies and are often mentioned by Aristotle as examples of substances. They possess one of each of the two fundamental pairs of opposites, hot/cold and wet/dry and they can change into one another.

The elements therefore cannot be generated from something incorporeal nor from a body which is not an element, and the only remaining alternative is that they are generated from one another (Arist. *Cael.* III 6, 305a31–34).

In evaporation, for instance, water (wet and cold) turns into air (wet and hot) but this could not happen unless there is again some further substratum underlying the process. The coldness of water is replaced by the hotness of air while wetness remains. However, a change in tangible quality is an instance of *alteration*, not of *generation*. Something else must persist through the change that occurs when the property “cold” is replaced by the property “hot.” What underlies elemental change cannot be any of the elements, since it must be capable of possessing the characteristics of each of them successively. This is prime matter, the ultimate constituent of everything.

The ontological question this raises is thus: can we say of such a thing (which is not even a thing) that, nevertheless, it *is*?⁸ Does not this clash with the ontological privilege Aristotle grants to substance, actuality, and form which are the best candidates to answer the basic question “*ti esti*,” (what is it)? After all, there is no prime matter *in itself* since to be “*kath’ hauto*” is to have substantial reality and to have substantial reality is to have a form. To be, in its primary sense, is to be “this something” “a this” (“*tode ti*”). This house, this tree, this horse, etc. are instances of primary substances. But matter, considered independently from form, can neither be a this nor anything separate. The impossible separation of matter and form leads us to admit that we cannot grasp matter by itself but, at best, only by analogy.

In *De generatione et corruptione* II 1, Aristotle sides with the philosophers who talk of a “matter of the perceptible bodies” (*hulen tōn somatōn tōn aisthetōn* – Arist. *GC* II

⁷ Timothy Crowley argues against the view according to which “fire, air, water, and earth are not elements strictly speaking, because they reveal under analysis, further, more fundamental, that is more *elemental*, items.” (Crowley 2008: 225). I agree that there is nothing more elemental than the elements, but it does not follow that what is elemental is ultimate.

⁸ In his recent translation of *De generatione et corruptione* into French Marwan Rashed rejects prime matter on the ground that a difficult sentence at *GC* I 3, 319b3 (“*ho men gar pote on hupokeitai to auto, to d’ einai ou to auto*”) would conceal Aristotle’s pronouncement against prime matter. The sentence is typically translated as “for the substratum, whatever it may be, is the same, but the being is not the same” (Williams). Rashed proposes to read “*ho pote on*” as having a temporal sense (“at any point of time”). Suppose that at t1 we have fire and at t2 we have earth; we should then understand “what matter is [at t1 and at t2], as it serves as substratum [pivot of] change is the same thing (*to auto*): namely dry.” (Rashed 2020: xcv). The problem however is that this reading works for *one* instance of elemental transformation (from fire to earth, “dry” is the constant that remains). But how can we account for the whole cycle when at some point air (wet and hot) will end up as earth (dry and cold) and no quality remains?

1, 329a25) but their mistake is to posit a separate material principle. Aristotle argues on the contrary that matter is inseparable. This raises a puzzle: on the one hand, *qua* cause (*aitia*), matter belongs, at least in part, to any explanatory account of substances. On the other hand, as Richard Lee observes, “whenever we turn our thoughts to matter, what emerges is not matter in its materiality, but a form” (Lee Jr. 2016: 24). The difficulty we are confronting fall under three main headings:

1. Matter cannot be encountered directly. It is always a component of a substance that forms a unitary hylomorphic whole. In other words, it is always informed and it is understood only indirectly by analogy (the wood is to the table what the metal is to the dagger and what the flesh is to the animal). But analogical thinking betrays our ignorance. None of these terms is known by itself since what is properly knowable of a substance is its form insofar as it informs some determinate matter (e.g., a snub nose), matter *by itself* (i.e., independent of form) is unknowable.

2. Prime matter is the material of the elements – air, water, earth, fire- but it is not itself made of any further matter. The word “prime” (*prôtē*) in the expression “prime matter” means that it is *ultimate* or *primordial*. Since the issue occurred out of the consideration of an analysis of hylomorphic substances, prime matter seems to function as a device contrived to halt infinite regress. In other words, it seems to have a role in the argument, but no place in ontology.

3. To the four sublunary elements are attached four primary qualities (hot/cold, wet/dry) but prime matter, the matter *of* the elements must itself be neutral. In order to be the matter of water as well as fire, earth, and air it must be neither wet nor dry, neither hot nor cold. Just as the rejection of bare particulars leads to the rejection of the concept of substance (a mere “I-know-not-what”), the rejection of properties leads to denying a material substratum. Confronted by these difficulties, most commentators have opted for one of two options: either prime matter is ultimately incoherent or it is deemed salvageable if we find a way of reifying it.⁹

Let us consider the first option, which I will dub eliminativism, the suspicion that the notion of prime matter is incoherent. Gill rejects prime matter and considers that “the four elements – earth, water, air, and fire – are the ultimate subjects in Aristotle’s system of the sublunary world” (Gill 1989: 40). On this, she follows Charlton who argues that there is nothing more basic than the elements and that they change into one another without there being anything that remains (Charlton 1983: 197–211). Some have even suggested that Aristotle was not truly committed to prime matter or that he didn’t even have such a concept.¹⁰ According to Graham, prime matter commits Aristotle to creation *ex nihilo* (even though Aristotle explicitly shares the Eleatic abhorrence for this idea).

⁹ Of course, other interpretations have been suggested and I will mention some of them. However, these seem to be the two dominant ones at this point and I will focus on them in this paper.

¹⁰ According to Beere, for instance, the elements are the lowest level. Beere interprets prime matter as a kind of undifferentiated universal stuff (not *this* fire, but fire in general) (Beere 2006: 324)

Aristotle identifies pure indeterminacy with the concept of nothingness of the Presocratic (specifically Eleatic) tradition (...). How then can Aristotle escape the charge that his elements are created out of nothing? For it appears that something which Aristotle posits as underlying elemental change is really no thing at all (Graham 1987a: 477).

There is, however, no reason to assume that indeterminacy is tantamount to non-being or pure nothingness and indeed, the same paper has a more nuanced conclusion:

As one approaches the limits of being in descending through the chain of being to simple substance, the substances become more real or at least no less real as subjects; at the same time, they become less real as determinate particulars. At the point where one meets prime matter the divergence has become complete. Prime matter is both an ultimately real substratum and an ultimately unreal particular (Graham 1987a: 489).

To say that something is not a particular is not tantamount to saying that it is nothing. The science announced at the beginning of *Metaphysics* Gamma, first philosophy i.e., the science that seeks a theoretical grasp of being qua being, must also investigate *relative non-being*. Negation, privation, potency, and absence are not pure nothingness. "In the case of a privation, a certain nature is also involved that is the underlying subject of which it is said" (Arist. *Metaph.* III 2, 1004b15). Graham ascribes to Aristotle an ontology that recognizes only actual substances and their properties and reduces any other sense of being to pure nothingness.

Proponents of eliminativism focus in particular on *Generation and Corruption*. Charlton, for instance, consider the following claim: "It is better to make the matter for all *achōriston* as being one and the same" (Arist. *GA* I 320b12–14). How to translate *achōriston*? The meaning is clear: not parted, undivided. Charlton proposes "not separate from the thing which changes" which is to say that matter in a hylomorphic compound is not separate from the form (a correct Aristotelian claim, no doubt) and interprets "all" as referring to "all kinds of change" (Charlton 1983: 200). But this interpretation raises two problems: (1) *Achōriston* refers to matter itself, not to one component of a material substance and (2) it does nothing to account for the claim that it is "one and the same;" yet, the expression can only refer back to *hulē* in a sentence that does not mention different kinds of change.

In *De generatione et corruptione* I 3 the contrast is between two types of generation: coming-to-be *simpliciter* (*haplōs*)¹¹ or "properly speaking" (*kuriōs*) and coming to be "something from being something" (Arist. *GA* 317a34). In the first case, the continuant is imperceptible and the change occurs in the *intrinsic* features of the entity (the features that are responsible for *what* the material substance is as when blood comes from semen,

¹¹ "*Haplōs*" has also the connotation of "simply" and even "absolutely" when used as the opposite of *kata ti* (relatively).

air from water or water from air). In generation, the substratum itself does not remain the same. In the case of alteration, however, the continuant is perceptible and remains the same; alteration does not affect *what* the body is but *how* it is. For instance, when one recovers from an illness one comes to be healthy from being ill. If, in the first instance, coming-to-be *simpliciter* means emerging out of non-existence, then we would indeed be faced with the incoherence Graham denounces.¹²

“Matter in the strictest sense (*malista kuriōs*) is the substratum receptive of generation and destruction, but in a certain way, it is also the [substratum] for other changes, because all substrata are receptive of certain contraries” (Arist. *GA* I 4, 320a2–5). Commenting on this passage, Gill concludes that “the description itself is misleading. Aristotle’s description of matter as “the *hupokeimenon* receptive of generation and destruction” seems, on its face, to characterize a subject that can come to be and pass away, and therefore a subject that is perishable” (Gill 1989: 61). The point of this argument is that the description of matter at *De generatione et corruptione* 320a2–5 is misleading as a description of prime matter. It is not matter qua substratum that perishes (since it is indestructible) but the *substance* as a whole (i.e., the composite of form and matter) that is generated and destroyed. Although it is true that a substance can also be considered the substratum of alteration, the concepts of *ousia* and *hupokeimenon* are not interchangeable. On this view, “matter in the strictest sense” refers to the four sublunary elements. This, however, is not a sufficient reason to dismiss the concept of prime matter.

David Charles, for his part, wishes to maintain the notion of prime matter but proposes to reconstrue it as a “logical object,” something akin to Fine’s arbitrary objects that serves as the denotation of the variables in the open sentences of quantifier logic. Prime matter is “that which receives genesis and destruction in material changes.”¹³ When water (wet and cold) turns into air (wet and hot), it retains the property wet and loses the property cold. Such a “logical” prime matter is not a true constituent of the elements. “The process of analysis Aristotle envisages is thus not a metaphysical one (...) but a *logical* analysis of stripping away the categorial attributes of a substance until one arrives at what we may call the logical subject” (Graham 1987b: 224–225). This posits an analogy: the logical substratum is the limiting case of logical analysis just as prime matter is the limiting case of metaphysical analysis.¹⁴ Such a “logical subject” may not have any ontological status. “If PM has no actual features of its own, that is, if for all feature *F*, PM is not-*F*, is not PM something like pure indeterminacy? And pure indeterminacy, *more than non-existence* is for Aristotle and his tradition (the Eleatic tradition) the paradigm case of nothingness.”¹⁵ Whether indeterminacy is “more than non-existence” nothingness will be tackled in section IV below. Another problem with this interpretation is that the

¹² Gill supports this view: “The *hupokeimenon* for generation is not a continuant.” (Gill 1989: 55)

¹³ Charles 2004: 158. See also Lewis 2008: 130–131.

¹⁴ Graham (1987b: 231) cautiously admits that “we cannot be sure on the basis of the limited evidence that Aristotle made such an analogy.”

¹⁵ Graham (1987b: 227) – my emphasis.

destruction of water is severed from the generation of air. In this case, an element has been *replaced* by another while Aristotle invites us to conceive of change as a continuous process rather than as a replacement; in motion, there is continuity and not sudden metamorphosis.¹⁶

Thus, it is not prime matter but elemental transformation without prime matter that introduces discontinuity and the emergence of something out of nothing.¹⁷ If prime matter is the subject of predication or properties *and* prime matter is nothing, then we have returned to the Eleatic puzzle. But this would assume that “coming-to-be *simpliciter*” means coming-to-be “from non-being *simpliciter*” (i.e., from nothingness). In other words, the qualification “simpliciter” (*haplōs*) would change from qualifying something to qualifying nothing. In which case, generation would indeed be creation *ex nihilo*. The appeal to prime matter is precisely meant to prevent this consequence. Before the statue was carved, it simply was not (i.e., there was no statue) but this is not equivalent to saying “there was nothing” (otherwise, as Aristotle warns, “it would be true to say that there are things of which non-being can be predicated” – Arist. *GA* 317b3). Likewise, in elemental transformation, if we reject prime matter as *hupokeimenon*, the annihilation of an element would be replaced by the emergence of a new one out of nothing. This contradicts both Aristotle's views on the continuity of motion and time and his objection to the Megarians in *Metaphysics* Θ. It follows from this that “that-out-of-which” a substance comes-to-be is not itself *substantial*, but not (*pace* Graham) that it is nothing. Indeed, prime matter is “no thing” (i.e., it is not a determinate something) but it does not follow that it is mere nothingness.

On the opposite side of the debate, arguments for the coherence of the notion of prime matter seek some essential property that could apply to it and they typically appeal to extension (and with it to the capacity for motion and rest).¹⁸ I shall dub this the extensionalist interpretation. Prime matter could not perform its role as constituent of bodies and substratum of elemental change unless it is extended. Byrne, for instance, writes:

In fact, not only must prime matter be extended, movable matter, but, given that the five elements are made out of it and all other perceptible substances are made out of these five elements, prime matter is also responsible for the extension, mobility, and corporeal nature of all other perceptible substances by being itself extended, movable, and corporeal.¹⁹

¹⁶ This is particularly central to Aristotle's critique of the Megarians. See Massie 2016: 279–309.

¹⁷ Charlton denies that there would be such a discontinuity “Aristotle wants to say that water passes away, not, indeed, into nothing, but into air; and air comes into being, not out of nothing, but out of water” (Charlton 1983: 210). But the problem remains: without the assumption of prime matter, there is a metamorphosis where one substance simply vanishes, and another one replaces it.

¹⁸ Sokolowski 1970: 263–288; Cohen 1984: 171–194; Byrne 2001: 85–111.

¹⁹ Byrne 2001: 101. As mentioned above it is not obvious that this can apply to the fifth element (*aether*) at least according to the testimony of Alexander of Aphrodisias.

Byrne is inviting us to imagine the extended prime matter as a finite but infinitely divisible three-dimensional magnitude that lacks any determinate visible or tangible qualities and thus is not essentially any particular kind of body. This would be a viable metaphysical concept and it would solve the question of Aristotle's commitment to prime matter.

The first difficulty with this line of thought is that attributing any essential property to prime matter (as the extensionalists do) is explicitly rejected by Aristotle:

If, first, there is a single matter of all things, as, for instance, the void or the plenum or extension (*megethos*) or the triangles, either all things will move upward or all things will move downward, and the second motion will be abolished" (Arist. *Cael.* IV 5, 312b21–23).

Different elements have different properties that account for different motions (fire tends to move upward and earth downward) but prime matter cannot have any intrinsic property.

The second problem is that the attempt to save Aristotle from the accusation of incoherence is done by assuming a purely quantitative conception of space where bodies are modifications of an infinitely extended matter. As Krizan puts it: "The essential problem for the Extended Prime Matter Thesis, as an interpretation of Aristotle, is that it requires his commitment to *indeterminate* extension, which is at odds with the concept of extension found in Aristotle's physical works" (Krizan 2016: 528). Aristotle's own terms (*diastēma* and *megethos*) are often rendered as "extension" in English translations. Yet, they do not fit with the modern idea of indeterminate three-dimensionality. "The specific use of *diastēma* to signify extension suggests that extension is the *internal* interval of a magnitude, and hence, extension *belongs* to a magnitude"²⁰. There is no extension beyond the magnitude of a body in which extension inheres.

Furthermore, extension is magnitude and magnitude is a quantity. However, when it comes to matter, we must consider that

By matter, I mean that which, in itself, is not stated as being the substance of something, *nor a quantity*, nor any of the other senses of being. For there is something of which all these things are predicated, whose being is *other than that of each of the predicates; for all the others are predicates of a substance, while a substance is a predicate of matter*. Thus, this last is in itself neither a substance nor a quantity nor any of the others [categories]; and it is not a negation of any of these for even a negation belongs to something accidentally" (Arist. *Metaph.* VII 3, 1029a20–25).

²⁰ Krizan 2016: 529. The term is used for all three dimensions. For instance, in *Physics* IV 2, 223a1 *diastēma* refers to the extension of a finite line.

If quantity is excluded, so is extension. There is no three-dimensional extension outside particular *actual* bodies but prime matter is potency and not actuality.

It is true that Aristotle does introduce the idea of an intelligible matter to account, in particular, for geometric beings. "Of matter though, there is some that is intelligible and some that is perceptible, and one part of the account is always of the matter and the other the actuality – for example, the circle is shape plus plane" (Arist. *Metaph.* VIII 6, 1045a34–35).²¹ Intelligible matter is the matter of geometric objects and seems to be a sort of bare extension, the extension we must assume when we think of any geometric object. But, *pace* Byrne, it does not follow that Aristotle attributes to *perceptible* matter the bare extension of geometric space.²² Material things' spatial existence is to be thought in terms of "place" and the "proper places" that belong to their elements rather than extension.

In short, the debate oscillates between two positions: either we attempt to save Aristotle by reifying matter and granting it some essential property (extensionalism) or we recognize that it is not some "thing" and conclude that it is nothing at all (eliminativism). The problem is that both positions assume substantialism and actualism as the only parameters of ontology and ignore that Aristotle's thought harbors the possibility of a non-substantialist alternative at the infra-level of potentiality.

Aristotle's universe contains, among other things, inert heaps and decaying stuff that are matter in a derivative sense (they were the material of past substances and could potentially become the material of future ones). These are by-products of the continuing upward struggle of all things towards complete realization or perfect activity that, in the sublunary world, always ends in loss (at least for individual substances). We call these "matter" because they are the elements into which things resolve when losing their forms, but this is a loose way of talking. Given the close connection between actuality and existence, prime matter cannot exist without some informed compound. Thus, prime matter is not separate or outside the things we commonly deal with. It is rather the potentiality that lurks at the bottom of all actual things.

If we declare that there is something that is more basic than all things, something that is not a thing and yet not merely nothing or that there is something more primitive than the elements themselves we encounter a difficulty. These claims raise an ontological question: in what sense can we say "*there is*" when we talk of prime matter? The expression "*there is*" is deictic. It points to... and to point to is to point to something substantial. Matter, however, does not have unity; it is not a "*this*" and as soon as some matter contributes to the emergence of a *tode ti*, it is not prime anymore but informed matter that has received a substantial form. Therefore, we should not even be allowed to say *there is* prime matter. Yet, a main reason why, despite these difficulties, eliminating it

²¹ Intelligible matter is also mentioned in *Metaph.* VII 10, 1036a9.

²² "In general, though, we might raise a puzzle about what sort of science it does belong to to go through puzzles about the *matter* of the objects of mathematics. For it does not belong to natural science, because the entire work of the natural scientist is concerned with things that have within themselves a principle of movement and rest" – Arist. *Metaph.* X 1, 1059b14–17.

from Aristotle's ontology is not a suitable solution is that matter plays a crucial role in the account of change and transformation. Rejecting it would make change not only incomprehensible but impossible.

III. Matter and the Metaphysics of Change

Any account of change requires an appeal to matter. In any change a property is either gained or lost. Something then must subsist to receive or lose the property in question, and this, ultimately, is matter. "Nor is there a matter of everything, but only of such things of which there is coming-to-be and change into each other" (Arist. *Metaph.* VII 5, 1044b27–28). The emergence of the notion of matter in the context of a philosophical account of change performs a crucial function. In response to Parmenides' challenge, Aristotle must show that change does not interlace in some impossible manner being and non-being *simpliciter* (if non-being is not, how could anything be mixed with it?), but substantial being and potential matter (which is a *relative* non-being but not absolute nothingness). If form and matter can be distinguished, it is because the form or the hylo-morphic compound as a whole is what is affected while the underlying substratum has its own peculiar persistence.²³ Everything that changes, changes through something, out of something, and into something, the last one being either a substance or a quality, a quantity or a place. Matter underlies the four cases as prime matter in the first case (simple genesis), as informed matter in the other three.²⁴ Since generation and corruption are everlasting (as the generation of something is always the perishing of something else), and since even the elements are not everlasting but come into being in some way (Arist. *GA* II 3) there is a need not only for a source of eternal motion (the motion of the sun along the ecliptic according to *De generatione et corruptione* II 11) but also for a receptacle that can guarantee this eternal cycle. If matter is eternal and the elements are destructible, to stop at the elemental level is to postulate that the elements emerge out of nothing.

As Fieremans has observed, the distinction between matter and substance (entities) is marked by the linguistic difference between mass nouns (earth, water, air, fire, flesh, bones, bronze, wood, stone...) that designate kinds of stuff and count nouns (horses, statues, houses...) that designate primary individual substances (Fieremans 2007: 21–49). Within the category of quantity, the distinction between matter and *ousia* has a correlate between continuous (as for instance geometric quantities, length, surface, volume) and discrete (arithmetic). This is why Aristotle observes that, when it comes to matter, ordinary language tends to replace nouns by an adjectival form. Aristotle even coins a neologism to designate what is said of a substance insofar as it has matter: "that-en"

²³ Mark Sentesy goes as far as granting the underlying matter its "own persisting *identity*" (Sentesy 2020: 36 – emphasis added). To talk of identity is problematic, I think we should instead consider persistence without identity. See section IV below.

²⁴ See Chen 1957: 54.

(*ekeininos*) which stands to the pronoun “that” the way “wooden” function as a generic adjective for the noun “wood.” The bed *is* not wood because only the form (bed), not the matter (wood), is the correct answer to the question “what is it?” To be a “bed” is not to be what a bed is made of. Rather, the bed is “wooden” just as the ring *is* not gold but “of gold” or “golden.” This linguistic observation makes of the material aspect of a substance something that is akin to a quality since we turn a substantive into an adjective. But since prime matter does not have any further underlying matter, it could not be called that-en. Language gives us a hint, but it does not follow from this that it is the sole basis of ontological multiplicity, for the distinction between form and underlying matter has its source in change.²⁵

Change, *metabolē*, is an umbrella term that covers the cases of *kinēsis* (motion), *alloiōsis* (alteration, qualitative change), growth and diminution, *genesis* and *phthora* (coming-to-be or generation and destruction or passing-away).²⁶ Aristotle invites us to hear *metabolē* literally as a “turning from/to”: “Every change is from something to something, as the name [*metabolē*] makes clear for after [*meta-*] something else shows that there is one thing before and another after” (Arist. *Ph.* V 1, 225a1–3). This definition stresses the fact that all changes presuppose a *source* from which they depart, and occur *between* (another sense of *meta-*) two terms. Matter is what needs to be posited to make sense of the transformational process. In other words, any “coming into” is a “coming from.” This rules out an emergence out of nothing, a destination that would have no provenance. Thus, we need a third term, for something must underlie and persist in the process between provenance and destination.

There cannot be change without physical matter; yet matter itself cannot be a source of motion:

If one were to say that matter generates by means of its movement, he would speak more in accordance with the facts of nature... However, these thinkers are also wrong for to be acted upon, that is to be moved, is characteristic of matter [*tēs men gar hulēs to paschein esti kai to kineisthai*], but to move, that is to act, is the function of another power (Arist. *GA* II 9, 335b24–31).

²⁵ On this issue, I agree with Senteny's claim: “It is not clear that form and underlying thing can be distinguished on the basis of language alone, because in speech predicate and subject are exchangeable [...] Change establishes the particularity of being which makes a distinction between subject and predicate possible in the first place” (Senteny 2020: 35).

²⁶ In *Physics* III 1 Aristotle uses *kinēsis* in a broad sense that makes it akin to *metabolē*: “The being-complete of what is in potency, as such, is *kinēsis*” (*Ph.* III 1, 201a11) and he lists under it alteration, growth and diminution, generation and destruction, and locomotion. Later on, however, in *Physics* V 1 *kinēsis* is reserved to locomotion. This suggests a generic and a specific sense of *kinēsis*.

Matter is then receptivity, disposition or pre-disposition for the act of the form. We find in it features of submissiveness to and attraction for the form that are assumed to be feminine.²⁷ Now, since a) every change presupposes an underlying substratum (*hupokeimenon*) and b) since there are two kinds of changes for some are non-substantial (e.g., the green leaves turn yellow in the fall while birds fly south, an object increases or shrinks in size, Critias changes from being non-musical to being musical) – in which case the substratum is already a substance while other changes are substantial (an entity that did not exist a moment ago now exists and one that did exist for a while is now gone), what then could play the role of the underlying subject in the second case (substantial change)? It clearly cannot be the substance itself or there would be no coming-into-being. By contrast with alteration and locomotion, generation is not a mere modification of an already existing substance; it is the emergence of something new. Something that was not has entered existence. But how can there be generation of a substance if there is no generation *ex nihilo*?

Aristotle's response to this question is matter. If we didn't entertain matter as an underlying substratum, we would have to conclude that something is generated from nothing or that nothing, somehow, turns into something; this would be a violation of Parmenides' principle that Aristotle is not willing to commit.

We ourselves agree with them [Eleatic thinkers] in holding that nothing can be said without qualification to come from what is not. But nevertheless, we maintain that a thing may come to be from what is not in a qualified sense, i.e., accidentally. For a thing comes to be from the privation, which, in its own nature, is *something which is not* (Arist. *Ph.* I 8, 191b13–16).

Generation is change from matter to substance and destruction is change from substance to matter. In either case, matter provides *persistence*; it remains the substratum that is not substantial and yet is not nothing. "In the case of privation, a certain nature is also involved that is the underlying substrate of which the privation is predicated" (Arist. *Metaph.* III 8, 1004a16). The substratum is *deprived*; privation is absence of a form in matter, the lack of a predicate is to say that it is relative non-being – a non-substance that is not nothing.

Yet a problem remains, for the matter we encounter in our ordinary dealing is always some kind of matter (wood, stone, iron, fabric, clay – matter ready for the reception of a form). This means that it is always determinate, it has a specific kind and can never exist separately from form. If generation is not creation *ex nihilo*, it seems to be rather a trans-formation. Even if we further analyze determinate matter (say bronze) we will find a certain combination of elements which, again, have a specific form. Is generation of elemental matter itself a kind of change?

²⁷ For a discussion of the gendered over-determination of matter, see Trott (2019) – chapters 4 and 5 in particular. Bianchi (2014), and Deslauriers (1998: 138–167).

For it is a puzzling question whether there is generation of a substance and a this rather than <merely> of a quality, or quantity or location (and the same applies to destruction). For if something is generated then clearly there will be something in potentiality but not an actual substance from which the generation will arise and into which the thing being destroyed must change (Arist. *GA* I 3, 317b21–26).

It is to be noted that in this passage the potentiality of matter is understood in relation to a “a substance and a this.” The solution to this impasse is that the generation of a substance is the destruction of another and that the destruction of one substance is the generation of another. So, in the case of proximate matter, generation does not proceed from some preexisting pure potentiality but from the reserve of further potentialities that any actual being harbors. If to be in potency is to be oriented toward actualization, then the actual is ontologically prior to the potential because potentiality is for the sake of its end in actuality.

But while the potentiality of proximate matter (a block of marble for instance) is oriented toward some possible forms and excludes others, the potentiality of prime matter is potentiality *simpliciter*. One could ask if we shouldn't go even one step further and ask about the kind of change that would generate prime matter itself? Aristotle, of course, rejects this hypothesis; prime matter is ungenerated and imperishable. Since it is not itself a compound of form and matter it can neither be generated nor destroyed.

While many commentators focus on “coming-into-being” the case of destruction is particularly important for the account of prime matter.

In one way too matter perishes and comes to be, and in another way it does not. For as *that in which*, it does intrinsically perish, since what perishes – the privation – is present in it; but as what is potentially, it does not intrinsically perish and is incapable of perishing and coming to be (Arist. *Ph.* I 9, 192a25–27).

Despite what is often assumed, potentiality does not always entail privation. The initial alternative (in one way matter perishes, in another it does not) refers to the two kinds of matter we have distinguished. Qua *proximate*, matter is perishable: wood rots or burns, iron rusts away, even rocks erode. Qua *ultimate* (prime), matter is what subsists. Thus, just as generation is not creation *ex nihilo*, destruction is not complete annihilation. As a commentator puts it “Prime matter is necessarily underlying substance [sic], substance necessarily underlying any generation and perishment, an endless, never-failing cause of endless, never-failing generation and perishment.”²⁸ It is not just the eternal divine bodies of the celestial spheres but also the pure potentiality at the core of the material beings that populate the sublunar world that is eternal. This may seem surpris-

²⁸ Fieremans 2009: 28. Of course, the expression is rather misleading. Prime matter is ultimate substratum but not *substance* in the proper sense of the term.

ing, since eternal things (which, by definition, are ungenerated and imperishable) must exist in actuality and no eternal thing exists potentially insofar as it is eternal. Yet, this is an inevitable consequence since if one were to assume that prime matter is not eternal but must be capable of being created and destroyed, one would have to posit yet one more underlying substratum to make this generation and destruction possible.

Things which contain matter cannot be eternal, that is, if that which is capable of not existing is not eternal, as we have had occasion to say elsewhere. Now if what we have just been saying – that no substance is eternal unless it is in actuality – is true universally, and the elements are the matter of substance, an eternal substance can have elements of which, as inherent in it, it consists (Arist. *Metaph.* XII 2, 1088b23–28).

This does not rule out materiality for the eternal celestial bodies, but rather matter insofar as it is a marker of potentiality; i.e., insofar as it is responsible for the fact that sublunary beings are capable of being as well as not being.

Surprisingly perhaps, the solution to what subsists at the lowest level of the chain of being is similar to what can be found at its zenith. Everything that moves is moved by another but the process cannot be pursued to infinity. At the summit of the pyramid of beings, we need to posit a prime mover that moves without being moved and is pure actuality and activity. At its base, we must posit prime matter as pure potentiality. Yet, the parallel does not mean that either extreme (the base and the summit) exist separately. The prime mover could not be in the absence of what is moved by it any more than prime matter can be independent from actual material substances.

IV. Potentiality and the Neuter

A proponent of prime matter could argue that Aristotle needs something like a pure potentiality because otherwise his theory would fail. This is true, but also insufficient. At best, we have here a motivation but not a justification. My contention is that Aristotle needs prime matter but that if we uphold this concept, we find ourselves in a situation that pushes Aristotelian metaphysics to its limits.

Whereas *Metaphysics Z* presented matter as substratum, *Metaphysics H* focuses on a crucial new determination by positing the equivalence of matter and potency, form and actuality. “By matter I mean that which, while not being a this in actuality is a this in potency” (Arist. *Metaph.* VIII 1, 1042a26). “Matter and form are one and the same thing, one in potency, the other in act” (Arist. *Metaph.* VIII 6, 1054b18). While in *Z 3* Aristotle was working from the assumption that the *hupokeimenon* is sufficiently captured by the

criterion of asymmetrical predication, it is now understood in terms of the criteria for substantiality that the *hupokeimenon* lacks; namely separability and thisness.²⁹

To state that a thing is not identical to its length, breadth, or depth is not conceptually difficult, of course, but this gives us a purely logical conception of *possibility* governed by the principle of non-contradiction that is not sufficient to grasp the *potentiality* of matter. Matter is nothing, in the sense of “not a thing” not in the sense of nothingness. In its proximate form is a determinate nothing i.e., the potentiality of a material to form some concrete substance. On the ground of the priority of actuality over potentiality, Aristotle still cannot accept matter as substance in the full sense of the term since it is not actually determined, yet, it cannot be eliminated since it is potentially a this.

Prime matter confronts us with the limit of intelligibility. On the one hand, material substances are indisputably substances; yet, as soon as we try to think their materiality, it recedes from thought. If we consider a statue, the first thing we know is its form while bronze is its matter; but if we wish to know bronze, we are once again considering a form (here in the sense of a ratio of approximately 88% copper and 12% tin); and if we consider the copper, the form is, say, earth and fire in yet another ratio, and if we talk about the earth, we again grasp cold and dry. Richard A. Lee puts the problem in the following terms:

Aristotle seems to implicitly recognize a central feature of matter as matter: it is, simply, other than thought. Aristotle is forced to this position, it seems, by his acknowledgment that the conditions that allow something to be thinkable *both require and refuse matter*. In this way, Aristotle's path to matter brings to the fore the basic feature of matter: it is nonthought, its being is as an *other* to thought (Lee Jr. 2016: 27 – emphasis added).

What is intelligible is a form-in-matter. The examples from *technē* (building, sculpture, pottery) indicate the imposition of a form on an appropriate material. An idealist position that identifies what is and what is thinkable could, of course, resolve the question by simply eliminating matter and this is the danger the eliminative position risks, but Aristotle is not Berkeley. Materiality may escape thought yet, it is what thought must assume. The materiality of matter may be ultimately unthinkable but, it is a non-eliminable *tertium quid*. As Lewis puts it:

Prime matter is the limiting case of the notion of matter, which applies throughout the sublunary sphere and is absent only outside the sublunary world altogether, in the case of the Unmoved Mover, which is itself the limiting case of the correlative notion of form (Lewis 2008: 127–128).

²⁹ See Green 2014: 335.

Lewis assumes the following (unstated but implied) argument: if you accept the doctrine of the prime mover as pure form and actuality then, by virtue of symmetry, you must grant ontological status to prime matter as pure potentiality. The solution he offers, which he dubs “functional-property view,” insists that what counts as prime matter is not any kind of stuff or structure at all – since by definition, it has no features of its own – but simply that it is the potentiality of receiving contraries in generation and destruction. “In this way, every amount of each of the four elements, earth, air, fire, water, has some amount of prime matter as a constituent” (Lewis 2008: 133–134). Prime matter survives through its various transformations and exhibits one and the same functional property throughout. Lewis’s solution has the advantage of granting prime matter the potency for constituting any one of the elements upon the imposition of the appropriate contraries. It is then to *dunamis* that we need to turn our attention.

In the account of mixing in *De generatione et corruptione* I 10 and II 7–8, Aristotle insists that the elements that are the initial matter of a *mixis* are present potentially. It is so because, in principle, a process of mixture could be reversed (the bronze could be returned to its components of tin and copper; thus, tin and copper did not vanish in the production of bronze but are still present in it in potency). However, the case of mixture is not identical to elemental change. How could the elements be potentially in the *mixis* unless there is a more primordial ontological plane where even the elements are in potency? We cannot say what prime matter is but only what it is not. Prime matter is insubstantial, indeterminate, unpredictable, and ineffable. Neither the positing of something (whether a substance or the property of a substance) nor the negation of these; it is literally neutral (*nec... uter* – “neither of the two”, “neither this nor that”). Something that is not a thing haunts reality.

This suggests that the being-potential of prime matter is quite different from the potentiality of proximate matter (wood, iron, flesh, bronze...). As Bianchi observes “As *hupokeimenon*, or substrate, *hylē* is thus not a determinate substance but rather an indeterminate, possibly abyssal, placeholder” (Bianchi 2018: 125). *Determinate* matter (wool, clay, iron, wood, or bronze) is characterized by a determinate lack and associated with the feminine. But the feminine is not pure passivity or, I should say, impassivity. Determinate matter (wood, bronze) exhibits a yearning for a form that complements it but not any kind of form would fulfil it. We cannot make a hammer head from paper or a garment from iron. We find here hypothetical necessity: *if* a hammer then iron or steel, *if* a garment, then wool, cotton or linen. The same applies for elemental matter – fire yearns for upward, earth for downward. Any privation is a yearning, but any yearning has a specific telos. On the plane of determinate or proximate matter (to use medieval terminology) the feminine/passive element is already oriented toward a specific masculine/active form. It seeks what can fulfil its specific lack and this is always a determinate form. In all this, the capacity to act upon another as an agent is never granted to the feminine matter even though the yearning has a specific orientation.

When we talk about prime matter, however, we must go beyond the duality of the active and the passive, the masculine and the feminine. The neuter refers to this third

gender, the neither... nor. The challenge is whether such a primordial space of neutrality is identical with pure nothingness (in which case, we would indeed have *creatio ex nihilo* and a violation of Parmenides' precept). Brown rightly suggests that "Aristotle's task (...) is to understand the actuality of disengagement," in effect, "to come to terms with an actuality that is not at work, a stillness, a silence, an inactivity that cannot be set down in terms of actuality, but for which an actuality of non-actuality must still be given" (Brown 2017: 199–214).

"The unlimited (*apeiron*) is the matter of the completeness that belongs to magnitude; it is what is potentially but not actually a whole (...) This is why the unlimited, insofar as it is such, is unknowable for the matter has no form." (Arist. *Ph.* III 6, 207a21–25). The location of indeterminacy in potentiality and not in actuality and form preserves the determinacy of what is actual. What exists in actuality is freed from any destabilizing indeterminacy. "It is that which exists potentially and not in actuality that is indeterminate" (Arist. *Metaph.* III 4, 1007b28). Thus, potentiality in the case of prime matter is not determined by limits. Indeed, it has no limits.

When a natural being develops from potency to actuality, its potentiality is not exhausted in the actualization. The actual being has not consumed up its potential; instead, the potential remains in the actual. For proximate matter to retain its plasticity and fluidity, it must still possess the potentiality of prime matter. In other words, to supplement Lewis's functional-property account, we need to add that prime matter is what accounts for the remaining indeterminacy in all forms and degrees of material reality.

This is where, pursuing this thought, we are taken beyond Aristotle's theory, even if we are using his own conceptual apparatus. Prime matter refers to the *apeiron* that lurks in natural substances by virtue of their materiality. Potentiality remains distinct from and exists in excess of actuality, even though it exists only in actual substances. It is a reserve of otherness and an openness to being other that any actual things harbor. Ontologically, prime matter indicates a certain leeway at the core of being. It is the indecision, the indeterminacy of potentiality insofar as the potentiality to be is also the potentiality not to be.

Now all things that are generated, whether by nature or by art, have matter; for there is a *dunamis* for each of them *to be and also not to be*, and this *dunamis* is the matter of each (Arist. *Metaph.* VII 7, 1032a20–22).

As Gill puts it: "[prime] matter is bare in the sense that no actual categorial properties belong to it accidentally. Nonetheless, the matter is essentially characterized by its potential to possess those determinate features."³⁰ This indeterminate hovering between

³⁰ Gill 1989: 41. This, of course is a consequence that Gill does not accept.

being and not being renders matter responsible for the ineliminable dimension of the aleatory in the sublunary world.

Dunamis entails that the possible is not merely what is logically compatible (i.e., what can be thought without contradiction) but a reserve of indeterminacy that actual substances harbor. Metaphysically, *dunamis* comprises an ambivalence: on the one hand, it connotes a restraint, a reserve awaiting for an eventual future release that may or may not come; as such, it stands by in retreat of its exercise just as a sleeping person who is literate (in “first actuality” in the terminology of *De anima*) retains the ability to read and write. Such *dunamis* indicates the presence of the non-manifest. On the other hand, *dunamis* suggests almost the opposite: force and power. The Latin etymology of “virtuality” (which was used to translate *dunamis*), is telling. *Virtualitas* derives from *virtus* which is related to *vir* (male).³¹ It expresses the force of the virile warrior and genitor which makes itself manifest in action when opposing an enemy. By contrast, the *dunamis* of prime matter is neutral and points to an ambivalence and indifference to the feminine and masculine realm.

Heidegger observes that Aristotle asks a central question in response to the Megarian challenge: “How ‘is’ a capacity thought of not only as potential but rather as actually present, although not being actualized?” (Heidegger 1995: 146). The answer is illustrated by Heidegger’s example of a sprinter. A sprinter who has not yet begun to sprint embodies the presence of the potentiality to sprint in the stillness of kneeling prior to the start of a race. This stillness is significantly different from the peasant who kneels down before a crucifix, Heidegger claims, because the still, quietness of the sprinter embodies the “not-yet” of the event of sprinting in a way that is contextually different from the potentiality that is embodied in the peasant. As Brown observes: “The ‘not-yet’ of the crouched sprinter appears in the actuality of the before and after that surrounds the engagement and permeates the movement of the action. The stillness that forms conspicuously between the movement of action is not nothing at all, but the real determinate quality of potentiality when it is disengaged from actuality” (Brown 2017: 205). Thus, we are led to understand actuality as the movement of potentiality. Likewise, the “not yet” of potentiality indicates the play of the future and its contingency in the present. The future is already present in actuality, but only in the guise of potentiality. It is what could be and could not be.

V. Conclusion

Beyond the distinctions between active and passive, rational and irrational potentialities mentioned in *Metaphysics* Θ, there is a further ambivalence that is made manifest

³¹ This, of course, is also visible in Greek. L.S.J. notes, among others, the following pre-philosophical senses of *dunamis*: power, might, bodily strength (Homer); authority (Aeschylus); military forces (Herodotus, Xenophon). In these instances, the term has a clearly masculine connotation.

when we consider the difference between proximate and prime matter. On the one hand, to be potentially something requires that the underlying subject be something actual and determinate. For an illiterate person to be potentially *grammatikos* entails that they must have some structural properties that make them apt to become *grammatikos* – a young child has such a potency, a rock does not. In that case, *dunamis* is a consequence of having some actual features (e.g., a brain capable of acquiring reading and writing). We could call potentialities of this type *dispositional properties* because they depend on underlying structural properties. This is a consequence of the priority of actuality over potentiality. “That for the sake of which a thing is, is its principle, and the becoming is for the sake of the end – and actuality is the end, and it is for the sake of this that the potency is acquired” (Arist. *Metaph.* IX, 1050a 8–10). The potential is potential relative to an actuality. Actuality is more primary than potentiality because potentiality is always for the sake of its end in actuality. A lump of bronze is potentially a statue insofar as it lacks the form of the statue but is nevertheless an appropriate material for its reception. To be in potency is to lack the form that will complete and achieve what a determinate matter is capable of achieving. The potentiality of proximate matter is always oriented toward some determinate form; construction materials are toward the house, wool toward coat, and clay toward a pitcher or a cup.

On the other hand, prime matter is *dunamis* in a different sense.³² Appealing to a distinction between “not to be x” and “to be not-x” from *Prior Analytics*, Alexander of Aphrodisias observes that:

It is not the same to say of it [matter] “it is not, in its own nature, qualified” and “it is, in its own nature, not qualified;” for “it is, in its own nature, not qualified” is an assertion that is said to be “by transposition” and is equivalent to a privation, but “it is not, in its own nature, qualified” is a negation which does not have the same force as a privation and it is [the negation] that is true of matter (Alex. Aphr. *Qaest.* 2.7, 53, 8–14; transl. Sharples 1992: 103).

Thus, privation in the case of determinate matter retains a certain determinacy. There is no such thing as privation *simpliciter*. The language of privation still allows us to make positive assertions. In the case of prime matter, however, to say that it is “not-qualified” would still be a way of affirming something about its nature and to treat “being non-qualified” as an essential property. The negative formula, however, brings us closer to the materiality of prime matter. It follows from this argument that there may be one exception to the principle of the priority of actuality over potentiality; namely, prime matter, not because it is prior, but because it is posterior to no forms. But this opens the road to another metaphysics that is not Aristotelian anymore. There are conceptual possibili-

³² “One must recognize that if matter is potency – and the terms *hulē* and *dunamis* are almost interchangeable in Aristotle – it is potency in a restricted sense that does not carry the connotation of tendency that is habitually carried by this notion”; Leblond 2012: 408 – my translation.

ties within Aristotle's corpus that could deal with the problem of prime matter but they would entail a profound revision of Aristotelianism.

We can see this at play in the case of destruction. Aristotle himself and his subsequent commentators up to the current era tend to pay more attention to coming-into-being, the entering into presence of a substance, rather than to destruction. Yet, destruction (passing-away) ultimately calls for an ontology of the negative. By contrast with generation which, as we saw, calls for proximate matter's affinity for a form, destruction (passing-away), i.e., the privation of all form calls for another sense of matter (i.e., prime matter). It is so because destruction cannot be pure annihilation since prime matter is ungenerated, indestructible, and eternal (features that neither proximate matter nor the elements can have). Yet, something remains for prime matter has the capacity of becoming any of the four (sublunar) elements and, by combination, to be part of everything whatsoever. This is the power of negation. To say that prime matter is pure potentiality is to say that it is capable of taking any form. If it is to acknowledge the reality of destruction, the ontology of matter cannot limit itself to the consideration of well-formed hylomorphic substances and must make room for the play of the negative that, at the same time, makes excess possible.

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Aristotle's Metaphysics of Matter

The issue of prime matter divides Aristotle's modern commentators on two questions: a) whether Aristotle was truly committed to it b) whether the notion is even coherent. Those who declare prime matter incoherent do so on the ground that what is deprived of characteristics or properties is simply nothing. Those who try to salvage the notion claim that it must have some characteristics focus on extension. As it stands, the debate turns on the possibility or impossibility of *reifying* prime matter. If we can, then it can be a coherent ontological category; if we cannot, then it is incoherent. This paper proposes a different path: indeed, *prôtē hulē* cannot be reified, but this does not make it incoherent. This, however, invites us to pursue ontology beyond substantialism and essentialism and takes us to the limits of Aristotelianism.

KEY WORDS

Aristotle, Change, Hylomorphism, Matter, Potency, Prime Matter, Substance

The Stoics on the Good, the Evil and the Indifferents*

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The concept of evil has raised debates and has been the key topic of approach for reflection and analysis in all philosophical schools, without exception, from antiquity to the present day. As a factor of negative effects on the world, on the relations between people and on each person individually, does evil ultimately touch upon the cognitive or ethical norms from which it deviates? Why does the existence of evil persist and, despite research and the identification of its causes and effects, does it nevertheless exist, influence behaviour, participate in and guide thoughts and decisions while shaping events with its negative power?

This paper will approach the concept of evil and its relation to moral action both in terms of man and in terms of its power as a factor in shaping and influencing the universal order, according to Stoic philosophy. In order to proceed to a partial analysis of the subject, I will first focus on the definition of evil by the Stoics of the first period, as formulated and recorded by their scholars as early as antiquity. I refer to the scholars, as few original texts on the theories of the early Stoics exist, since their writings have not

survived, except for a few.¹ Next, I will refer to two other equally crucial concepts regarding the Stoics' moral philosophy: the good and the indifferents, as opposed to the concept of evil, since all three concepts are actively linked to each other, constitute and demonstrate rules of human behaviour. Finally, I will try to assess the overall impact of evil on man and the world, always in accordance with the philosophers of the Stoa.

Definition of the good, the evil and the indifferents

Stobaeus, in a text of his *Anthology*,² gives the definition of evil, which as he writes was formulated by Zeno, the founder of the School, around the end of the 4th century BC in contrast to the good and the indifferents. Stobaeus writes:

Zeno says that of things, some are good, some are evil, and some are indifferents. (...) Goods are wisdom, prudence, justice and vigour. Evil are folly, debauchery, unrighteousness and cowardice (...) Indifferents, moreover, are death, glory, lack of glory, pain, pleasure, wealth – poverty, disease – health, and such like.³

It seems here that the philosophers of the Stoa choose the four cardinal platonic virtues,⁴ as these are the ones that lead to eudaimonia, which is the end (τέλος), the target of the Stoic sage, as we shall see later in this paper. Good, after all, is a virtue, which, they argue, can be taught. Proof of this is the fact that vicious people become good.⁵ The Stoics most likely follow the Socratic teaching that virtue can be taught.⁶ In this way they clearly declare their membership in the chorea of Socratic philosophers, through Antisthenes,⁷

* This text is dedicated with gratitude to Livio Rossetti, a great teacher of Ancient Philosophy and an eternal friend.

¹ D.L. in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, book VII, dedicated to the old Stoics, gives the titles of their treatises. Additionally, we find some titles in different passages of other ancient researchers as well as in the texts of the Stoics of Rome.

² Cf. Konstan 2011: 19–20. Cf. Stob. *Ecl.* II, p. 57, 18 W. (= SVF I 190).

³ The fragment has no comma between the words: wealth poverty, disease health. It is for this reason that we put a hyphen for better understanding. Stobaeus uses these concepts without any punctuation marks, creating a total of opposite pairs.

⁴ Cf. Pl. *R.* 427c: Δῆλον δὲ ὅτι σοφὴ τ' ἐστὶ καὶ ἀνδρεία καὶ σώφρων καὶ δικαία; *R.* 536a: Καὶ πρὸς σωφροσύνην, ἣν δ' ἐγώ, καὶ ἀνδρείαν καὶ μεγαλοπρέπειαν καὶ πάντα τὰ τῆς ἀρετῆς μέρη [...]; *Phd.* 69c: κάθαρσις τις τῶν τοιούτων πάντων καὶ ἡ σωφροσύνη καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀνδρεία, καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ φρόνησις.

⁵ D.L. VII 91: διδασκὴν τε εἶναι αὐτὴν, λέγω δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν, καὶ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ τέλους φησὶ καὶ Κλεάνθης καὶ Ποσειδώνιος ἐν τοῖς Προτρεπτικοῖς καὶ Ἐκάτων· ὅτι δὲ διδασκὴ ἐστὶ, δῆλον ἐκ τοῦ γίνεσθαι ἀγαθοῦς ἐκ φαύλων.

⁶ Pl. *Prt.* 361b: σπεύδεις, ἐπιχειρῶν ἀποδείξαι ὡς πάντα χρήματά ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη, καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ σωφροσύνη καὶ ἡ ἀνδρεία, ᾧ τρόπῳ μάλιστα ἂν διδασκὸν φανείη ἡ ἀρετή; *Men.* 95e: οἷόςθ' ὅτι ἐν τούτοις μὲν ὡς διδασκτοῦ οὔσης τῆς ἀρετῆς λέγει.

⁷ D.L. VI 22. Upon arriving in Athens from Sinope, Diogenes became a pupil of Antisthenes. Later, Diogenes became the teacher of Crates, who in turn taught Zeno of Citium when he arrived in Athens (D.L. VII 2).

Socrates' interlocutor,⁸ since, according to the latter, no one is bad of his own free will but only of ignorance.⁹

Socrates, as we know, inspired his contemporaries such as Antisthenes, for example, who extensively adopted the Socratic theory of virtue and how to attain it, arguing that virtue can be taught.¹⁰ Socrates, moreover, in his *Apology* according to Plato, defended his innocence against the accusations of his prosecutors and countered that the goal of his life was the improvement of the Athenians. This goal focused exclusively on the transformation of *doxa*, that is, changeable opinion into a stable knowledge or awareness of the self through constant *control*.

The Stoics, for their part, divided people into two categories: the wise, meaning the virtuous, and the vicious, meaning the ignorant who are foolish and evil.¹¹ It is important to note that for the philosophers of the Stoa, there is no middle ground. One is either wise or vicious.¹² As a wise, one behaves in a virtuous and cultivated way being *ἀσπεῖος*, that is a person distinguished by a courteous and civil manner.¹³ His actions rely on reason and are regarded as true achievements (*κατορθώματα*) because they are, by nature, lawful and morally right. According to Chrysippus, every action rooted in continence, endurance, wisdom, or courage constitutes an achievement of the sage.¹⁴

⁸ D.L. VI 10: (Ἀντισθένης) διδασκὴν ἀπεδείκνυε τὴν ἀρετὴν.

⁹ Pl. *Prt.* 358c: οὐδὲ τὸ ἥττω εἶναι αὐτοῦ ἄλλο τι τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἢ ἀμαθία, οὐδὲ κρείττω ἑαυτοῦ ἄλλο τι ἢ σοφία [...] ἐπὶ γε τὰ κακὰ οὐδεὶς ἐκὼν ἔρχεται; *Rep.* 589c: οὐ γὰρ ἐκὼν ἀμαρτάνει, which are attributed to Socrates by Plato; *Ti.* 86d–e: κακὸς μὲν γὰρ ἐκὼν οὐδεὶς; *Euthd.* 281e: ἄλλο τι ἢ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων οὐδὲν ὄν οὔτε ἀγαθὸν οὔτε κακόν, τοῦτοιν δὲ δυοῖν ὄντων ἡ μὲν σοφία ἀγαθόν, ἡ δὲ ἀμαθία κακόν.

¹⁰ In his book *Socrates, Sein Bild in Dichtung und Geschichte* O. Gigon (1995: 219) argues that the textual tradition of the Socratic legacy is notably uneven. In Plato, the Socratic tradition is well-preserved, partly because Plato founded a school. However, none of the other Socratics established a school of their own. Despite this, two of Socrates' interlocutors were claimed as ancestors by Hellenistic schools: the Stoics traced their lineage to Antisthenes, and Epicurus to Aristippus. Although there is limited evidence of a direct relationship between Antisthenes and the Stoics, we frequently encounter Antisthenes' ideas embedded within the Stoic philosophy.

¹¹ It appears that a contradiction arises here regarding the Stoic teaching on virtue. How can virtue be teachable if, at the same time, they assert that only two types of human beings exist – sages and fools – with no possibility of moving from one category to the other? As we shall see later, the Stoics, particularly Chrysippus, gradually introduced some possibility for personal improvement and development.

¹² Cf. Brouwer 2020: 62–63.

¹³ The urban dweller (of ἄστυ) exhibits civilised behavior in contrast to those from the countryside who lack culture. Chrysippus wrote a treatise describing the behavior of the civilised individual (*ἀσπεῖος*) (SVF II 131), to whom the Stoics attribute all virtues and virtuous capacities. They assert that he is the only truly free person (that is liberated from all passions; cf. SVF III 362 and SVF III 15).

¹⁴ Cf. D.L. VII 107–109: Κατωνομάσθαι δ' οὕτως ὑπὸ πρώτου Ζήνωνος τὸ καθῆκον, ἀπὸ τοῦ κατὰ τινὰς ἥκειν τῆς προσονομασίας εἰλημμένης. Ἐνέργημα δ' αὐτὸ εἶναι ταῖς κατὰ φύσιν κατασκευαῖς οἰκείον. As Diogenes Laertius reports, the term καθῆκον constitutes a Zeno's neologism. It is the effect of an action familiar to things that are done according to the habit and the nature and as a determination and pursuit of good. Cf. Hicks 1958: 213, n. b. For a person to accomplish virtuous actions – κατορθώματα, or right actions – the guidance of wise, correct thinking is essential, as exemplified by the sage. Thus, the κατορθώματα, or correct action of the wise aligns with the laws and is morally ordered, well-mannered, fulfilling, and timely as it is carried out with self-control, endurance, prudence, and courage. Cf. Plu. *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* 15, 1041A; cf. Cic. *De finibus*, III 32.

Hence, the Stoics believe that only through logos, it is possible to become wise (virtuous), as the path that leads to *eudaimonia*, passes through the conquest of virtue.¹⁵ They even argue that it is this direction that Nature itself leads us to.¹⁶ The inextricably linked relation between reason, ethics and physics in the Stoic system is thereby emphasised, since Zeno in his treatise *On the Nature of Man* showed that the ultimate purpose of life is *living in accordance*: τὸ δὲ τέλος ὁ μὲν Ζήνων οὕτως ἀπέδωκε· ‘τὸ ὁμολογουμένως ζῆν’· τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶ καθ’ ἓνα λόγον καὶ σύμφωνον ζῆν.¹⁷ This simple definition, reported by Stobaeus, needs further analysis in order to be interpreted. What does the sage’s *accordance* consist of and in relation to what? Finally, what is the way through which nature guides us towards *ὁμολογία*?

Etymologically, the term *ὁμολογία* means consent, assent, acceptance, agreement between word and deed, as in music, when an agreement, an intelligible, ultimately audible result, comes from the practice of many musical instruments. According to A. A. Long, the noun *ὁμολογία*, can be synonymous of *harmonia* and *symphonia* as it happens in Plato’s *Symposium* 187b.¹⁸ The clarification by Cleanthes, Zeno’s successor in the School, – by adding ‘τῇ φύσει’ to the zenonian definition of *ὁμολογουμένως ζῆν* (D.L. VII 87), which thereby becomes: *ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν* – demonstrates that not only does nature itself guide us to *eudaimonia* but also that *eudaimonia* results from the identification of life with the observation, understanding and acceptance of the evolutionary course of the natural world.

Opposition to the evolutionary course of the world, as Stobaeus argues, creates unhappy people (*κακοδαιμονούντων*).¹⁹ Therefore, *ζῆν ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει* seems to be based on a fragile balance between natural events and man’s ability to constantly adapt to them, as only the wise man can achieve it while he processes situations rationally and thereby lives harmoniously and in accordance with nature.

The conquest of *eudaimonia* through the good

Therefore, one would argue that the attainment of *eudaimonia* is a simple process as long as we look at the nature around us, agree, consent and accept the facts and circum-

¹⁵ D.L. VII 127: αὐτάρκη τε εἶναι αὐτὴν (τὴν ἀρετὴν) πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν, καθά φησι Ζήνων καὶ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ ἀρετῶν καὶ ἑκατὼν ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ Περὶ ἀγαθῶν.

¹⁶ For the notion of Nature to the Stoics, cf. Long 1986: 168, 180, 189. The Stoics attributed to God many nominations. Cleanthes calls him God of many names since God has many qualities. Cf. Zeller, 1880: 358. Cf. Protopapas-Marneli 2014: 232–233.

¹⁷ Stob. II, p. 75, 11 W.: τὸ δὲ τέλος ὁ μὲν Ζήνων οὕτως ἀπέδωκε «τὸ ὁμολογουμένως ζῆν» τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶ καθ’ ἓνα λόγον καὶ σύμφωνον ζῆν, ὡς τῶν μαχομένων ζώντων κακοδαιμονούντων.

¹⁸ Long (2001: 203 and n. 5) argues that “in technical harmonics *symphonia* applies only to certain aesthetically special and structurally crucial relations, especially those of the fourth, fifth and octave.” He continues by saying that the Stoics applied the term “harmoniously” as the mode of life and so they connected it to the art which comes first in mind that is music.

¹⁹ “ὡς τῶν μαχομένων ζώντων κακοδαιμονούντων”.

stances that are present. This process, however, proves to be, as we shall see below, long and arduous, as man rarely finds a way to reconcile, consent and accept the circumstances that arise, affect and alter the rhythm of his life.

Besides, neither Zeno, nor Cleanthes, not even Chrysippus, the third Scholarch of the School, seem to include themselves in the chorea of the wise. On the contrary, they maintain that most men are fool (*φᾶῶλοι*), but that there may have been (as is rumoured) one or two sages in the world; indeed, they admit that it is so paradoxical to find a wise person that it comes to be a rarer phenomenon than that of the phoenix, that strange bird which may once have lived near the Ethiopians.²⁰ For this reason, the rarity of the sage with his hard-to-find qualities is coloured by the Stoics with impressive tones. Perhaps this is a kind of human being that never appears in the context of a real city. This underscores how philosophical moral teachings are so impractical that they cannot realistically be applied, even when referenced by philosophers themselves. After all, the Stoics describe the wise as someone who never existed.²¹ What their philosophy claims about the sage is similar to what Plato says about the heavenly city, which he is not concerned with, whether it exists or will exist or how often it will appear on earth (Pl. *Rep.* 592b). Just as Plato's ideal city exists only as an abstract model, so does the Stoic sage represent an ideal – virtuous in every aspect of life, possessing all virtues to an absolute degree.²²

This 'extreme' description of the sage's personality, which encapsulates all virtues, emerges during the Hellenistic period as one model advocated by the philosophical schools that developed almost simultaneously in Athens. During this time, the emergence of individuality as a means of self-preservation disrupts traditional notions of collectivity and citizenship in the city-state. However, it also broadens the horizons of the reflective individual, who comes to realize that happiness can be attained through the continuous effort of self-improvement. The emphasis that the Stoics lay on self-improvement through philosophy inevitably leads to individuality and detachment from the bonds of the city, since the city is no longer able to guarantee with its institutions the security and cohesion of the citizens among themselves. A concomitant phenomenon

²⁰ The Phoenix is a mythological bird that, upon dying, is reborn from its own ashes. Its name, "Phoenix" (*Φοίνιξ* in Greek), derives from the word "φοινός", meaning "purple" or "deep red." Hdt. II 73, 1–4: "Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλος ὄρνις ἱρός, τῷ οὐνόμα φοῖνιξ. ἐγὼ μὲν μιν οὐκ εἶδον εἰ μὴ ὅσον γραφῇ· καὶ γὰρ δὴ καὶ σπάνιος ἐπιφοιτᾷ σφι δι' ἐτέων, ὥς Ἡλιοπολιταὶ λέγουσι. Cf. Alex.Aphr. *De fato*, ch. 28, p. 199, 7 Bruns. (= SVF III 658).

²¹ On this topic cf. O. Gigon 1975: 74.

²² The virtues of the sage, a part of Diogenes Laertius (VII 122) appear in a number of ancient Stoic Scholars. Cf. Clem.Al. *Strom.* II, p. 438 Pott. (= SVF III 658): (the citation begins with reference to Plato: εἰ γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία σπουδαῖον ὁ τε σοφὸς μόνος βασιλεὺς καὶ ἄρχων, ὁ νόμος λόγος ὧν ὀρθὸς σπουδαῖος· ἃ καὶ ἔστιν. τούτοις ἀκόλουθα οἱ Στωϊκοὶ φιλόσοφοι δογματίζουσιν, βασιλείαν, ἱερωσύνην, προφητείαν, νομοθετικήν, πλοῦτον, κάλλος ἀληθινόν, εὐγένειαν, ἐλευθερίαν μόνῳ προσάπτοντες τῷ σοφῷ· ὁ δὲ δυσεὔρετος πάνυ σφόδρα καὶ πρὸς αὐτῶν ὁμολογεῖται)» (The author has separated each letter of the cited words for added emphasis); but also in Stob. *Ecl.* II 7, 11d: Οἰκονομικὸν δ' εἶναι μόνον λέγουσι τὸν σπουδαῖον καὶ ἀγαθὸν οἰκονόμον, ἔτι δὲ χρηματιστικόν. Τὴν μὲν γὰρ οἰκονομικὴν εἶναι θεωρητικὴν ἔξιν καὶ πρακτικὴν τῶν οἴκῳ συμφερόντων· τὴν δ' οἰκονομίαν διάταξιν περὶ ἀναλωμάτων καὶ ἔργων καὶ κτήσεως ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ τῶν κατ' ἀγρὸν ἐργαζομένων· τὴν δὲ χρηματιστικὴν ἐμπερίαν περιποιήσεως χρημάτων ἀφ' ὧν δέον καὶ ἔξιν ὁμολογεῖσθαι ἀναστρέφεσθαι ποιῶσαν ἐν συναγωγῇ χρημάτων καὶ τηρήσει καὶ ἀναλώσει πρὸς εὐπορίαν· τὸ δὲ χρηματίζεσθαι τινες μὲν μέσον εἶπον εἶναι, τινὲς δὲ ἄσπετον. Cf. Edelstein 1966: 11.

of the era is the emergence of the portrait in art, where the figure depicted has its own particular characteristics rather than the ideal proportions of a model. Each person is depicted as they really are, with their imperfections.²³

It seems, however, that in combination with the perception of the rarity of the wise man, Stoicism is characterised by pessimism about the perfection of man, as can be observed from the fact that the representatives themselves recognised the difficulty of the goal pursued, namely, awareness. This pessimism also arises from the spirit of the era, characterised by the changeable and unexpected dictates of fortune. Apart from the fact that Fortune is deified at that time, her spherical pedestal or the depiction of her holding the rudder of a boat upright and steering it through the waves, further demonstrates the delicate, fragile and changeable balance of the world under the goddess's absolute control, as well as her power – half Providence, half *Eimarmene* – to which the world but also man obey. Moreover, Zeno attributes his arrival and settlement in Athens to a chance event, after the shipwreck of his ship loaded with porphyry, during his journey from Phoenicia to Piraeus, according to Diogenes Laertius.²⁴

On the basis of the above, we could, therefore, argue that the fool is the one who does not adapt to situations, but is outraged, regretful, revengeful, and opposed to a situation that upsets the course of his life, since the Stoic philosophy defines eudaimonia as “*εὐποία*”, namely, the good flow of life, which flows smoothly, similar to the flow of the waters of a river.²⁵ The ordinary man, at every adverse moment, considers himself treated unjustly, utterly unhappy, at the mercy of fortune, after some considerable loss, as was the case with Zeno. In the same context, that is, the inability to perceive events and the parallel opposition to them, falls, for example, the loss of a loved one, of one's property or health.²⁶ If this is the case, the Stoics will have to counter that these are part of human subjectivity and that such losses do not disturb the cosmic order. So, we should distance ourselves from our relation to loss, since all the above do not belong to the evils but to those things that are considered *indifferents*, as we have already seen. Indeed, the Stoics argue that the most appropriate attitude is one of constant vigilance and readiness regarding the arrival and confrontation of possible unpleasant situations. With this in mind, Chrysippus urged people to adopt a steadfast and rational approach toward events. Meanwhile, Poseidonius, a representative of Middle Stoicism, coined the term *παρενδμεῖν* (to ‘live with’ or ‘live close to’) to suggest that the wise person should ‘welcome’ adversity

²³ Hellenistic sculpture: Late 4th – early 1st century BC. “In sculpture, new local workshops and renowned sculptors that rendered the figures realistically, depicting their personal features, came to the fore”: <https://www.namuseum.gr/en/collection/ellinistiki-periodos-2/>

²⁴ D.L. VII 2: πορφύραν ἐμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ τῆς Φοινίκης πρὸς τῷ Πειραιεὶ ἐναυάγησεν.

²⁵ Stob. II, p. 77, 20 (= SVF III 658).

²⁶ Epict. *Discourses*, II 19, 14: “According to the Stoics, health belongs to the category of ‘preferred indifferents.’ This means that while everyone prefers health over illness, poor health does not hinder a virtuous life. The Stoics acknowledge that health is influenced by how one lives, making it our responsibility to care for ourselves to maintain it; otherwise, we would not be living in harmony with our natural inclinations. Thus, the pursuit of good health is essential for its preservation. However, this effort does not impact our moral character, as health, in most cases, remains beyond our control.” Cf. also, Long, Vertzagia 2020.

in his home, that is, in his soul, long before it appears so that he becomes familiar with it.²⁷ Later, Epictetus taught that we should not ask for things to happen the way we want them to happen, but wish for things to happen exactly as they do and then they will run smoothly.²⁸ This refers most likely to the sage's penetrating look at nature and acceptance of its dictates, whatever they may be. The dictates of nature cannot be violated with impunity, even if no one learns of it except himself. Nature gives imperatives necessary for the evolution of life. Our violation of nature or opposition to it imply real harm, injustice to the natural world (and this is related to the truth of our action or logos).²⁹

In this context of consensus and acceptance, the joy that Zeno of Citium felt afterwards – after the shipwreck – should be included.³⁰ The unpleasant event turns into an auspicious one, for if the circumstances do not change, then our perspective towards them must change.³¹ Therefore, Zeno acknowledges that thanks to the Fortune that caused the shipwreck, he was led towards philosophy.³² When the waves of the sea crushed his ship, he did not regret it. Instead, he went up to Athens and sat at a bookseller's shop (D.L. VII 2). After that, he consulted the oracle of Apollo in Delphi, to learn from the god what would be best to occupy himself with to attain the best life. The god's response was that he should acquire the colour of the dead; Zeno followed the oracle and devoted himself to the study of philosophy, so much so that he felt he was conversing with the ancient philosophers and becoming one of them. His negative feelings were transformed into the joy of knowledge, as is the case with the Stoic sage. Zeno had undoubtedly found, after twenty years of philosophical pursuits (D.L. VII 4) and painstaking efforts, the way to deal with events by abstaining from emotions, making a way of life out of the sage's apathy, meaning his detachment from all kinds of passions such as sorrow, fear, anger, frustration and the like.³³

But it is not always so, despite the fact that Nature (God or Logos) gave every man the gift of reason, since this divine Logos, in the capacity of a craftsman, penetrated the

²⁷ Gal. *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis libri novem* (= PHP); IV, 7, 393 (De Lacy 1981). Cf. Pigeaud 2006³: 277.

²⁸ Epict. *Manual*, 8: Μὴ ζητεῖ τὰ γινόμενα γίνεσθαι ὡς θέλεις, ἀλλὰ θέλε τὰ γινόμενα ὡς γίνεται καὶ εὐροήσεις.

²⁹ Epict. *Discourses*, I 14–15: ὅταν κλείσῃτε τὰς θύρας καὶ σκότος ἔνδον ποιήσῃτε, μέμνησθε μηδέποτε λέγειν ὅτι μόνον ἐστὲ· οὐ γὰρ ἐστὲ, ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς ἔνδον ἐστὶ καὶ ὁ ὑμέτερος δαίμων ἐστίν. καὶ τίς τούτοις χρεια φωτὸς εἰς τὸ βλέπειν τί ποιεῖτε;

³⁰ Cf. n. 24 above.

³¹ Epictetus advises that if noise outside your house disturbs you, remind yourself that it is simply the sound of a holiday celebration, and choose to interpret it as if you were listening to pleasant conversations. Cf. Epict. *Discourses*, IV 4, 24–25: τί λέγεις θορύβῳ; ἐν πολλοῖς ἀνθρώποις; καὶ τί χαλεπὸν; δόξον ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ εἶναι, πανηγυρίαν αὐτὸν ἡγῆσαι. κάκεῖ ἄλλος ἄλλο τι κέκραγεν, ἄλλος ἄλλο τι πράσσει, ἄλλος τῷ ἄλλῳ ἐνσειέται. ἐν τοῖς βαλανείοις ὄχλος· καὶ τίς ἡμῶν οὐ χαίρει τῇ πανηγύρει ταύτῃ καὶ ὀδυνώμενος αὐτῆς ἀπαλλάσσεται; μὴ γίνου δυσάρεστος μηδὲ κακοστόμαχος πρὸς τὰ γινόμενα. ‘τὸ ὄξος σαπρὸν, δριμύ γάρ’· ‘τὸ μέλι σαπρὸν’, ἀνατρέπει γάρ μου τὴν ἔξιν.

³² D.L. VII 5: ‘ἄλλοι δὲ διατριβόντα ἐν ταῖς Ἀθήναις ἀκοῦσαι τὴν ναυαγίαν καὶ εἰπεῖν, ‘εὖ γε ποιεῖ ἡ τύχη προσελαύνουσα ἡμᾶς φιλοσοφίᾳ.’

³³ Plu. *On Moral Virtue*, 7, 446F: καὶ γὰρ ἐπιθυμίαν καὶ ὀργὴν καὶ φόβον καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα, δόξας εἶναι καὶ κρίσεις πονηράς, οὐ περὶ ἔντινι γιγνομένης τῆς ψυχῆς μέρος, ἀλλὰ ὅλου τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ ῥοπάς καὶ εἴξεις καὶ

changeable and with no quality matter, and gave every creature a form with characteristics peculiar to each one.³⁴ Reason and matter coexist in every human being, cohabit within him, determining reactions and behaviours. Endowed as he is with reason, and because he knows how to distinguish good from evil, every man should always choose to do good, since theoretical occupation with philosophy leads to practice.³⁵ But most of the times, this is not the case. People engage in deceitful acts and reconcile themselves with evil, thinking that they will thereby satisfy their impulses, desires and expectations. In the *Hymn to Zeus*, Cleanthes describes this man, who irrationally turns towards the acquisition of all kinds of material goods and pleasures while in fact moving away from his goal, which is eudaimonia:

Thus, from all things, may emerge an eternal logos.
 From mortals the vicious shun and defy it,
 The unfortunate, who always desire the possession of goods
 Nor they see the common law of God, nor hear it,
 To him with prudence, if they had obeyed, they would have had a good life.³⁶

The early Stoics held that there is nothing between absolute virtue and absolute vice, because, they argued, wood is either straight or crooked. In the same way, there is no more just or more unjust but just or unjust.³⁷ Indeed, nature itself gives man the first principles (*predispositions*), as well as the principle of justice. So, the acceptance of good and evil to an absolute degree should probably push man to surrender to a fatalistic state and deny the possibility of self-improvement. However, the Stoics themselves believe that all men have a natural disposition towards virtue³⁸ and argue that virtue is an art, just as reason comes to be added as an absolute skill to man, limiting all instinctive impulses.³⁹ Art, however, they maintain, is a system of applied theory and practice,⁴⁰ and so they revert to their original position, according to which virtue can be taught, as the end (*τέλος*) of life, they set forth the constant exercise of man for the attainment of the good.

συγκαταθέσεις καὶ ὁρμὰς καὶ ὅλως ἐνεργείας τινὰς οὐσας ἐν ὀλίγῳ μεταπτωτάς, ὥσπερ αἱ τῶν παθῶν ἐπιδρομαὶ τὸ βραδύαιον καὶ τὸ σφοδρὸν ἐπισφαλὲς ὑπὸ ἀσθενείας καὶ ἀβέβαιον ἔχουσι»; cf. also Plu. *On Moral Virtue*, 3, 441C: καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάθος εἶναι λόγον πονηρὸν καὶ ἀκόλαστον, ἐκ φαύλης καὶ διημιτημένης κρίσεως σφοδρότητα καὶ ῥώμην προσλαβούσης.

³⁴ Besnier 2003: 57. D.L. VII 134; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 65, 2.

³⁵ D.L. VII 126: τὸν γὰρ ἐνάρετον θεωρητικὸν τ' εἶναι καὶ πρακτικὸν ποιητέον.

³⁶ Cleanthes, *Stoic. Hymn to Zeus*, 20–25 (Stob. *Ecl.* = SVF I 537).

³⁷ D.L. VII 127: Ἀρέσκει δ' αὐτοῖς μὴδὲν μεταξὺ εἶναι ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας, τῶν Περιπατητικῶν μεταξὺ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας εἶναι λεγόντων τὴν προκοπὴν· ὥς γὰρ δεῖν φασιν ἢ ὀρθὸν εἶναι ξύλον ἢ στρεβλόν, οὕτως ἢ δίκαιον ἢ ἄδικον, οὕτε δὲ δικαιότερον οὐτ' ἀδικώτερον, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁμοίως.

³⁸ SVF III 214, 215.

³⁹ D.L. VII 86: τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῖς λογικοῖς κατὰ τελειοτέραν προστασίαν δεδομένου, τὸ κατὰ λόγον ζῆν ὀρθῶς γίνεσθαι <τοῦ> τοῖς κατὰ φύσιν· τεχνίτης γὰρ οὗτος ἐπιγίνεται τῆς ὁρμῆς.

⁴⁰ *Anecdota graeca Paris*, vol. I, p. 171 (*Quomodo homines boni et mali fiant?* = SVF III 214: πᾶσα δὲ τέχνη σύστημα ἐκ θεωρημάτων συγγεγυμνασμένων).

Thus, he who is not yet virtuous will be able to attain virtue if he chooses the right *exercise*, while the virtuous will always and in every choice embody virtue (Reesor 1951: 105).

The Evil in Man and the World

In the last part of this study, I will try to assess the impact of evil on man and the world, according to the philosophers of the Stoa.

In view of the above, I believe that there is an ‘anxiety’ on the part of the teachers of Stoicism, not only because they themselves did not succeed in joining the category of the wise man, as they defined him, but also because they understood, already from the first years of the foundation of the School, that man’s constant effort against evil would never give him the opportunity to change category, but that he would constantly remain in the category of the one in progress (*προκόπτων*),⁴¹ the one who belongs to the second category after the ‘infallible’ sage. Unlike the vicious one, who does not understand the consequences of his actions and, precisely because of his ignorance, uncritically attributes them to the gods (or to others), the *προκόπτων* aims at self-improvement, by constant and arduous *exercise* of the self for the benefit of reason and at the expense of his emotions, even if he completely renounces his material nature in order to remain unfaltering – as far as possible – in the face of situations.

Evil, however, exists in any case, and maintains a special relationship with events, is in accordance with the *logos* of nature, and is not useless to the world. Without it, man, the Stoics maintain, would have no conception of the good. Evil exists and we know it, for it is what opposes virtue.⁴² Perhaps, then, evil is related to that without quality matter which exists because of our nature,⁴³ since the *Logos* united with it, giving us in seed the possibility of becoming wise.

In the *Hymn to Zeus*, Cleanthes describes God’s effort to guide everything on earth in the right direction. Yet, the unrestrained actions of the fools momentarily escape his control, affirming human free will. Meanwhile, the *Logos* (God) uses his intellect to bring order to chaos, striving to harmonize good with evil. Since, in the end, God subdues and integrates even the acts of the fools to maintain cosmic order and benefit the continuous course of the world, how does human free will truly persist? The answer comes down to two conclusions:

⁴¹ This is the theory, which the Stoics ultimately borrowed from the Peripatetics, who maintained that between virtue and vice, there is progress (*προκοπή*) (= D.L. VII 127).

⁴² D.L. VII 91: εἶναι δὲ καὶ τὴν κακίαν ὑπαρκτήν διὰ τὸ ἀντικεῖσθαι τῇ ἀρετῇ.

⁴³ D.L. VII 134: δοκεῖ δ’ αὐτοῖς ἀρχὰς εἶναι τῶν ὄλων δύο, τὸ ποιοῦν καὶ τὸ πάσχον. τὸ μὲν οὖν πάσχον εἶναι τὴν ἄποιον οὐσίαν, τὴν ὕλην, τὸ δὲ ποιοῦν τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ λόγον, τὸν θεόν· τοῦτον γὰρ αἰδίων ὄντα διὰ πάσης αὐτῆς δημιουργεῖν ἕκαστα.

1. There is a free disposition, if we call a free act the act that stems from the character of man and not an act caused by extrinsic causes (which the Stoics call *primaries*). This is because it is up to ourselves to have good or bad character (which is the primary cause of our act). Chrysippus uses the example of the cylinder and the cone to show that man's acceptance or rejection of an event (primary cause) is due to his character.⁴⁴ The reaction comes from ourselves. Each of us does not react in the same way to an event. Similar to the cylinder or the cone, which when given the initial impetus will cause the cylinder to roll while the cone will rotate, man reacts to the impetus of situations according to his character. A Stoic will say that it was fatal for me to break my leg (as an event beyond his control) but he will never say that "it was fatal for me to do a bad deed" (Frede 2007: 118). For we ourselves might have acted differently if we had not become the kind of person we are. The wise man is always the man of excellent *disposition*.⁴⁵
2. According to the Stoics, we perceive and act in a certain way. However, in order for any action to take place, it is necessary that there should be a cause, and this cause is created when we give our consent to a stimulus that stems either from our character (our natural inclination) or from our way of thinking that guides our action. Chrysippus argues that no emotion can arise without some external cause as mentioned above. As far as concerns humans, for example, the stimulus is not enough for a theft to take place; it takes the thief himself possessing that particular character, as Seneca mentions.⁴⁶ Events pass forward from one character to another, as it happens with a ball in a tennis match. The player holding the racket has the advantage. But there are good and bad players, who nevertheless have not chosen to be as they are. Thus, according to Cleanthes and the majority of the Stoics, it only remains to admit the dissimilarity between people since they are either wise or fools.⁴⁷

Our nature, however, is part of the Whole. It is up to each person to choose at any time the best decision for him/herself. Bad decisions though, lead to the deprivation of freedom and the disruption of the cosmic order, even if only momentarily. If the attainment of eudaimonia depends on the attainment of virtue, perhaps eudaimonia does not last since virtue also depends, according to Chrysippus,⁴⁸ on a bad mental and physical disposition such as melancholy, drunkenness, fever, diarrhoea, all being diseases, which reason has no control over. In formulating their portrait of the sage, the Stoics, however,

⁴⁴ Cic. *De fato*, 18, 42: "Chrysippus vult, quam dudum diximus, non ut illa quidem fieri possit nulla vi extrinsecus excitata (necesse est enim adsessionem viso commoveri), sed revertitur ad cylindrum et ad turbinem suum, quae moveri incipere nisi pulsa non possunt. Id autem cum accidit, suapte natura, quod superest, et cylindrum volvi et versari turbinem putat."

⁴⁵ S.E. *M.* XI 202: τὸν σοφὸν ἰδίον ἐστὶν ἔργον τὸ πράττειν ἕκαστον τῶν πραττομένων ἀπὸ ἀρίστης διαθέσεως.

⁴⁶ Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 107, 10 (Lafont 1993: 1010).

⁴⁷ Cf. Veyne 1993: 1011 and n. 2.

⁴⁸ D.L. VII 127: ὁ μὲν (Χρύσιππος) ἀποβλήτην (τὴν ἀρετὴν) διὰ μέθην καὶ μελαγχολίαν.

assert that while he may drink wine, he will not succumb to drunkenness, madness, or the negative effects of melancholy or delirium on his intellect. Although these experiences may be contrary to nature, they acknowledge nonetheless, that such occurrences can happen as the sage is still, after all, a human being.⁴⁹ This demonstrates the extent to which reason depends on the body and supports the Stoics' claim that they do not regard themselves as truly wise. Although diseases are classified as indifferents, they still affect the conduct of even the sage, despite their belief that he can remain unwavering.

In conclusion, we realise that this assumption occurred because they realised that the coexistence of good and evil in the world and the constant change of worldly events should be transubstantiated into an effort to find even a temporary eudaimonia. Therefore, every human being, through constant practice, pursues the art of consensus, acceptance, and reconciliation with himself first and then with others, the world, and events, in order to chart his own course towards perfection, that is, towards eudaimonia, even if only temporarily.

⁴⁹ D.L. VII 118: (τὸν σοφὸν) καὶ οἰνωθήσεσθαι μέν, οὐ μεθυσθήσεσθαι δέ. ἔτι δὲ οὐδὲ μανήσεσθαι· προσησέσθαι μέντοι ποτὲ αὐτῷ φαντασίας ἀλλοκότους διὰ μελαγχολίαν ἢ λήρησιν, οὐ κατὰ τὸν τῶν αἰρετῶν λόγον, ἀλλὰ παρὰ φύσιν.

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The Stoics on the Good, the Evil and the Indifferents

In this paper, we examine the concept of evil in Early Stoicism, which is assessed alongside the concepts of good and indifferents within the Stoic classification of things that partake in essence. Adopting the Socratic theory of virtue, which holds that virtue can be taught, the Stoics divided humanity into two categories: the wise (those who act according to reason and are virtuous) and the fools (those who lack reason and are, therefore, ignorant and bad). In this framework, they introduced the notion of the ‘human in progress,’ a state attainable by all who make continuous and diligent effort. If this model holds true, why then do evil people exist, and why does evil persist in the world? The Stoics, we believe, ultimately provide a solution to this problem, which we aim to explore and substantiate in this paper.

KEY WORDS

evil, virtue, indifferents, free will, human in progress (*prokopōn*)

Plotino e Adorno: alcuni parametri di visioni estetiche

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*Ad Annamaria, che vede il Bello in sé,
nel dolce eterno grato ricordo.*

Introduzione

Sebbene il termine “estetica” assuma, in un certo universo semantico, determinati significati con rimando ad una certa conoscenza che ha a che fare con i sensi (αἴσθησις), e quindi con una funzione attributiva che accompagna un sostantivo che compie (αἰσθάνομαι) effettivamente l’azione del conoscere, esso può avere anche una funzione ambivalente, quando non polivalente, ovvero capace di “manifestare” (φαίνω) un significato

o “mostrarsi” (φαίνομαι) secondo questo, per “rivelarne” (ἀποκαλύπτω) poi, sotto una lente analitica, uno “ulteriore” (ἐπέκεινα) e “noumenico” (νοούμενον)¹.

L'oggetto di questo contributo non è tanto l'estetica in sé, della quale molti e valenti studiosi a vario titolo e sotto ogni aspetto si sono occupati e si occupano; non aggiungerei altro che balbettanti ripetizioni per una disciplina filosofica tanto ampia quanto complessa in riferimento alle sue diverse accezioni. Piuttosto, in queste pagine vorrei tentare di mettere in dialogo una certa “teoria” estetica di Plotino (203/205–270) con quella di Theodor W. Adorno (1903–1969). Due modi di “vedere” che possono essere considerati decisamente distanti e forse anche inconciliabili se si guarda, da un lato alla visione del primo e dall'altro a quella del secondo. Prescinde dai miei intenti, infatti, il tentativo di “conciliazione”. Far dialogare e confrontare nonché confrontarsi, non necessariamente vuol dire accordarsi. L'azione dialogica e dialettica, quantomai nella speculazione filosofica, genera ulteriori e sempre nuovi risultati, è segno di una pluralità di pensiero che è sinonimo di fecondità. Non si ha quindi la pretesa della novità sull'argomento; piuttosto si comprende la problematicità a cui determinate affermazioni potranno condurre, qualora non rese chiaramente e distintamente intelligibili. Il lettore saprà usarmi clemenza e onorarmi delle sue osservazioni che, in particolar modo in ambito speculativo e, appunto, critico, risulterebbero assai utili, efficaci e dunque produttive per lo sviluppo del pensiero.

Sotto il registro del *multifocal approach*, tenterò di illustrare alcuni aspetti dell'estetica di Adorno attraverso nozioni del pensiero di Plotino relative alla sua speculazione sulla Bellezza e al rapporto che quest'ultima ha con il sensibile. In questa peculiare prospettiva di ripensamento di aspetti salienti della riflessione adorniana cercherò di guardare all'estetica dell'immediato e della sensazione nonché a quella dell'“industrializzazione della cultura” e quindi dell'arte, tentando di recuperare quelle categorie metafisiche che, a parere di Adorno, mancano nell'estetica contemporanea, e di ridare alla dimensione che le è propria, attraverso il rimando alla dialettica tra il sensibile e il noetico propria del pensiero plotiniano, una certa essenza che trova la sua sussistenza nel mondo delle “forme”. Occorrerà quindi, prima di tutto, guardare al diverso motivo di trascendenza che muove entrambi i pensatori nella loro visione estetica. A questo approccio, guardando a un altro contesto della filosofia neoplatonica, si aggiungeranno una lettura della dottrina di Proclo (412–485), esposta nella *Teologia platonica*, relativa al rapporto tra l'essenza della Bellezza, vista come categoria dell'intellezione, e il suo corrispettivo nel mondo materiale, che trova realizzazione nella disponibilità di “adeguarsi” al mondo delle forme, nonché una valutazione della visione estetica in relazione al tardoantico e al moderno a partire da *La regola del gusto* di David Hume (1711–1776).

Per ciò che concerne Plotino mi muoverò quindi dal trattato sul Bello, con dei riferimenti all'amore, all'ascesi intellettuale, alla relazione dell'arte con la bellezza e all'unione

¹ Quest'ultimo lemma deriva proprio da un “verbo di pensiero” propriamente detto, essendo il participio presente mediopassivo di νοέω.

dell'uomo con il "Bello" in sé e quindi con l'Uno². Dell'eminente rappresentante della "scuola di Francoforte" terrò in considerazione alcuni aspetti della sua *Teoria estetica*³, un testo che si presenta come scritto di getto, quasi in un unico dialogo con l'esistente che si manifesta in una conoscenza immediata e che esige una propria analisi. Uno scritto che, nella titolazione delle sue parti, non presenta, a mio parere, uno schema organizzato, ma una diafasia capace di adattare il linguaggio alle situazioni osservate, le stesse che provengono dall'ἐμπειρία o dal mondo dell'arte, la cui visione sensibile si traduce in una "prima" e immediata esperienza estetica⁴. Termini come "arte", "società", "situazione", "tecnica", "bello naturale e bello artistico", "apparenza ed espressione", "senso", "concordanza", "soggetto", "oggetto", offrono le lenti per guardare dentro i contenuti che questi lemmi significano e valutare la possibilità che, ripensandoli con categorie metafisiche di carattere neoplatonico – quelle che tento di utilizzare, le quali non sono quelle di cui si serve Adorno – si possa cercare un "contenuto di verità" che porti il soggetto osservante l'oggetto, quel soggetto che legge la natura o l'opera d'arte – dove per quest'ultima si intende universalmente quella che afferisce non soltanto ad opere scultoree o pittoriche ma anche musicali testuali e di ogni genere che *tocchi la sensibilità* visiva e teoretica del soggetto –, fino a quel κέντρον che Plotino indica come culmine estatico, momento in cui il soggetto si unisce con il proprio oggetto, per dirla con Adorno, ovvero, per rispondere con il pensatore di Licopoli, quell'istante in cui l'uomo si unisce all'Uno. Posta criticamente, la possibilità di questo confronto può essere ammessa; resta da capire quali punti possono essere di concordanza e quali, invece, diventano delle linee parallele. Su queste certamente vi sono i punti di partenza dei due pensatori: una posizione prettamente metafisica e platonica, per Plotino, volta ad un'indagine metafenomenica che, semmai, dialetticamente e in maniera discensiva si volge oltre l'ipostasi dell'Anima. Una posizione istantanea e immediata, che guarda intanto al fenomeno e cerca in esso il criterio di verità, per ciò che riguarda Adorno. Tuttavia, in merito all'estetica e al bello, come percezione da un lato e come visione dall'altro, quindi "Bello" in senso neoplatonico, occorre fare una precisazione per chiarire che estetica non è sinonimo di bellezza, come purtroppo nel tempo e nell'uso comune del linguaggio quel lemma è diventato.

La determinazione dell'estetica come dottrina del bello frutta così poco perché il carattere formale del concetto di bellezza si allontana dal contenuto intero dell'estetico. Se l'estetica non fosse che un catalogo magari sistematico di ciò che in qualche modo viene chiamato bello,

² Cfr. Radice (2002: tr. I 6; III 5; V 9).

³ Cfr. Desideri, Matteucci (2009).

⁴ In merito alla traduzione e alle indicazioni sull'organizzazione del testo si veda la nota introduttiva dei curatori. Cfr. Desideri, Matteucci (2009: XXXI–XXXIV).

non se ne trarrebbe alcuna idea sulla vita interna al concetto di bello. All'interno di ciò a cui mira la riflessione estetica esso rappresenta solo un momento⁵.

Invece è proprio del carattere formale che qui mi voglio occupare, di quel carattere, cioè, che essendo originario, permette a ciò con cui viene in relazione, di parteciparvi, di "assumerne" una forma, di "essere in relazione a lui e non per se stesso". Elevando tale concetto, in maniera direttamente proporzionale potremo fare altrettanto con quello di estetica, ovvero di una conoscenza che da immediata può divenire mediata. Altrimenti, come intende Adorno, il concetto di bello ne rappresenterà soltanto una parte. Il valore del Bello in sé, quindi, secondo i due pensatori qui presi in esame, come raggiungimento di un termine, di un risultato, è la meta di un percorso speculativo, a prescindere dal metodo seguito per il raggiungimento di quel risultato. Il bello, come anche il brutto⁶, gravitano nell'universo dei ragionamenti, i quali fungono da indispensabile ὄργανον per la comprensione del loro oggetto. Ciò riguarda, anche, la percezione estetica che afferisce al sentimento o agli stati d'animo, soprattutto se guardiamo alla relazione tra soggetto – che guarda – e oggetto – che è guardato e, a volte, anche visto⁷.

Guardare e vedere

Come luogo in cui il Bello risiede Plotino indica, *ex abrupto*, determinati sensi: la vista «soprattutto» e poi anche l'udito, spostando subito oltre la sensazione per trovarne l'essenza: «Se ci si eleva al di sopra delle sensazioni si incontra la bellezza delle attività, delle azioni, delle disposizioni, delle scienze e delle virtù. Se poi ancora prima di ciò si trovi qualcos'altro, non mancherà di rivelarsi»⁸. Sorge una prima questione: la vista o l'udito, sono il luogo in cui è il Bello o, piuttosto, essi sono quel mezzo che ci permette di vederlo (ὁράω) per conoscerlo (οἶδα)? Se subito dopo Plotino guarda al metodo che gli consente di andare oltre, di essere più avanti (πρόειμι), comprendiamo che, in un ambito dialettico prettamente platonico, proprio quella è la via che per lui porta al Bello, consistente in un superamento del "senso" estetico, della percezione mediante la vista o l'udito, e protesa a un principio ulteriore che è «al di là delle sensazioni» appunto.

Si potrebbe già prospettare una prima argomentazione proveniente dal lessico adorniano: quella che fa riferimento alla "situazione", all'*hic et nunc*. Il senso estetico riguarda soltanto ciò che è bello, ciò che "piace" o, piuttosto, va riferito a ciò che si vede e trasposto a ciò che non si vede? Si tratta, a mio parere, di tornare forse a quelle categorie aristoteliche che spiegano cosa sono i sensi e, a partire da questi, tracciarne il campo di indagine e utilizzare gli stessi sensi come via, come metodo. Leggendo in filigrana, le posizioni

⁵ Desideri, Matteucci (2009: tr. 69).

⁶ Cfr. Desideri, Matteucci (2009: 62–83).

⁷ Cfr. Pedio (1989).

⁸ Radice (2002: tr. I 6, 1, 1).

di Adorno in fatto di estetica mi sembrerebbero ondivaghe tra una metafisica classica e una che potremmo chiamare proprio della situazione, del momento, dell'immanenza. Mi rendo conto non della contraddizione in termini ma dell'ossimoro speculativo che ho appena utilizzato. Provo a spiegare partendo proprio da ciò che Aristotele intende per metafisica e, in particolare, per "sostanza"; lo faccio – per rimanere in tema di estetica e di visione – "guardando" il celeberrimo affresco di Raffaello nella stanza della Signatura in Vaticano: la *Scuola di Atene*. Al centro della raffigurazione si vedono Platone e Aristotele che discutono; il primo con la mano alzata e il dito indice che punta in alto, verso quell'idea del Bene che comporta uno spostamento dialettico ascensionale e discensionale, se si vuole partire dal mondo sensibile e andare verso le vere forme, le idee appunto, e viceversa, se dal valore ed essenza di queste ultime si raggiunge il mondo sensibile consapevoli che la *verità* consiste nel mondo di lassù. Procedimento che, come sappiamo, vediamo sintetizzato nel "mito della caverna"⁹. Aristotele è con la mano in posizione frontale e orizzontale, quasi ad indicare una "situazione fattuale", lungi tuttavia dal negare il mondo sovrasensibile ma volto a predicare che della visione si deve fare analisi secondo determinati principi che la costituiscono. Sono assai note quindi le sue sintetiche definizioni della "filosofia prima", la quale indaga le cause e i principi primi e supremi, l'essere in quanto essere, la sostanza, Dio e la sostanza sovrasensibile¹⁰. La ricerca della sostanza, come ciò che rende una cosa ciò che essa è, che non si predica di altro ma ciò che si predica fa riferimento ad essa;¹¹ questo risulta essere l'oggetto vero di una visione – *prima facie* – filtrata dal carattere estetico e non più dal suo senso.

La questione posta da Plotino, relativa alla relazione che vi è tra le cose sensibili e il Bello in sé, ovvero sulla causa che rende le cose belle e perché sia proprio l'Anima, come terza ipostasi, l'elemento simbolico che unisce le cose con il Bello, o meglio, perché proprio l'Anima sia lo strumento affine alla conoscenza del Bello e alla sua visione da parte delle cose sensibili¹², ottiene una risposta proprio relativamente alla questione della visione della sostanza. Si tratta cioè di comprendere la distinzione tra "essere per sé" ed "essere per altro". In mezzo, simbolicamente, sta la terza ipostasi. «Il fatto è – spiega Plotino – che alcune realtà, per esempio quelle corporee, non sono belle per effetto dei loro sostrati, ma per partecipazione; altre invece, come la natura della virtù, sono belle in sé»¹³. C'è quindi un essere per sé, che identifichiamo nello *ὑποκείμενον*, in quel sostrato cioè, che ha una sua propria essenza e che è per se stesso¹⁴. Le realtà corporee pertanto, partecipano "di" un sostrato che fa sì che esse siano più o meno belle o che non lo siano affatto, «perché un conto è l'essere del corpo, un conto quello della bellezza»¹⁵. Plotino

⁹ Cfr. Gabrieli (1997: VII 514a–517a).

¹⁰ Cfr. Berti (2017: tr. A 1–2; 3, 983a24–34; α 1; Γ 1–2; E 1, 1026b10–30; Z 1–6).

¹¹ Cfr. Berti (2017: Z 3, 1028b33–1029a5).

¹² Cfr. Radice (2002: tr. I 6, 1, 9–12).

¹³ Radice (2002: tr. I 6, 1, 9–12).

¹⁴ Cfr. Berti (2017: tr. Z 3, 1028b35 ss).

¹⁵ Radice (2002: tr. I 6, 1, 15).

cerca proprio l'oggetto di attrazione del contemplante, quello vero, quello che mette in contatto il contemplante con il contemplato e si chiede quale sia la sua natura, un passaggio fondamentale che evidenzia la natura della metafisica neoplatonica volta all'ascesi verso il Vero e il Bello. L'essenza delle cose belle, quella che, per dirla in termini aristotelici, fa sì che le cose *abbiano del Bello* – il complemento partitivo è voluto – rispetto a ciò che è Bello, trova il suo fondamento ultimo nella natura dell'Uno, nell'unità rispetto alla molteplicità.

Il termine di paragone di Plotino, infatti, è la complessità rispetto alla semplicità, laddove quella, per assumere la bellezza, deve possedere determinati canoni, quelli dell'armonia e della proporzione, tipici della classicità antica. Un'opera d'arte, per intenderci, per essere definita bella doveva rispettare i parametri dell'armonia tra le sue parti. Il concetto di ordine è alla base di questa posizione, imprescindibile per un greco antico. La speculazione di Plotino va naturalmente oltre, affermando che per le "vere" cose belle, come ad esempio l'essenza della virtù, o per l'autenticità della bellezza dell'Anima, il concetto di armonia e proporzione non può essere "adeguato". La bellezza dei corpi, di un'opera d'arte, di un brano musicale, di un paesaggio di campagna... La bellezza fenomenica insomma, acquisisce diritto di cittadinanza se viene riconosciuta da ciò che le è affine, dall'Anima, che vede le cose e si "ricorda" della sua essenza e del fatto che determinate realtà somigliano per partecipazione a quelle sovrasensibili. Credo che i termini cruciali utilizzati in questo frangente da Plotino siano proprio μορφή e εἶδος, "forma". Una forma come figura esteriore e una come idea, matrice propria, essenza. La realtà sensibile, sebbene tendente al Bello, non vi partecipa se non viene plasmata dall'essenza del Bello; se non vi partecipa non ne assume la bellezza. Tale partecipazione è una disposizione ad adeguarsi alla forma superiore, che viene data dal percorso dialettico ascendente che ha come meta l'idea del Bello, la Bellezza in sé. Ciò che vediamo, insomma, per Plotino è bello se ha un grado di partecipazione di quella forma superiore che ne è essenza divina. Ciò che non rientra in questo tipo di partecipazione rimane fuori dalla ragione, anche questa divina. In tal caso, la lontananza dal Bello, la mancanza di disposizione ad assumere la forma, fa venir fuori la bruttezza.

Dal tardoantico al moderno. Due postille

In una visione complessiva della storia della filosofia, mi giova soffermarmi su due pensatori che aiutano nell'approfondimento della ricerca della visione del Bello in sé e nell'istanza della necessità di acquisire un metodo per potere apprezzare il valore della bellezza, mediante l'intellectio e i sensi. Il primo, Proclo, segue e irrobustisce la speculazione di Plotino e quindi di Platone; il secondo, David Hume, si colloca, in età moderna, nell'ambito di una filosofia che predilige il valore dell'ἐμπειρία, quindi diametralmente opposta ad una metafisica della sostanza e della contemplazione. In questa proposta di lettura, rispetto ad Adorno, queste due prospettive di pensiero manifestano un significativo valore sia per la tensione e la "nostalgia" metafisica espressa come defi-

cienza del suo tempo e che si cela tra le fitte righe della *Teoria estetica*, sia per lo squarcio che Hume – e l’empirismo tutto – apre nella storia delle idee, influenzando giocoforza in campo estetico stili, gusti e modi di percepire la realtà circostante il soggetto che la pensa e la indaga. A proposito del termine αἰσθησις insomma, in Proclo e Hume possiamo incontrare la polisemia che ho indicato nell’*Introduzione*, dalla quale, secondo una mia interpretazione, Adorno non è immune.

Commentando il *Fedro* e il *Filebo*, Proclo fa sua l’analisi platonica in merito al Bene, intercambiabile con la sapienza e la bellezza. Sebbene il registro speculativo utilizzato da Proclo al riguardo sia rivolto alla struttura ontologica degli dèi, esso può essere accostato in qualche modo all’assunto *ens, verum, bonum et pulchrum convertuntur in unum* che dalla scolastica è riferito ai trascendentali quali attributi divini mentre per Proclo, appunto, indica la struttura dell’essere divino¹⁶. Questi, infatti, parla proprio del Bene, della sapienza e della bellezza come essenza del divino, degli dèi, che sono tali perché consistono in questi tre principi, dei quali partecipa il mondo sensibile; nessun ente, infatti, è buono se non partecipa e non è causato dalla bontà divina¹⁷.

Una modalità per questa partecipazione, che Proclo inquadra nell’atto del “rivolgersi” (ἐπιστρέφομαι) degli enti verso la bontà degli dèi¹⁸, e che potrebbe avvicinare la posizione di Plotino riferita poco sopra, è quella che intende la partecipazione come discesa (e dialetticamente risalita) dal (al) Bene.¹⁹ Nella sua interpretazione di Platone, Proclo presenta «i tre caratteri in assoluto più importanti della natura del Bene, quello di “desiderabile”, quello di “adeguato”, quello di perfetto» e aggiunge che «Bisogna infatti ad un tempo che esso – il Bene – faccia volgere verso se stesso tutte le cose, che le colmi e che sotto nessun aspetto la sovrabbondanza venga a mancare né diminuisca».²⁰ Bene inteso, anche, come Bello. Il “far volgere” viene ad essere corollario del “desiderabile” e dell’“adeguato” che, sommati, danno la perfezione. Se questa è propria degli dèi, e di questi parla Proclo, mediante gli altri due elementi si apre l’accesso alla divinità, a quella partecipazione alla “forma” di cui tratta Plotino.

¹⁶ Secondo un’ermeneutica platonica, per Proclo l’Uno-Bene, assunto come il Principio primo di tutte le cose, trascende anche alla Bellezza in sé intesa come forma e la verità stessa. Nella visione henologica procliana, l’Uno-Bene trascende tutti gli dèi, i quali ricevono i loro caratteri divini da esso e li dispensano a tutti gli altri enti, facendoli partecipare della loro bontà. La loro stessa immutabilità, la loro unità e la loro verità, derivano e vengono trascese dalla Bontà. Cfr. Abbate (2019: tr. I 17, 81, 14–21). In part. cfr. Abbate (2019: tr. I 17, 81, 28–82, 2: «Pertanto tutto ciò che viene mostrato risulta dipendere da queste tre cognizioni comuni concernenti la realtà divina: la bontà, l’immutabilità e la verità».

¹⁷ Cfr. Abbate (2019: I 18, 83, 4–9; 21–29; 84, 1–15).

¹⁸ Cfr. Abbate (2019: I 18, 86, 26–87, 21).

¹⁹ Abbate (2019: I 22, 101, 5–12): «Il bene [...] è fonte di conservazione e di esistenza per la totalità delle cose, e [...] risulta sussistere in ogni ambito come entità assolutamente somma, [...] è atto a colmare le tutte realtà sottoposte, [...] preesiste in ogni livello del reale come analogo al Principio primissimo di tutti gli ordinamenti divini. Infatti è in base al bene che tutti gli dèi risultano uniti alla sola ed unica causa della totalità dell’universo e gli dèi hanno il loro essere principalmente in base ad esso: ed infatti non v’è per tutti gli enti cosa più perfetta né del bene né degli dèi».

²⁰ Abbate (2019: I 22, 101, 15–19).

Mi sembra che in questi tre elementi si rispecchi ciò che propriamente contraddistingue la filosofia platonica, l'idea del movimento che conduce ad unità e la relazione tra molteplice ed Uno. Non voglio allontanarmi dagli intenti di questo contributo ma ritengo che nell'attrarre, nel "far volgere a sé", e quindi nel guardare come ricercare, come trasporre la propria esperienza nel visibile o come lettura dello stesso, come chiave per una *θεωρία* estetica, non solo come visione ma anche e soprattutto come investigazione, si possano trovare le tracce di una conclusione, abbozzata se vogliamo, che simbolicamente possa porre in dialogo pensatori che partono da "punti di vista" e da "visioni" in modalità diverse, come quelli qui presi in esame.

Il "desiderabile" non è il "desiderato". Il primo indica un'azione che si compie continuamente, che costituisce non l'oggetto da raggiungere ma ciò che fa sì che gli altri lo guardino per raggiungerlo, per partecipare della sua ineffabilità. Il "desiderato" indica piuttosto qualcosa che viene carpito, come finalità e conclusione di un movimento. La visione invece, l'investigazione, se da un lato cercano e trovano un risultato, dall'altro si nutrono e vivono di "desiderabile", che le illumina e simbolicamente le connette a se stesso. Il "desiderabile" non è insomma l'appetibile ma ciò che «solleva tutte le realtà e le trasporta in alto verso gli dèi in modo ineffabile con le proprie irradiazioni»²¹. In tal modo la materia risulta «protesa», tendente a quel "desiderabile" che non è passivo, ovvero non è un oggetto fermo che attira: se da un lato esso può sembrare tale, dall'altro si deve cercare una definizione che trasponga gli elementi della relazione simbolica e consideri proprio il "desiderabile" come ciò che conduce l'azione della visione e della partecipazione. "Elevare" le realtà principiate è la struttura protologica del "desiderabile", perché «di tutti quanti gli enti <esso> è il centro, e intorno ad esso tutti gli enti e tutti gli dèi hanno ad un tempo le essenze, le potenze e le attività. E la tensione verso di esso ed il desiderio da parte degli enti sono inestinguibili. Infatti, pur essendo inconoscibile e incoglibile, gli enti bramano questo Desiderabile»²². Siamo al punto di distacco di cui abbiamo riferito di Plotino: nel momento in cui ci si eleva dalle sensazioni, si incontra la vera bellezza.

Altro carattere simbolico su cui riflette Proclo è l'"adeguato", una *δύναμις* che lega la sovrabbondanza dell'unità a tutte le entità «fino alle ultime», senza nulla perdere della propria qualità. Possiamo dire che è la realizzazione della processione che dalle ipostasi plotiniane giunge sino al mondo sensibile. È un vero e proprio simbolo che congiunge le realtà ad un carattere che permane in se stesso ma che raggiunge le cose, "adeguando" la propria potenza, facendo sì che le realtà si uniscano al "desiderabile". Si tratta, insomma, del vero e proprio nucleo centrale dell'elevazione, che è presente in tutte le cose per via del suo procedere. Si passa quindi da un momento in cui la materia è protesa ad un momento in cui riceve la generazione secondo una processione dal Bello. Permanere in se stessi, essere "desiderabile", non significa staticità ma indica un movimento che

²¹ Abbate (2019: I 22, 102, 6–8).

²² Abbate (2019: I 22, 102, 12–17).

dal mantenimento della propria natura, si sposta ad una generazione che procede verso le realtà inferiori. Abbiamo quindi un “protendere” e un “procedere”, un doppio scatto che, in chiave estetica, è indice della relazione soggetto-oggetto-soggetto, che coniuga un impatto immediato con la serenità della riflessione e della speculazione. Non è un caso che, a proposito della visione del bello e della sua generazione, Adorno denunci proprio questa mancanza di mediazione nell’estetica del “secolo breve”, fatta di esperienze concluse, di sentimentalismo e irrazionalità.

Il pensiero di Hume risulta un passaggio utile per evidenziare il contrasto con il neoplatonismo e la modernità stessa, fondamentale dal punto di vista storico-critico, che potrebbe gradualmente far confluire nelle conclusioni di Adorno. Nel saggio *La regola del gusto* egli cerca «una regola mediante la quale possano venire accordati i vari sentimenti degli uomini, o almeno una decisione che, quando venga espressa, confermi un sentimento e ne condanni un altro»²³. Hume pensa intanto ad una norma universale ed evidenza, prima che un giudizio di gusto, un “giudizio di metodo” che accordi tutti su una determinata obiettività data dall’evidenza empirica. Tuttavia – ed ecco un primo contrasto con il neoplatonismo – se da un lato per il filosofo scozzese si cerca un’oggettività valida per tutti, questa appartiene non alla sostanza di un oggetto che colpisce i nostri sensi, che noi “guardiamo”, ma ad un “accordo” di giudizio che faccia prevalere un sentimento specifico su un altro. Dall’altro però – e siamo al tentativo di ricerca della sostanza – va sottolineata l’intensità della speculazione humiana volta a fissare un punto fermo di osservazione, che incontrovertibilmente generi il giudizio di gusto, condiviso da tutti. Nel campo dell’empirismo sappiamo bene che ciò non può avvenire a livello di sostrato ontologico, semplicemente per la suddetta distinzione tra il “guardare” e il “vedere”, per quella differenza tra relativo-opinabile e assoluto-oggettivo. Verrebbe anche inficiato il criterio del “giudizio di verità”. Se è vero come è vero che quest’ultimo si fonda sul principio di non contraddizione, proprio di una logica formale, nella speculazione empirica, relativa all’osservazione dei fenomeni e non delle cose in sé, la verità può essere tale da un punto di vista prettamente logico, ovvero secondo un adeguamento dell’intelletto alla realtà (che descrive ciò che vede); ma dal punto di vista ontologico viene meno l’apprendimento del *verum* da parte dell’intelletto rispetto all’ente. Hume infatti afferma che i sentimenti sono reali e sono tutti giusti, ma ciò non può valere per le determinazioni dell’intelletto, le quali si riferiscono a ciò che sta al di là di ciò che si guarda. Ciò che del sentimento risulta giusto è l’unità di misura – relativa – del rapporto che vi è tra l’oggetto e gli organi che lo percepiscono. Ma, dice Hume, «la bellezza non è una qualità delle cose stesse: essa esiste soltanto nella mente che la contempla, ed ogni mente percepisce una diversa bellezza»²⁴. Un’affermazione del genere elide la visione estatica dell’Uno proposta da Plotino e annulla il processo procliano che va dal “desiderabile”, all’“adeguato”, fino al “perfetto”, in una prospettiva in cui proprio quest’ultimo attributo appare inesistente

²³ Preti (1971: tr. 636–658, in part. 639).

²⁴ Preti (1971: tr. 639; cfr. 643).

per un empirista di tal sorta. La Bellezza, piuttosto, è delle cose in sé; non è soltanto nella mente che la contempla, secondo la visione platonica.

Anche la tesi estetica di Adorno può prendere le distanze dalla posizione humiana, perché, come si legge più avanti in questo articolo, non sono la mercificazione e l'industrializzazione della cultura (per Hume il cambiamento delle mode e il volgere dell'esperienza) a mostrarci l'essenza del bello e della cosa in sé; anzi, l'analisi di Hume da un lato è propedeutica al cambiamento culturale e quindi al volgere della storia delle idee che si evince in quella industrializzazione posta in evidenza da Adorno; dall'altro, con la proposta e la necessità di fissare una "regola del gusto", si presenterebbe contigua alla critica di Adorno sulla mancanza di una visione metafisica dell'estetica. Vi è comunque, in entrambi i pensatori, il bisogno di fondare un ragionamento senza contraddizioni; tuttavia, per il filosofo tedesco la necessità è data dal ritrovare – sebbene con modalità rivedute – una sostanza situata oltre il ginepro dell'industrializzazione e delle sensazioni immediate; per quello scozzese dal fissare un metodo valevole per tutti, una "regola del gusto". Quest'ultima, per Hume, non può provenire dall'astrazione a priori del pensiero, che indaga sulle essenze e sulle relazioni di idee eterne e immutabili le quali hanno per lui un unico fondamento: «l'esperienza; e non sono altro che osservazioni generali relative a ciò che si è trovato piacevole in tutti i paesi e in tutte le epoche»²⁵. Ma se consideriamo le essenze delle cose e le loro relazioni, se guardiamo alle idee come forme eterne, immutabili, per se stesse e non per altro, quindi tali per essenza, esse vanno colte proprio con l'assoluta astrazione dell'intelletto di contro all'esperienza sensoriale che rilancia il relativismo doxastico. Una "regola del gusto" può avere una valenza relativa quindi, perché ciò che per Hume ha fondamento nell'esperienza e ha la pretesa di elevarsi a regola universale, ha piuttosto e di necessità un fondamento teoretico come postulato: «Se dunque né per tutti tutte le cose sono allo stesso modo insieme e sempre, né per ciascuno in privato è ciascuna cosa, allora è chiaro che le cose sono esse da se stesse in possesso di una qualche stabile essenza, non relative a noi né da noi tratte in su e in giù per l'immagine che ne abbiamo, ma in se stesse in relazione alla loro essenza in possesso di un loro proprio modo di essere già predisposte»²⁶.

Di contro alla difficoltà e alla superiore richiesta di attenzione per discernere le relazioni che vi sono tra le forme e i sentimenti, fondate sempre sull'esperienza e giudicate "oscuri", Hume propone una via alternativa di analisi, basata sulla «durevole ammirazione» che permane nonostante i cambiamenti delle mode e delle abitudini, nonché degli errori e della stessa ignoranza²⁷. Da dove proviene la "durevole ammirazione"? Se questa è soggettiva essa vale soltanto ogni qual volta si guarda l'opera, come se questa fosse sospesa e prendesse vita quando viene percepita dai sensi. Se invece è oggettiva, ma non mi sembra tale il riferimento di Hume relativamente ai sentimenti,

²⁵ Preti (1971: tr. 640).

²⁶ Cfr. Aronadio (2018: tr. 386d–386e).

²⁷ Preti (1971: tr. 642).

essa appartiene al Bello in sé, che è stabilmente nella condizione di essere ammirato. Si tratta di rispondere alla domanda se un dipinto del Caravaggio, un'aria di Bach, un panorama dolomitico e qualsiasi altra cosa noi percepiamo con i sensi, siano belli e suscitino ammirazione “soltanto” quando vengono visti o se siano sempre nello stato di bellezza, anche se nessuno li veda. Quest'ultimo aspetto è ciò che manca all'arte in generale secondo Adorno: un fondamento ontologico in sé per sé, ed è quello che Hume a mio parere cerca nella “durevole ammirazione”, tutto sommato relativa, che verrà ad essere il perno attorno al quale ruota la sua “regola del gusto”. In una speculazione metafisica, invece, la “durevole ammirazione” è tale se è data dal movimento del pensiero, che si sofferma e si riconosce, come dice Plotino a proposito dell'Anima, affine al proprio oggetto di pensiero, “desiderabile”, ovvero capace di generare sempre l'azione speculativa. Possiamo considerarla “simbolica”, appartenente sia al Bello in sé sia al pensiero stesso, che se ne serve per cercarlo e conoscerlo; ma queste sono disprezzate e assurde «teorie di astratta filosofia»²⁸. È tuttavia dichiaratamente il campo empirico quello percorso dal pensatore scozzese, che vede nella “durevole ammirazione” uno strumento al servizio di chi guarda e non una caratteristica ontologica dell'oggetto guardato.

«Una causa evidente per cui molti non possono sentire il sentimento del giusto della bellezza è la mancanza di quella “squisitezza” dell'immaginazione che è necessaria per poter essere sensibili a queste che sono le emozioni più raffinate»²⁹. Nell'uso linguistico siamo abituati a utilizzare il sostantivo “squisitezza”, come anche il relativo attributo “squisito”, relativamente a qualcosa di buono e di bello. Hume invece lo utilizza nel suo significato originario, prettamente analitico; il lemma latino da cui deriva, *exquiro*, significa propriamente “investigare”, “cercare di scoprire”, “esaminare”, “esplorare”, “verificare”, “informarsi”, “giudicare”...³⁰. La mancanza di squisitezze per Hume è la causa della mancanza di raffinatezza dell'immaginazione, perché quest'ultima non riesce a fare le necessarie distinzioni e le dovute analisi del proprio oggetto. Manca effettivamente la “percezione” raffinata che porta alla perfezione della conoscenza empirica; come quando ad esempio si distingue un artigiano perfezionista da uno rozzo, i quali producono in maniera diversa il loro oggetto: l'uno è dotato di squisitezze, l'altro no. Non è soltanto una questione di metodo ma anche di conoscenza e visione. Secondo Hume manca lo strumento per conoscere, per riconoscere e identificare come “desiderabile”, direi nell'accezione di Proclo, il Bello in sé, il quale, ammesso che ci sia, non è giudicabile dal sentimento. Con una semantica diversa e contraria a quella spiegata da Proclo, Hume utilizza “desiderabile” come attributo della squisitezze, forse più come “desiderato”, considerata come una qualità essenziale dello spirito – inteso come l'uomo che pensa – e del sentimento, «perché è la fonte di tutte le gioie più raffinate e più innocenti di cui l'umana natura sia capace» e che permette quindi di giudicare³¹. Identificare la squisitezze, quindi,

²⁸ Preti (1971: tr. 652); cfr. Preti (1971: tr. 657–658).

²⁹ Preti (1971: tr. 644).

³⁰ Cfr. Preti (1971: tr. 646).

³¹ Preti (1971: tr. 646).

significa per l'empirista Hume, fondarsi su un certo *consensus omnium* per potere esprimere opinioni basate sull'esperienza; vale il giudizio di tutti o della maggior parte degli uomini, che guardano all'esperienza per distinguere i diversi generi di bellezza: «Soltanto un forte buon senso, unito ad un sentimento squisito accresciuto dalla pratica, perfezionato dall'abitudine ai confronti e liberato da tutti i pregiudizi, può conferire ai critici questa preziosa qualità; e la sentenza concorde di questi, ovunque si trovino, è la vera regola del gusto e della bellezza»³². Fa problema, a mio giudizio e secondo la visione che ho posto in evidenza nell'*Introduzione*, a chi attribuire l'aggettivo "critico": se ad un movimento di pensiero prettamente teoretico – utilizzato da Plotino e Proclo e ricercato in tal senso da Adorno –, o ad una pragmatica capacità (poietica) di vedere e distinguere con i sensi, empiricamente, la bellezza degli oggetti. Per Adorno la squisitezza scompare in quella mercificazione culturale che non soltanto annebbia la capacità soggettiva della ricerca ma cela sotto una coltre pesante la bellezza distintiva di ogni cosa. In ogni caso, per entrambi, viene meno ciò che dirime tra complessità (molteplice e anche empirica) e semplicità (propria dell'unità e quinti relativa alla sostanza).

L'imitazione come scoperta eziologica contro l'appiattimento culturale

Adorno afferma che «l'arte è il rifugio del comportamento mimetico. In essa il soggetto (...) si rapporta al proprio altro, da esso separato e *tuttavia* non completamente separato. La rinuncia dell'arte alle pratiche magiche, implica partecipazione alla razionalità»³³. Mi sembra che egli indichi l'imitazione come "luogo naturale" dell'arte; ma è su quell'avversativa, "tuttavia" che vorrei guardare in riferimento alla relazione tra soggetto e oggetto, per poi tornare all'imitazione. Intanto chi o che cos'è il "proprio altro"? Soltanto l'oggetto da imitare o anche e πλεϊστον, per dirla con Plotino, quello da conoscere, *mediante* l'investigazione speculativa e metafisica? L'argomento su cui riflette Adorno è contestuale al momento storico in cui scrive e i riferimenti nelle pagine della *Teoria estetica* lo dimostrano; egli indica una trasformazione che si è avuta nell'elaborazione del concetto di estetica, del quale il bello è solo una parte.

L'industrializzazione e la mercificazione di ogni tipo di arte, hanno certamente e fortemente limitato il suo scopo principale ovvero la sua stessa libertà di espressione, di riproduzione, di indagine, al punto che i suoi oggetti propri come prodotti di arti "poietiche", nonché i soggetti che li guardano, sono tutti omologati, classificati come somigliantisi tra di loro e sottomessi al potere del capitale. In questa analisi dell'arte e del bello – fuori di sé, ovvero fruito dall'uomo – Adorno, insieme a Horkheimer, è lapidario; riferendosi all'innovativa forma di arte cinematografica, alla radio e alla musica che passa attraverso le onde di quest'ultima, ne definisce gli esiti come affari ideologici atti

³² Preti (1971: tr. 651).

³³ Desideri, Matteucci (2009: tr. 72); corsivo mio.

a legittimare «le porcherie che producono deliberatamente. Si autodefiniscono industrie, e rendendo note le cifre dei redditi dei loro direttori generali soffocano ogni *dubbio* possibile circa la necessità sociale dei loro prodotti»³⁴. In altre parole, non vi è più una relazione simbolica tra l'oggetto estetico, che diventa prodotto industriale, e il soggetto che guarda, che si rivede, che vuole conoscerne l'essenza. È questo un richiamo precipuo del filosofare, con riferimento all'appello al dubbio, anima della speculazione e suo inizio³⁵; ma non semplicemente in quanto condizione di domanda per conoscere, quanto piuttosto, in questo caso, come appello al *duplum*, al doppio, che proviene proprio dall'alternanza che si pone Adorno nel guardare all'industrializzazione della cultura e, con questa, dell'arte. Da un lato quindi l'oggetto e dall'altro il soggetto: una doppiezza che non registra più una posizione mediana di incontro, un "movimento" che genera pensiero come esito del mutamento mentale, un'alternativa simbolica che possa sublimare nella conoscenza la ricerca del soggetto che entra nell'oggetto e viceversa. «*Prima philosophia* e dualismo vanno insieme» sostiene Adorno³⁶, indicando il concetto antico di metafisica in un luogo speculativo che fronteggia appunto concetti e categorie e giudicando negativa – come negazione della relazione – la dialettica dei principi e delle idee. Un dualismo che mette a confronto l'ontico specifico con l'ontologico e che³⁷, tradotto nell'ambito della filosofia estetica, assumerebbe un carattere che pone in relazione la flessione tra l'oggetto specifico della visione sensibile e l'elaborazione di dati trascendenti che condurrebbero ad una soluzione afferente all'essere in sé di quell'oggetto³⁸. Un'operazione dialettica appunto, che viene assunta dal soggetto che guarda, pensa, vede, conosce.

In verità il riconoscimento di movimento di mediazione soggettiva implica la critica alla concezione di uno sguardo che penetra fino al puro in sé, concezione che, dimenticata, sta agguattata dietro tale volgarità. (...). Ma proprio il muro che circonda il soggetto getta su tutto quel che evoca l'ombra della cosalità, che poi una filosofia soggettiva combatte impotentemente. Qualunque elemento di esperienza la parola essere porti con sé, è esprimibile solo in configurazioni di essente, non tramite un'allergia contro di esso; altrimenti il contenuto della filosofia diventa il misero risultato di un processo di sottrazione, non diversamente un tempo

³⁴ Solmi (2010: tr. 127); corsivo mio.

³⁵ Il riferimento di Adorno è essenzialmente alla distinzione che c'è tra pensiero e pensato, anche se ci si riferisce all'Essere; egli insiste sulla contrapposizione di soggetto e oggetto e sulla loro conseguente identificazione nel rapporto teoretico, arrivando ad affermare che né il soggetto né l'oggetto sono totalmente tali e lasciando intendere che nella relazione che li trascende l'uno è partecipato dall'altro. Cfr. Desideri, Matteucci (2009: tr. 156–157).

³⁶ Desideri, Matteucci (2009: tr. 124).

³⁷ Il crinale tra Hume e Adorno mi sembra intercettabile in questa distinzione tra ontico e ontologico. Non è nelle corde della filosofia del primo guardare all'aspetto teoreticamente ontologico dell'estetica per stabilirne una regola del gusto; piuttosto è la sua visione dell'ontico a disciplinarla, secondo un'opinabile per quanto da lui auspicata assoluta squisitezza. Adorno invece, sebbene "si muova" a partire dall'immanenza, tenterebbe il passaggio da tale immanenza ad una trascendenza ormai vanificata proprio dall'eco empiristica. La ricerca dell'Essere nell'industrializzazione della cultura ne costituisce una prova.

³⁸ Cfr. Berti (2017: tr. B 3, 998b23–33); Medda (2016: tr. II 7, 92b14–15).

dalla certezza cartesiana del soggetto, la sostanza pensante. Non si può guardare oltre. Ciò che sarebbe al di là appare soltanto nei materiali e nelle categorie all'interno³⁹.

Viene quindi indicata la possibilità – come potenza – di vedere l'essenza delle cose, di inquadrarle come esse si mostrano e trovare nel fenomeno (esistente) ciò che esse sono. Occorre cogliere uno *status* di conoscenza che non oggettivizzi assolutamente ma che relativamente all'oggetto "adegui" la conoscenza soggettiva rispetto a ciò che il soggetto vede. È l'esistente stesso, a parere di Adorno, che costringe la filosofia, come visione, a reconsiderarlo immediatamente, mostrandosi quasi esso stesso come suo proprio concetto teoretico⁴⁰. Come del resto indica Hume: la visione è immediata, e si valuta quello che si vede; ma Adorno sposta il baricentro della ricerca nel tentativo di oltrepassare l'immediatezza e inserirsi in quella sintonia con l'Essere dell'esistente. Nel quadro generale della relazione concetto-essenza-esistente (ontico), Adorno indica la «non identità» dell'essenza con «il concetto di ciò che viene posto per la prima volta dal soggetto»⁴¹; la prima, piuttosto, precede il secondo, gli è ulteriormente anteriore perché afferisce all'ontologico, mentre l'elemento ontico ne è un aspetto, un ambito o, se vogliamo, una manifestazione determinata secondo categorie analitiche tali da permettere il percorso dialettico fino all'essenza; oppure indeterminata, immediatamente visualizzata e quindi da decifrare e analizzare. Nel caso della funzione dell'arte e dell'epifania del bello, quella assumerebbe per Adorno un "nuovo" ruolo sotto la lente di una metafisica che guarda alla "cosa" cogliendone il sostrato immediatamente; essa si presta ad una gnoseologia fondata sull'espressione e non sul vago soggettivismo omologato dall'industrializzazione artistica e culturale.

Il fatto che Adorno veda nell'arte una struttura di razionalità che anche nell'imitazione cerca qualcosa di vero e vuole sintonizzarsi nel giudizio di verità, fuori dalla «razionalità del dominio» dell'industria culturale⁴², ritengo sia collegato a questi processi teoretici. L'industria culturale

si è sviluppata insieme al primato dell'effetto, della trovata, dell'*exploit* concreto e tangibile, del particolare tecnico, sull'opera nel suo insieme, che, un tempo, era la portatrice dell'idea ed è stata liquidata insieme con essa. (...). Il singolo effetto armonico aveva cancellato, nella musica, la coscienza della totalità formale; il colore particolare – in pittura – la composizione del quadro; la penetrazione psicologica l'architettura del romanzo. A tutto questo l'industria culturale pone fine, se così si può dire, per totalità. Non conoscendo più nient'altro che gli

³⁹ Donolo (1970: tr. 125).

⁴⁰ Cfr. Donolo (1970: tr. 124).

⁴¹ Donolo (1970: tr. 151).

⁴² Solmi (2010: tr. 127). Cfr. Ledesma (22; 2022: 28–73).

effetti, essa spezza la loro insubordinazione e li sottomette alla formula che ha preso il posto dell'opera. Essa foggia allo stesso modo il tutto e le parti⁴³.

Adorno si dilunga sulla sottrazione di razionalità che l'appiattimento culturale dell'industria ha adoperato sulla fecondità del molteplice, che origina il movimento di pensiero nell'osservazione e nell'elaborazione critica delle idee. La sineddoche utilizzata dal pensatore tedesco indica chiaramente una totalità che fa scomparire le parti e i particolari⁴⁴, segno e non simbolo, di una levigatura del pensiero e dell'osservazione, con relativo trasferimento dell'entropia soggettiva e artistica, nella massificata omologazione che elide ogni soggettività, essenziale a livello estetico. Tanto ovvio quanto inutile sottolineare che il concetto di estasi plotiniano, per certi versi avvicinabile proprio alla mancanza di razionalità nell'estetica teorizzata da Adorno, per il suo sublime livello di sovrarazionalità risulta inversamente proporzionale al concetto estetico del '900 che Adorno stesso ci descrive con raffinatezza di pensiero nella sua complessità. Riferendosi alla cultura, egli non indica il livello ma, appunto, il "livellamento" che in essa manifestano le creazioni artistiche, alle quali associa il qualificativo «spirituali», denotandone l'origine in una ποίησις noetica piuttosto che pneumatica⁴⁵, che traduciamo propriamente con τέχνη, la quale indica esattamente una partecipazione intellettuale all'azione poetica del plasmare un oggetto, che nel nostro caso è l'opera d'arte. Riguardo a questa relazione deficitaria tra il guardare e il vedere, evidenziata da Adorno, Plotino offre delle chiavi di lettura in qualche modo coniugabili, a mio parere, con quanto ci dice Adorno. Il pensatore di Lico-polis mette a confronto il bello che è nei corpi, trattandolo come mera immagine, e il Bello in sé, l'Essere Bello o, meglio, l'Essere *del* Bello. Quello dei corpi è transeunte e chi guarda deve piuttosto "fuggire" ciò che immediatamente gli appare per correre verso «ciò di cui è immagine» quel corpo bello⁴⁶. Il tipo di fuga di cui parla Plotino è quella dell'astrazione, della risalita, dell'ascesi: «Basta solamente distaccarsi da tutto e non guardare più, ma, per così dire, con gli occhi ben serrati, riattivare quell'altra vista che tutti hanno, ma che in pochi usano, e ricorrere ad essa»⁴⁷. Chiaramente, quelli appena citati non sono lemmi appartenenti al lessico di Adorno, ma il contenuto è riferibile a quanto Adorno stesso ci dice a proposito della mancanza di produzione speculativa nell'ambito estetico. «In pochi» cioè utilizzano «l'altra vista»; in pochi ormai si pongono domande in merito a ciò che vedono e sulla consistenza, sull'essenza dell'esistente. Se da un lato Plotino parla di ascesi e di fuga, dall'altro Adorno pone l'accento sull'accezione critica dell'uomo

⁴³ Solmi (2010: tr. 132).

⁴⁴ «A nessuno è più concesso di dimenticarsi e di perdersi nell'oggetto della rappresentazione. La perfetta somiglianza è l'assoluta differenza. L'identità della specie esclude quella dei casi. Si potrebbe quasi dire che l'industria culturale ha perfidamente realizzato l'uomo come essere generico. Ciascuno si riduce a ciò per cui può sostituire ogni altro: un esemplare fungibile della specie». Solmi (2010: tr. 156).

⁴⁵ «Il luogo in cui lo spirito artistico si eleva al di sopra del meramente esistente è la rappresentazione che non capitola davanti alla mera esistenza dei materiali e dei procedimenti». Desideri, Matteucci (2009: tr. 52).

⁴⁶ Cfr. Radice (2002: tr. I 6, 8, 5-8).

⁴⁷ Radice (2002: tr. I 6, 8, 25-27).

del '900, capace soltanto di guardare e cogliere tutto alla medesima maniera. La filosofia teoretica cioè, ha pieno diritto di cittadinanza nell'ambito della speculazione estetica.

Paradossalmente, le classificazioni culturali ingabbiano il bello e lo "neutralizzano", lo oggettivizzano ai fini catalogativi eliminando ogni *contrarietà*, primo elemento necessario per una speculazione che possa dirsi tale⁴⁸. In tal modo viene meno tutto, scompare il travaglio kantiano che si sviluppa nell'estetica, nell'analitica e nella dialettica trascendentali⁴⁹; non mi riferisco tanto agli esiti della "critica" kantiana nella sua specificità, quanto, insisto, al travaglio speculativo, al movimento logico, all'utilizzo della ragione come strumento nella realizzazione di un'opera che possa definirsi bella⁵⁰. Se tutto è bello lo stile proprio svanisce; se tutto è bello viene meno perfino l'armonia tra le parti, tutte distinte tra di esse, il più classico dei "canoni" che definiscono appunto la bellezza. «L'idea del bello (...) deve eliminare tutto ciò che le è eterogeneo, che è convenzionalmente posto, ogni traccia di reificazione. Anche per il bene del bello, non c'è più qualcosa di bello: perché nulla lo è più»⁵¹. La razionalità dell'opera d'arte, infatti, svolge il compito di organizzare in unità, di sussumere, di fare sintesi tra le parti che continuano ad avere tra di loro una certa relazione simbolica, *ad intra* ma anche *ad extra*⁵². L'opera d'arte cioè, ha una sua vita interiore e un rapporto esteriore con il mondo in cui è inserita, riproducendone le categorie; il problema sorge quando quell'opera è aperta alla visione che non può coglierne l'essenza immediatamente ma deve riconoscerne e perseguirne le cause: «Se uno subisce il fascino di qualcosa e ne è affine, certo ha familiarità anche con le sue immagini. Se, però, annulla la causa di tale attrazione, non riuscirà a rintracciare i caratteri e i motivi di un tale sentimento»⁵³. La "conoscenza per cause", il riconoscimento delle forme, fanno quindi da sostrato alle affinità "erotiche" e di sentimento. Queste ultime vanno pertanto "governate" razionalmente, un principio cui lo stesso Adorno aderisce nell'affermare la sovranità dell'Essere sull'esistente e sulle realtà ontiche che si riscontrano nelle opere d'arte. Se da un lato l'arte esprime un sentimento, dall'altro essa è organizzata, lo esprime logicamente secondo criteri razionali ordinati:

La razionalità è all'interno dell'opera d'arte il momento che istituisce l'unità, che organizza, non senza relazione con quella che domina all'esterno, di cui però non riproduce l'ordine categoriale; i tratti dell'opera d'arte, irrazionali secondo il metro di quest'ultima, non sono sintomo di uno spirito irrazionalistico, neanche sempre di una disposizione d'animo irrazionalistica propria dell'osservatore; la disposizione d'animo, di solito produce piuttosto opere

⁴⁸ Cfr. Donolo (1970: tr. 129).

⁴⁹ Premesso che il termine "trascendentale" in Kant si riferisce a ogni conoscenza che si occupa del nostro modo di conoscere gli oggetti (cfr. Gentile, Radice: [2005]), il riferimento al filosofo di Königsberg è voluto per indicare, in modo traslato, una configurazione di pensiero critico che imposta la sua ricerca metodologica con riferimento alla differenza, nella conoscenza, tra il piano sensibile e quello noetico.

⁵⁰ Cfr. Solmi (2010: tr. 138).

⁵¹ Desideri, Matteucci (2009: tr. 72).

⁵² Cfr. Radice (2002: tr. I 6, 3-4).

⁵³ Radice (2002: tr. III 5, 1, 25-28).

d'arte a sé congeneri, in qualche senso razionalistiche. Anzi, la sua *désinvolture*, la dispensa dai precetti logici che entrano come ombre nel suo ambito. (...). Le opere d'arte non rimuovono; mediante l'espressione fanno giungere a coscienza attuale ciò che è non coeso e sfuggente senza di per sé "razionalizzarlo"⁵⁴,

dove "senza razionalizzarlo" non contraddice quanto detto poco prima ma indica la spontaneità e disinvolture espressiva dell'arte, che rimane dentro i parametri della logica cognitiva.

Entrare nel Bello

Se proviamo ad utilizzare le chiavi di lettura di Proclo, il "desiderabile", l'"adeguato" e il "perfetto" non possono trovare spazio fra le osservazioni sull'estetica riferita da Adorno, non tanto perché superate quanto piuttosto perché non pensate; potrebbero però trovare cittadinanza nel suo *modus cogitandi*: «Una cosa è palesare artisticamente, formare e quindi rendere in un certo senso razionale l'irrazionale – l'irrazionalità dell'ordine come della psiche –, un'altra predicare l'irrazionalità, come suole accadere quasi sempre con il razionalismo dei mezzi estetici in base a nessi di superficie grossolanamente commensurabili»⁵⁵. Davanti ad un'opera d'arte non siamo dinanzi a qualcosa di appetibile – non desiderata ma desiderabile –, piuttosto al cospetto di qualcosa che si fa guardare perché ci si manifesta di fronte, ci si palesa perché si fa conoscere con determinati criteri che elevano la conoscenza del soggetto al di sopra del livellamento culturale, una superficie appena rassettata, senza criterio, «grossolanamente commensurabile» appunto. Mediante i criteri razionali, invece, essa viene formata, plasmata, assume un'idea che è un legame tra le parti; si "adeguа" ad una certa razionalità che è costitutiva nell'essenza dell'opera d'arte che palesa il bello. Se la perfezione di cui parla Proclo, come terzo elemento risultante dall'unione del "desiderabile" con l'"adeguato", è propria del divino, e non ritengo sia questo il caso della visione del bello di Adorno, la funzione della razionalità come strumento per pensare il bello e, di conseguenza, generarlo nell'opera d'arte, può essere calibrata con quegli elementi indicati dal Licio.

L'alternanza, ancora, è proprio quella tra razionale e irrazionale, un crogiolo nel quale l'arte trova la sua sintesi. Il momento irrazionale, indicato da Adorno nella magia, viene ad essere la base per un superamento, per una vera e propria elaborazione speculativa, che tuttavia l'industrializzazione dell'arte soffoca, canalizzandone gli intenti sulle rotte del mercato e riducendola, nuovamente, se non nell'irragionevole magia, nell'irrazionale mancanza di pensiero e di ragione. Ciò è dovuto, continua Adorno, all'«aver celato

⁵⁴ Desideri, Matteucci (2009: tr. 75).

⁵⁵ Desideri, Matteucci (2009: tr. 75).

la dialettica di razionalità e mimesi immanente all'arte»⁵⁶. Quando egli parla di mimetica dell'arte non si riferisce soltanto all'imitazione della natura, al tentativo di "raffigurare", ma ragiona sul fatto che «il luogo comune dell'incanto dell'arte richiama alla mente qualcosa di vero»⁵⁷. Ciò che è vero viene quindi richiamato alla mente; ciò che strutturalmente corrisponde al giudizio di verità viene visto e perciò riconosciuto dalla mente, lo strumento proprio per conoscere il vero. Esso si riconosce nel suo luogo proprio e soltanto lì può essere definito come tale; e se siffatta conoscenza viene procurata dall'arte, allora vuol dire, secondo lo schema adorniano, che pure essa è uno strumento teoretico capace di offrire alla speculazione una via metafisica in una dimensione ontologica. Lo stesso Plotino non rifiuta il valore dell'imitazione artistica, indicando nel processo tecnologico che produce l'opera d'arte un procedimento di avvicinamento alle Idee-forme che ne costituiscono l'essenza, e sostenendo, in base al principio di partecipazione che distingue l'essere per sé e l'essere per altro, che le opere d'arte sono belle in virtù della loro partecipazione ad una Bellezza altra e superiore. L'alterità di cui parla Plotino è comunque intrinseca all'oggetto d'arte, le è strutturalmente connaturata, perché quello viene prodotto in base al modello superiore, il quale appartiene ad una Intelligenza superiore. L'imitazione, quindi, si presenta come lo strumento idoneo per realizzare la partecipazione all'Essere che precede l'esistente e la sua essenza⁵⁸.

L'"altro" cui si riferisce Adorno, come genere di alterità, assumerebbe allora una doppia valenza, di distacco da un lato e di unione dall'altro. A mio parere, secondo il pensatore tedesco, nella *μίμησις* si realizza il momento della ricerca, che parte da un punto originario e in esso ritorna. Il soggetto è separato *ma* non del tutto dal suo oggetto; l'alterità di quest'ultimo non è insomma un indice di estraneità dell'uno rispetto all'altro ma un simbolo, una relazione. Se è così, il concetto di *μίμησις* assume una valenza diversa da quella celeberrima di Platone, perché in esso avviene il superamento dell'irrazionale e l'acquisizione della conoscenza.

In quel doppio momento, che accoglie simultaneamente il "procedere" e il "proten-dere", potrebbe trovare spazio questo ragionamento di Adorno, che guarda all'arte come stato mimetico e come ad una sorta di conoscenza, un momento razionale. Se nell'imitazione non troviamo nulla di originale perché in questa fase abbiamo un blocco della

⁵⁶ Desideri, Matteucci (2009: tr. 73).

⁵⁷ Desideri, Matteucci (2009: tr. 73).

⁵⁸ Cfr. Radice (2002: tr. I 6, 9, 28-44). Un recente studio sulla bellezza in Plotino rende conto, tra l'altro, della ripresa del valore della *τέχνη* nella produzione dell'opera d'arte e della relazione che vi è tra quest'ultima e l'Uno. Cfr. Gál (2022: 43-51).

conoscenza⁵⁹, secondo Adorno «l'arte completa la conoscenza con ciò che è escluso da questa e in tal modo pregiudica il carattere conoscitivo, l'univocità di essa»⁶⁰.

Lo stesso Proclo, al “desiderabile” all’“adequato” e alla “perfezione” fa seguire la via dell’intellezione, preceduta dalla sapienza. L’atto razionale è preludio alla “visione” della Bellezza, che segue il suo costitutivo Bene. Il sapiente, strutturalmente possiede le cose conoscibili, che mediante l’intellezione vengono rese intelligibili, “adequate” alla visione intellettiva. La visione del Bello quindi, a dire di Proclo, è legata all’atto astrattivo, ciò che manca nella descrizione estetica che ci fornisce Adorno e che lui stesso indica secondo le sue categorie speculative. Nel pensiero di Proclo, il genere della sapienza è triadico, «in quanto è *colmo* di essere e verità, è *generativo* della verità intellettiva, ed è *perfezionatore* delle intellezioni in atto, pur rimanendo esso costantemente in potenza»⁶¹. Il luogo del pensiero di Adorno in merito all’oggetto della sua ricerca in campo estetico, mi sembra essere proprio il giudizio di verità: l’arte deve dirci qualcosa, non soltanto deve esprimere qualcosa ma deve darci se stessa, e con essa il bello come anche il brutto,⁶² come sue parti. In questo troviamo il contenuto di verità. Estetica quindi non è soltanto l’esplorazione della sensazione, dell’esperienza, ma l’ingresso in questa esperienza come tale, il dialogo con essa, la ricerca e la fatica dell’analisi, proprio «perché» – riprendiamo Plotino – «un conto è l’essere del corpo, un conto quello della bellezza»⁶³.

Conclusione

La questione del Bello viene concepita, sia da Plotino come da Adorno, dentro quella dell’Essere, e viene ragionata organicamente con strumenti afferenti alla lezione metafisica, sebbene con calibrature distinte, derivanti da tradizioni diverse. Leggendo le loro pagine al riguardo, mi è sembrato che ognuno, parallelamente, provasse a condurre l’argomento fino all’unità dell’Essere; Plotino perché proveniente dalla tradizione metafisica che fin dalla questione eleatica ragiona sul rapporto tra uno e molteplice, con la relativa filosofia platonica e aristotelica a tentare di fare sintesi; Adorno in quanto addita l’assoluta indifferenza propinata dall’industria culturale al soggetto che osserva le opere d’arte rimanendo inficiato da un modo di dialogare che ha accantonato il dibattito dialettico

⁵⁹ Alludo qui a Platone, del quale conosciamo l’opinione sull’arte. Poiché Adorno parla della *mimesi*, prendo a riferimento quanto Platone ci dice in *R.* X, 598b e ss. Il valore dell’imitazione, tradotto sul piano della gnoseologia, arriva soltanto alla *δόξα*, rimanendo di gran lunga lontano dall’*ἐπιστήμη* da quel grado di conoscenza cioè che porta alla *νόησις* e quindi alla conoscenza dell’Idea del Bene.

⁶⁰ Desideri, Matteucci (2009: tr. 73).

⁶¹ Abbate (2019: tr. I 23, 105, 24–26).

⁶² Adorno lo intende come ciò che è restio a lasciarsi plasmare, come l’ostilità al movente dell’arte e, in quanto tale, ne amplia il concetto oltre l’ideale artistico. Il brutto serve in qualche modo a definire i confini dell’arte e del bello. Cfr. Abbate (2019: tr. I 23, 105, 67–68).

⁶³ Cfr. *supra*, nota 15.

che, invece, dalle differenze genera i suoi prodotti speculativi, ponendoli sempre al vaglio della critica.

Il riferimento all'Essere mi sembra fondamentale per entrambi i pensatori, sebbene questi abbiano manifestamente diverse prospettive e motivazioni speculative. In Plotino, infatti, – come anche in Proclo – il riferimento all'Essere – con a fondamento dell'Essere un Principio che lo trascende – è un punto di partenza, un principio, quasi un postulato, nei termini di un'ontologia ripensata e fondata in una prospettiva henologica. In Adorno, potremmo dire, l'Essere può essere colto nella ricerca del fondamento, capace di andare oltre la prospettiva dell'industrializzazione e della mercificazione dell'arte, laddove l'analisi critica sembra volta a riportare la realtà destrutturata ad un fondamento, a un principio che ricompone la complessità delle parti del reale. Il punto di partenza di Plotino diverrebbe la meta della metodologia adorniana.

Quanto fin qui si è cercato di articolare non vuole certamente essere un accordo tra i due filosofi; sarebbe questa una ingenuità esegetica oltre che ermeneutica. Tuttavia, lo studio della storia delle idee porta sempre a far dialogare i pensatori e, in questo caso particolare, mi è sembrato di potere applicare determinate categorie estetiche afferenti alla filosofia antica a quelle proposte da Theodor Adorno. In particolare, a proposito del "travaglio" speculativo e del movimento del pensiero, che si esprime sempre mediante categorie logiche, ho cercato di tradurre visivamente alcune suggestioni che questo studio mi ha suscitato. Penso ai "Prigioni" di Michelangelo. Essi sono collocati nel corridoio della Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze, a destra e a sinistra del visitatore il quale entrando guarda già sul fondo l'imponente David del Buonarroti. La sorte storica dei "Prigioni" ha voluto che queste sculture rimanessero incomplete, "non finite"; l'allestimento museale della Galleria dell'Accademia le vuole propedeutiche al "finito" David. Esse mi fanno pensare a quella tensione spirituale di cui parla Plotino, alla ricerca della causa del Bello che vediamo sullo sfondo, a quella *contrarietà* e al travaglio posti in evidenza da Adorno. «Il fermare i ghiribizzi dell'immaginazione e il ridurre ogni espressione alla verità e all'esattezza geometriche sarebbe la cosa più contraria alle leggi dell'estetica, perché produrrebbe un'opera che, per esperienza universale, si è ritrovata essere la più insipida e sgradevole»⁶⁴. Dal punto di vista empirico, una tale ricerca del Bello si traduce come una sorta di istantanea, una volta raggiunto. Tuttavia l'immaginazione non viene fermata affatto ma insieme alla logica e al ghiribizzo – o alla logica *del* ghiribizzo – danno senso e significato al movimento di pensiero; essi sono l'attività essenziale diretta verso il fine come Bello in sé e quindi vera conoscenza assoluta e non relativa all'esperienza. Se ci si fermasse a quest'ultima verrebbe – nuovamente – obnubilata la ricerca dell'Essere proposta da Adorno; non l'esperienza deve quindi essere universale bensì la conoscen-

⁶⁴ Preti (1971: tr. 641).

za, e questa si sviluppa proprio da quei ghiribizzi di movimento, a cui afferisce proprio il “desiderabile” di cui ci parla Proclo.

Se guardiamo all’attuale idea di estetica, il contemporaneo *modus cogitandi*, dalla musica all’arte visiva in generale, dall’osservazione del creato alla cultura della bellezza fisica assoluta, esula a mio parere sia dalla proposta empirista di Hume, quella di cercare una regola universale del gusto, sia soprattutto dal concetto complesso di “desiderabile” proposto da Proclo. Nel primo caso viene decisamente meno il concetto di “squisitezza”, preso almeno nei suoi principi analitici e quindi a prescindere dalla sua condivisione a livello speculativo. Nel secondo caso, il desiderio dell’immediato supera la visione dell’immediatezza e valica l’esperienza e il gusto stesso, raggiungendo una sorta di provvisorietà priva dello stesso principio empirico. Il “desiderabile”, essenza della tensione e del movimento di pensiero, quell’informe visione che vediamo proprio nei “Prigioni”, si scioglie in un rapido appetito e in una repentina affezione volta alla soddisfazione del possesso.

Quel “non finito” entropico, invece, è forse proprio il finito in sé, che si realizza *mentre* il pensiero è in movimento. Nella visione del Bello non è soltanto questione di piacere e di gradimento, questo è secondario. Diventa piuttosto primario “cercare” risposte e con esse le cause della visione.

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Plotinus and Adorno: Some Parameters of Aesthetic Visions

This article proposes a comparison between the aesthetic vision of Plotinus and that of Theodor W. Adorno, two distant thinkers – not only in time – but not for this reason not comparable to each other in the possibility of a dialogue on the way in which respectively they conceive the relationship with beauty. An attempt is made to address the topic through some parameters that structure the distinction between looking and theoretical vision, and therefore that between the object of sensation and its true content, giving prominence to the metaphysical slant of aesthetic theory. The speculative proposals of Proclus and Hume are then used methodologically to highlight links and contrasts with Neoplatonism and contemporary philosophy.

KEY WORDS

Plotinus, Adorno, aesthetics, vision, being, beauty, true

Proclus and the Intelligible-Intellectual Roots of Mathematical Theology

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1. Platonism and the Philosophical Role of Mathematical Images

The role played by the Platonic dialogues in constructing an axiomatic-deductive mathematical knowledge, as well as the influence that mathematics exerted in the evolution and refinement of Plato's philosophical method, are still matters of debate.¹ What seems less doubtful is that we have evidence of a positive and critical relationship with mathematics, not only concerning its methodological aspects (e.g., the use of hypotheses, the role of calculation) but also regarding the recourse to images in problem-solving. From this perspective, one could argue that Plato's interest in mathematics contributed to both intertwining the two sciences and enriching the reflection on issues central to the Platonic model itself, such as, for instance, the ontological status of images, the possibility of being in error, and the relationship between arithmetic and geometry. These three topics are, in some ways, interconnected.

¹ See Marongiu (2025: 5–7) and cross-references. This paper is part of the project FIS 2021 – Ancient Science, Ancient Philosophy. I am grateful to John Finamore for pre-reading my work and providing suggestions and to Daniela Taormina for discussing on these topics. I thank Marco Caruso for some corrections. Furthermore, I sincerely appreciate the anonymous reviewer for their proposed improvements.

What does it mean to make an error, and what is the status of error when constructing a science? Let's consider a dialogue that would represent a kind of turning point for the intertwining of mathematics and philosophy. In the *Meno*, the slave's arithmetical error in calculating areas is corrected when the abstract calculation by numbers is abandoned in favor of a visible support in the procedure: in other words, numbers as such are neglected, and it is agreed to work only with squares.¹ It would seem, therefore, that it is easier to err with numbers, especially if they are abstracted from figures, than with figures themselves. This choice would also leave traces in Euclid's *Elements*, where an attempt to operate geometrically without numbers is preferred.²

The deceptive power of numbers might explain their wide use not only in mathematics but also in Greek poetry and rhetoric, due to the capacity, apparently intrinsic to enumeration, to enchant by the semblance of an accuracy.³ Thus, numbers, especially when associated with quantities that are not geometrically visualized, may compel the assent of the listener or the reader, becoming an instrument of distortion of reality rather than of description and knowledge. It would seem, therefore, that the more a number is abstracted from a geometric context, the greater the possibility of error. This, precisely, brings us back to the choice made in the *Meno* to abandon the arithmetical analysis of the problem and adopt a geometrical approach.

What has been mentioned leads to a first, temporary conclusion: numbers possess a deceptive power by virtue of their intrinsic abstraction, which prevents the enumerating soul from having a numbered object of its own at hand. In sum, it is the possibility of calculating intransitively (i.e., solely and exclusively through numbers) that creates the conditions for deception in enumeration. This last assertion seems at first glance to contradict the ontological inferiority of the sensible image compared to its intelligible model: if the embodied soul has to draw figures to grasp the truth, then it derives from the more sensible aspects of geometrical operations the necessary support to evade deception. Thus, what can deceive as an image is also capable of sustaining the overcoming of error.

Such a conclusion confirms the ambiguous status of the image in Plato:⁴ indeed, an image maintains a relationship with its model, thus referring back to the other from itself and revealing itself to be an instrument for the path toward the original. In this respect, insofar as geometrical figures are more related to the sensible, which is the image of the intelligible, they would – if properly utilized – aid the embodied soul in correctly framing of problems and objects. However, this would be more difficult to do when questions are arithmetically set, since the soul, precisely because it is embodied, seems to need the visible to move toward the intelligible.

¹ See Pl. *Men.* 82a ff.

² See Lee (2022).

³ See Sicka (2022); van Berkel (2022); Sing (2022).

⁴ See, e.g., Esposito (2022: 94–136).

However, it is the dialogues themselves that caution against such an unambiguous result. While, as anticipated, numbers are both poetically-rhetorically and arithmetically placed, geometry, for its part, can be compared to painting, since both use representation as their reference.⁵ Thus, deception is possible by both resorting to numbers and figures. It follows that we must either beware of mathematics or establish an epistemological foundation, which is the premise and the outcome of an ontological clarification.

This foundational project, alluded to in the dialogues, is further developed by late Neoplatonism, when mathematics becomes an instrument of theology. Although this question cannot be explored in depth here, it is essential to mention in this regard that the status of mathematics in Platonic dialogues cannot be equated with the role that this science occupies in Neoplatonism, particularly in its later stages. It is certain that Platonic inquiry gives rise to questions that will later be the subjects of discussion among exegetes: it suffices to consider the ancillary role of mathematics concerning dialectic, partly authorized by the central books of the *Republic*, or the way in which dialogues such as the *Theaetetus* and the *Parmenides* intertwine numbers and figures with the analysis of the nature of knowledge/dialectic and being, or, furthermore, the role assigned to the limit and the unlimited in the *Philebus*.⁶ Despite of this, it is late Neoplatonism that initiates a systematic investigation into the ontological placement of mathematical entities, which in turn entails a more clearly defined role for mathematics in onto-theological examination.

2. Proclus on Mathematical Theology

In *Platonic Theology*, Proclus, as is well known, identifies four paths within theological discourse. Two of these directly engage with their object: the divinely inspired discourse and the dialectical one. In the other two, the theological truths are instead ‘indicated’⁷ as they are not immediately shown and demonstrated but are either veiled – as it may happen through symbols – or addressed through images.⁸ This latter path is identified with mathematics:

The way that proceeds through images (διὰ τῶν εἰκόνων) is Pythagorean, since it was precisely by the Pythagoreans that the forms of mathematical knowledge were discovered to arrive at the recollection of divine reality, and through these, as through images, they sought to arrive at it. Indeed, they traced numbers and figures back to the divine.⁹

⁵ See Marongiu (2025: 103–105).

⁶ On these issues, I refer again to Marongiu (2025).

⁷ Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 1.4.20, 2: δι’ ἐνδειξεως.

⁸ See Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 1.4.17, 18–24, and Steel (2007: 215–216). About the difference between image and symbol, see, e.g., Chlup (2012: 188–192); Domaradzki (2014: 125).

⁹ Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 1.4.20, 8–11. Translations from *Platonic Theology* are mine. See also Procl. *in Euc.* 21, 25–22, 6.

In this respect, it should be noted that Proclus, while maintaining that mathematical theology resorts to images, also acknowledges its elaborateness, as it intertwines with other theological approaches. Indeed, as reality is ontologically ordered due to the interconnection between the parts – which is made possible by both their subordination to Being and Being's dependence on the One – it follows that the four theological ways, insofar as they epistemologically conform to the ontological order, are not rigidly distinct. Instead, they represent different perspectives on the same object, shaped in part by the varying nature of the audience.¹⁰ For instance, regarding the intertwining of mathematics and dialectic, Proclus opts for argumentative procedures and terminology of mathematical origin when constructing his system of theology as a science. This intersection is authorized by the acknowledgment of the dependence of mathematics on dialectic – that epistemologically corresponds to the ontological dependence of mathematical entities on intelligibles in the proper sense –,¹¹ which explains why Proclus recognizes in dialectic a method consisting of four *dynamais* that also apply to mathematics – analysis, division, definition, and demonstration.¹²

Such a model depends on at least two traditions: one dating back to the *Sophist*, a dialogue in which a four-part method for dialectic can be found, and the other, going back to Iamblichus, which also refers to mathematics as a quadripartite procedure, partly drawn from Aristotelian logic.¹³ And it is still to Iamblichus that the emphasis on Pythagorean authorship of the theological function of mathematics is owed, as well as the idea that it is impossible to philosophize without mathematics, due to the ability of mathematical entities to be mirrors of reality.¹⁴

Therefore, in his mathematical theology project, Proclus brings together doctrines of Platonic, Neoplatonic, and (Neo)Pythagorean origin: the possibility that mathematics encourages recollection as well as the mathematical structure of the soul dates back to Plato;¹⁵ the use of numbers and figures in the theological sphere is ascribed to the Pythagoreans,¹⁶ although it would be more accurately described as a Neopythagorean readaptation of Pythagorean models, since, while the Pythagoreans seem to have preferred arithmetical images, it would be the Neopythagoreans who extended mathemati-

¹⁰ See Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 1.2.8, 16–9, 7.

¹¹ On mathematics' ontological dependence on dialectic, see, e.g., MacIsaac (2010).

¹² See Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 1.9.40, 5–10; in *Euc.* 42, 12–43, 1; 43, 18–21. The intertwining of mathematics – and more specifically, geometry – and dialectic proves useful, e.g., in the demonstrative procedure (see *Theol. Plat.* 1.10.45, 24–46, 2). On these issues, see Charles-Saget (1982: 271 ff.); O'Meara (1989: 198–204; 2017: 175–179); Martijn (2014); Opsomer (2022).

¹³ See Iambl. *Comm. Math.* 64, 20–65, 29. See, e.g., O'Meara (1989: 47); Bechtle (2000; 2002: 209–216).

¹⁴ See Iambl. *Comm. Math.* 96, 25–97, 8.

¹⁵ The identification between the essence of the soul and mathematical realities is probably also influenced by the doctrine, attributed to Xenocrates and recovered by both Plotinus and Iamblichus, according to which the soul is conceivable as a number that moves itself. See Arist. *de An.* 1.2.404b 27–28; 1.4.408b 32 ff.; Plu. *De procr. an.* in *Tim.* 1.1012D ff.; Plot. *Enn.* 6.6.9, 29–31 (where the Xenocratean expression, however, relates to νοῦς); Iambl. *Comm. Math.* 40, 19 ff.

¹⁶ See Procl. in *Euc.* 22, 1–16.

cal theology to geometry as well.¹⁷ In particular, although divine geometry cannot be ruled out from ancient Pythagoreanism, it is more likely that it was Plato who initiated or at least firmly established the use of geometrical figures in theology.¹⁸ Lastly, Proclus certainly owes a debt to Iamblichus in terms of his recognition of the ontologically intermediate nature of mathematical entities.¹⁹ It is from this contamination of different traditions that numbers and figures acquire, in the theological system proposed by Proclus, an ascending function toward the divine.

The theological role of mathematical objects does not directly concern the characteristics they possess in the processes of calculation and measurement on sensibles but relates to those numbers and figures that can be conceived as the essence of the soul. Only this kind of mathematics is theological, as it helps the soul to become akin to bodiless natures, thus leading toward the intelligible.²⁰ Indeed, whereas perceptions anchor the soul to divisible and lower realities, which are an obstacle to ascent, the mathematical objects that the soul discovers within itself are endowed with the opposite characteristics and favor recollection:²¹

We must not suppose number in the soul to be a plurality of monads, nor understand the idea of interval as bodily extension, but must conceive of all the forms as living and intelligible paradigms of visible numbers and figures and ratios and motion.²²

Regarding arithmetic, it is, e.g., the very understanding of the definition of number that would prepare the soul to grasp the structure of being. Proclus borrows from the Pythagoreans the idea that numbers, as they gather a class of objects with shared characteristics thus unifying a multiplicity, contribute to penetrating the ordering of reality, conceived as a series led back to the monad that generates the series itself.²³ Regarding geometry, the soul's ascending activity is stimulated by both its procedures – insofar as geometry 'from one theorem to another, ascending step by step, elevates the soul to a higher world and no longer allows it to either descend among the things of the sensible world (...) or (...) not to fly away from them'²⁴ – and certain figures. Among these, the

¹⁷ See Steel (2007: 217–218).

¹⁸ See again Steel (2007: 227–235).

¹⁹ See below, § 3. For further discussion of the role played by Iamblichus, see Maggi (2010: 159 ff.).

²⁰ See Procl. *in Euc.* 20, 27 ff., and Plot. *Enn.* 1.3.3 quoted by Proclus (*in Euc.* 21, 21). It is worth pointing out that Proclus' theological use of mathematics cannot disregard actually doing mathematics: only those who are familiar with the procedures of mathematics grasp the image-like nature toward the divine that is proper to numbers and figures. Moreover – as will be discussed in the third section – the theological status of numbers and figures as images arises from both mathematics' place within epistemology and the ontological rank of its objects.

²¹ See Procl. *in Euc.* 46, 3–18.

²² Procl. *in Euc.* 17, 6–11. Unless otherwise specified, translations from Euclid commentary are those of Morrow. For the difference between mathematical entities as such and those applied to sensible objects, see, e.g., Procl. *in Euc.* 40, 1–4 and the discussion in Klein (1992: 46 ff.).

²³ See the discussion in Cutino (2023: 158 ff. and cross-references). See also Cleary (2000: 94).

²⁴ Procl. *in Euc.* 84, 19–23 (my translation).

divided line provides a good example of a (Neo)Platonized Pythagorean theology,²⁵ since the principles that regulate the structure of being – namely, the seamless procession, guaranteed by the One, and the dependence of what is ontologically lower on what is higher – are indicated respectively by the nature of the line and the inequality between the segments:

So wishing to indicate that the procession of existent things from the One was continuous (...), <Plato> conveyed this continuity through the image of a single line (...) since no emptiness separates existent things. (...) At any rate, it is necessary that the process of becoming must be assimilated to that which produces it. Therefore, since that <producing it> is one, the process of becoming must of necessity be continuous, because continuity is akin to unity. (...) For these reasons, <Plato> takes a single line and divides it in two, dividing it not into equal parts, but into unequal ones. (...) The division of all things into unequal parts indicates, in his view, the rank of the things divided.²⁶

However, when the straight line is described as ‘the separation (ἀπόστημα) of the center from all parts of the circumference,’²⁷ it is implicitly acknowledged that truth lies only in circularity as it reflects both the principle of generation and return,²⁸ and the symmetry between these two processes.²⁹ More specifically, Proclus adopts the Plotinian image of the spiritual circles referring to each other to emphasize the relationship between the hypostases and their dependence on the One:

The extensionless point is prior to the line, and surely in the same way the intellect precedes the soul, having included it in a manner that is undivided and antecedently comprehended it indivisibly. (...) So he <the Demiurge> properly distinguished them, and the account connects the straight line, and after this the circle (...) to the soul, while the point is connected to intellect. (...) Intellect in turn has the status of the circle in relation to the nature of the Good around which it converges as a whole at every point by dint of its yearning for the One and its contact with the One.³⁰

Here the circles are, so to speak, vertically structured and culminate in an absolutely unitary center that transcends all circumferences, not being the center of its circumferen-

²⁵ On Proclus’ interpretation of the divided line, see d’Hoine (2018).

²⁶ Procl. *in R.* 1.288, 6–26 (Baltzly’s, Finamore’s, Miles’ translation). See also Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 2.7.44, 1–16.

²⁷ Procl. *in Euc.* 185, 24–25.

²⁸ See, e.g., Procl. *in R.* 2.46, 18–21.

²⁹ From this perspective, Sara Rappe (2000: 181) underlines that circularity can also indicate – for instance, in Proclus’ exegesis of the *Timaeus* – the double movement of the soul, since ‘the two circles described in the soul are related to the two essential moments of this manifestation, that is, procession and return.’ On this point she quotes Procl. *in Ti.* 2.255, 24–33.

³⁰ Procl. *in Ti.* 2.242, 29–243, 17 (Baltzly’s translation). See also *in Euc.* 142, 2–5. See Plot. *Enn.* 4.3.17, 12–14; 5.1.7, 4–8; 6.8.18, 1–4; 6.9.8, 2–4. For Proclus’ dependence on Plotinus, see Oosthout (2025: 55). For

ce. When a subordinate nature/circle relates to the further nature/circle constituting its center, the geometrical definition of a circle seems to be denied. How could it be possible to conceive of a circle if it could not be defined as the set of all points that are at a given distance from a given point, i.e., its center? Moreover, how can a center that geometrically is not the center of anything be admitted? Reflecting on the negation of the geometrical definition of the circle forces the mind to an effort that culminates in the admission that a circle will be such not by virtue of a center it possesses in itself but thanks to a center that, precisely because it is beyond circles, is the root of all circles. In this regard, it could be argued that, although the soul dances around that which it seeks, unfolding the unity of what it possesses,³¹ nevertheless, just as mathematical images bring the soul closer to the vestibule (ἐν προθύροις) of primary forms³² in the same way, reflection on these spiritual circles lacking their geometrical definition as circles can prove fundamental in favoring the actual conversion almost up to the antechamber of the Good.³³

These premises would seem to give geometrical images a key role in the ascent of the individual soul. This is true. However, as will be shown, the status of geometry is, in turn, based on the Proclean multilevel structure of the intelligible-intellectual realm, in which number becomes the paradigm of all divided reality.

3. The Intelligible and Intellectual Roots of the Soul's Ascent

3.1. Soul and Intermediate Entities

As mentioned above, the ascending function of mathematics lies both in its procedures, as they are characterized by order and the power to lead multiplicity back to unity, and its objects (numbers as well as figures), as they are appropriate images of reality. The status of images for mathematical objects is based on at least two assumptions: (1) they reproduce certain aspects of being iconically; (2) they are images by their participation in higher realities.³⁴ In the latter sense, the ascending power of mathematics is ontologically strengthened by the Proclean theory of intermediates, according to which they would become bridges between two realms, namely, the intelligible and the sensible.³⁵

a discussion of the multiple meanings of the metaphor of the circle in Proclus, Beierwaltes (1965: part 2) still remains fundamental. See also O'Meara (2005: 139–141).

³¹ See Procl. *in Ti.* 1.248, 2–6.

³² See Procl. *in Euc.* 5, 2–3, and Cleary (2000: 88). Of course, as has been noted in this section, this is possible when the substance of mathematics has been grasped not in its relation to the sensible being measured, but from those immaterial aspects that are typical of numbers and figures in the soul.

³³ See Procl. *in R.* 1.295, 12, and Baltzly, Finamore, Miles (2022: 186, notes 54–55). See also Rappe (2000: 133).

³⁴ See, e.g., Moutsópoulos (1981: 267). About the ambivalent approach to the notion of image, see Shepard (1995).

³⁵ See Procl. *in Euc.* 3, 1–7.

Although traces of a tripartite model can be epistemologically found in Plato's dialogues – for instance when mathematics is made to coincide with discursive knowledge and the intermediate nature of δῖαοια between mere opinion and noetic science is emphasized –,³⁶ the ontological intermediacy of mathematical entities does not seem to find explicit and systematic confirmation in Plato³⁷ but was acknowledged as Platonic by Aristotle when discussing the so-called 'unwritten doctrines' and the difference between arithmetical and ideal numbers.³⁸ This Platonic-Aristotelian doctrine was embraced by a part of the Neoplatonic tradition, which also often resorted to contaminations between the Aristotelian testimonies and some topics of Neopythagorean origin. In particular, the increased emphasis given by late Neoplatonism to intermediates relies on two reasons: (1) the spread of a debate concerning the relationship between philosophy and mathematics dating back to Iamblichus; indeed, it is from Iamblichus that the reading of the divided line – a reading of even Neopythagorean inspiration – becomes central to the elaboration of the Neoplatonic theological system;³⁹ (2) the tendency to multiply hypostases, which made it necessary to readapt the investigation into the nature of mathematical entities to the complete account of the degrees of reality.⁴⁰ It is in the light of these assumptions that in both the Euclid Commentary and the *Republic* Commentary, Proclus attributes the doctrine of intermediate mathematical entities to Plato:⁴¹

Mathematical being necessarily belongs neither among the first nor among the last and least simple of the kinds of being but occupies the middle ground between the partless realities – simple, incomposite, and indivisible – and divisible things characterized by every variety of composition and differentiation.⁴²

Intermediate entities are conceived as objects proper to discursive reason, which, in this sense, is also intermediate:⁴³

³⁶ See Pl. *R.* 6.509d–511e; 7.533e–534c.

³⁷ On this subject, which cannot be further explored here, see the bibliographical discussion in Marongiu (2025: 12–22).

³⁸ See, e.g., Arist. *Metaph.* 1.6.987b14–18; 13.6.1080b11–14. See the bibliographical investigation in Lopes, Cornelli (2016), and Maggi (2025).

³⁹ See, e.g., Napolitano Valditara (2000).

⁴⁰ See, e.g., O'Meara (1989: 79–81; 90; 135–141). Therefore, while Plato does not clearly answer regarding the twofold level of intelligibles, Iamblichus is explicit, as proved by the fact that the objects proper to discursive thought are defined as 'second and inferior (δεύτερα δὲ καὶ ὑποδεέστερα).' See Iamb. *Comm.Math.* 32, 15–16; 10, 7–13; 53, 29–54, 13.

⁴¹ For the dependence of some Proclean arguments on Iamblichus, see Mueller (1987: 334–338; 342–343); Dillon, Urmson, Gertz, Griffin, Sorabji (2020: 22–23). For Proclus' dependence on Syrianus, see Nikulin (2008: 156) and d'Hoine (2018: 587–589).

⁴² Procl. *in Euc.* 3, 1–7. See Nikulin (2019: 129–130). For a comparison between Euclid Commentary and *Republic* Commentary on this topic, see d'Hoine (2018: 590–593).

⁴³ See Nikulin 2008 (156–157).

Though second in rank to intellect and the highest knowledge, understanding is more perfect, more exact, and purer than opinion. For it traverses (διεξοδεύει)⁴⁴ and unfolds the measureless content of Nous by making articulate its concentrated intellectual insight (νοερᾶς ἐπιβολῆς), and then gathers together again the things it has distinguished and refers them back to Nous.⁴⁵

The relationship between discursive reason and really existing mathematical objects provides theology through images with both an epistemological and ontological basis: what the soul assumes as a means of ascending toward the intelligible is not image-ry – therefore, the recourse to mathematical images is neither accidental nor arbitrary. Furthermore, the interconnection of intermediate entities and the soul's movements and activities entails that the mathematical path in the theological sphere is grounded on the very structure of the soul. Indeed, when Proclus defines mathematical entities as λόγοι, since 'their properties and structure may become explicit in a discursively developed argument',⁴⁶ he means that such objects are produced by the soul, which in turn implies that the soul's reflecting on mathematical objects involves reflecting on itself.⁴⁷

We must therefore posit the soul as the generatrix of mathematical forms and ideas. And if we say that the soul produces them by having their patterns in its own essence and that these offspring are the projections (προβολαί) of forms previously existing in it, we shall be in agreement with Plato and shall have found the truth with regard to mathematical being.⁴⁸

The possibility of overcoming the deceptive power of mathematics arises from a peculiar role of the imagination. It is conceived by Iamblichus, likely influenced by Aristotle, as the faculty capable of perceiving in dimensionality the images (εἰδωλὰ) of ideas.⁴⁹ While the Platonic imagination has as its proper objects mere images of the mind – with an implicit association with the notion of appearance and deception – from Aristotle onward, the φαντασία becomes an intermediate faculty that directs perception toward the διάνοια, thus playing a fundamental role in the processes of understanding and insight.⁵⁰ As a result, Iamblichus interprets the Platonic image of reflections on water from two different points of view.⁵¹ On the one hand, he identifies them with the lowest

⁴⁴ The use of διεξοδεύειν to indicate the impossibility for the διάνοια to intuitively grasp its objects goes back to Plotinus. See Plot. *Enn.* 5.9.7, 10.

⁴⁵ Procl. *in Euc.* 4, 8–14.

⁴⁶ Nikulin (2019: 132). See also d'Hoine (2018: 589) and Helmig (2017: 195–199).

⁴⁷ See O'Meara (2017: 172–173).

⁴⁸ Procl. *in Euc.* 13, 6–11.

⁴⁹ See Iamb. *Comm.Math.* 33, 24–34, 12.

⁵⁰ See Lepschy (1987: 21).

⁵¹ This twofold meaning of the mirror would already be found in Plato, since while in the divided line the reflections on water appear in relation to shadows and thus to εἰκασία, in the myth of the cave they also seemingly are attributable to dianoetic knowledge. See Pl. *R.* 6.509e1–510a3; 7.516a5–b7. In this regard, see, e.g., Napolitano Valditara (2007: 334–335).

level of the divided line.⁵² On the other, he states that mathematics ‘hunts for images of the works of nature, as through mirrors that differ in brilliance,’⁵³ thus providing the conditions for a non-deceptive use of φαντασία. In short, if it is true that every mirror or image is deceptive, it is also true that both the imagination and its objects represent the embodied soul’s way of grasping in extension what is not in itself unfolded.⁵⁴

The intermediate status of the imagination is further refined, as is well known, by Proclus’ theory of projection.⁵⁵ He also makes positive use of the mirror metaphor,⁵⁶ showing how the soul’s projections are means of embracing the λόγοι that soul itself produces from higher realities.⁵⁷ Therefore, imagination is not misleading but can be conceived as a mirror multiplying which is just one in itself,⁵⁸ thus allowing ideas to ‘remain the ultimate objects of mathematical thought.’⁵⁹

3.2. The Intermediates and the Intelligible-Intellectual Realities

The ontological autonomy of intermediates does not contradict the principle of the causal dependence of a lower nature on a higher one – as it is exemplified by the aforementioned divided line – which is one of the fundamental topics of Neoplatonism.⁶⁰ Indeed, the objects of the διάνοια are the substantial effect, at a distinct and lower ontological level, of the causal action of further ontologically pre-existing realities, and it is only from the perspective of this model that arithmetical-geometrical entities are images. Thus, intermediates are the products of the soul but, at the same time, are produced by something ontologically higher than the soul, on which the soul itself depends:

If, however, mathematical forms do not exist by abstraction from material things (...), of necessity the soul must obtain them either from itself or from Nous, or from both itself and that higher intelligence. Now if the soul gets them from itself alone, how can they be images of intelligible forms? (...) Yet if they come from Nous alone, how can the inherent activity and self-moving character of soul be preserved when it receives its ideas from elsewhere, like a thing moved by outside forces? (...) There is left only the conclusion that soul draws its

⁵² See Iamb. *Comm.Math.* 32, 25–33, 13; 34, 4–6; 35, 27–36, 23; 38, 29–39, 5.

⁵³ See Iamb. *Comm.Math.* 96, 27–28.

⁵⁴ See Iamb. *Comm.Math.* 43, 19–44, 9. See Sheppard (1997) about the Iamblican φαντασία and the role played by Plotinus (see, e.g., Plot. *Enn.* 4.3.30, 2–11).

⁵⁵ On projection and its relationship with Platonic recollection, see, e.g., Cleary (2000: 90–91); MacIsaac (2001); Nikulin (2008; 2019: 140–143); Lernould (2011); Chlup (2012: 144–147); d’Hoine (2018: 589–590).

⁵⁶ See Procl. *in Euc* 141, 2 ff.

⁵⁷ See Giardina (2008: 37–39) and MacIsaac (2002: 99).

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Charles (1971). See d’Hoine (2018: 589–593) for a comparison between the projective theory in Euclid Commentary and similar hints in the 12th dissertation of *Republic* Commentary.

⁵⁹ Sheppard (1997: 113).

⁶⁰ On the seamless degrees of reality guaranteed by causal dependence see, e.g., Martijn, Gerson (2017: 51–55; 58–61).

concepts both from itself and from Nous, that it is itself the company (πλήρωμα)⁶¹ of the forms, which receive their constitution from the intelligible patterns but enter spontaneously upon the stage of being.⁶²

Soul's dependence on the Intellect, in turn, is set within a unitary ontological framework that Proclus carries out from the exegesis of the *Parmenides*.⁶³ It is from that dialogue that the philosopher formulates a peculiar participatory model based on the following assumptions: (1) everything that exists proves its subordination to the One beyond Being through its one-manifoldness structure: therefore, everything that is included in Being is a whole, according to unfolding degrees;⁶⁴ (2) a participated nature, conceived as a cause, does not manifest in itself the characteristics it produces in the participating realities, whereby it is both unparticipated and participated in;⁶⁵ (3) although the cause remains separate in itself, any ontologically higher level pre-contains the one that comes from it, wherefrom it follows that 'not only do superior principles implicitly contain the characteristics they produce, but inferior principles also retain images of the characteristics of their creators.'⁶⁶ Accordingly, the (Neo)Platonic One Being, as the first cause in the sphere of being, on the one hand pre-contains everything that exists; on the other hand, it has to possess characteristics that are different from what follows, thus constituting itself as a transcendent whole before the parts.⁶⁷

Based on these criteria, Proclus rejects those readings of the *Parmenides* that would have traced back to the same rank of Being all the conclusions to be drawn from the so-called second hypothesis:⁶⁸

As the manifold set of conclusions should be neither attributed only to the wholeness of being nor identically placed in all parts of being, I believe that it must be maintained that a certain part of being corresponds to each conclusion.⁶⁹

⁶¹ For this lexical choice, see Morrow (1992: 14, note 28).

⁶² Procl. *in Euc.* 15, 19–16, 7. See Cleary (2000: 91–92). On Proclus' criticism of Aristotelian abstractionism—to which Proclus opposes the model of projection (see also the discussion above, § 3.1) –, see, e.g., Nikulin (2019: 132); Helmig (2017: 193–199).

⁶³ Central to the Neoplatonic paradigm is, as is well known, a metaphysical interpretation of the *Parmenides*, probably dating back to Speusippus, which intertwines with the testimonies regarding the academic doctrines on numbers and principles. On these issues, see, e.g., Dillon (2011); Szlezák (2011); Gerson (2016).

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Procl. *Theol.Plat.* 1.10.46, 14–17; Oosthout (2025: 83 ff.).

⁶⁵ On Proclus' asymmetrical interpretation of the participatory model from the *Parmenides*, see, e.g., Gerson (2011); d'Hoine (2019); Greig (2021: 73–117); Martijn (2022: 75–78). See also Nikulin (2019: 125–127).

⁶⁶ Oosthout (2025: 157).

⁶⁷ On the principle of the whole as a structure before the parts, see the discussion in Oosthout (2025: 91–98). See also Siorvanes (1996: 70–71). For similar issues in Plato, see Chiurazzi (2023) and Harte (2002). I use here the notion of 'whole before the parts' logically and not metaphysically. Actually, the very first metaphysical wholeness is represented by the Life, i.e., the second *element* of the intelligible triad. See, e.g., Opsomer (2000: 363).

⁶⁸ See Procl. *Theol.Plat.* 1.10.41, 24–42, 20. See Brisson (2017: 208–209) for a presentation of Proclus' criticism of earlier interpretations of the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. For a discussion of the Neoplatonic readings of the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, see, e.g., Beierwaltes (1985: 193 ff.) and Steel (2000).

⁶⁹ Procl. *Theol.Plat.* 1.11.48, 10–15.

Therefore, the first conclusions pertain solely to the One Being. Hence, from more unitary to less unitary realities, the procession continues orderly and seamlessly until constituting different ontological levels.⁷⁰ As a result, the One Being is vertically and asymmetrically ordered: the earliest determinations of Being – as they are closely related to the One of the first hypothesis – give rise to a multiplicity κρυφίως and ἀδιακρίτως, in which the One and the Being are unified and the Otherness has not yet divided them; the following ones will have a more manifold nature and, at the stage of the latest determinations, will be closer to the following level of reality.⁷¹

This reading of *Parmenides*' second hypothesis affects the Proclean theory of mathematical entities. In particular, when Proclus is reasoning about the so-called 'generation of numbers' from the *Parmenides*,⁷² he concludes, from the different ontological status of causes and effects:

As (...) Being is the producer of the first number, and (...) number is produced by Being (...), and since Plato presents the One Being and number separately, they cannot both be placed on the same ordered level of determinations of Being. Indeed, what is cause and what is caused in no way can have the same (...) rank, but these realities are distinct from one another.⁷³

Indeed, if Being is the cause of number – otherwise, Plato would not have made the number arise from the One Being – and the cause pre-contains the effect without coinciding with it, number, yet pre-contained in the One Being, must belong to an ontologically lower level.

Moreover, by virtue of the ontological dependence of the generation of numbers on Otherness,⁷⁴ number cannot be placed among unified natures. As both the identification between number and Being *per se* – by virtue of One Being's unified nature⁷⁵ – and that between number and Life – which is the power bringing One and Being together⁷⁶ – can be rejected, Proclus then discusses the relationship between the intelligible Intellect/Living Being in itself⁷⁷ – namely, the third ontological *element* constituting the intelligible triad – and number:

How then can we place in the Living Being in itself the first number? Therefore, if someone wanted to say that number exists in the Living Being in itself, he would say this in the sense that number is there causally and intelligibly and that it has been intellectually differentiated by Otherness. (...) If, on the contrary, it were affirmed that the intelligible Living Being is *per*

⁷⁰ See Van Riel (2017: 87–88); d'Hoine (2017: 99–101); Oosthout (2025: 94–95).

⁷¹ See Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 3.9.39, 20–24, and 1.11.49, 20–25.

⁷² See Pl. *Prm.* 143b3 ff.

⁷³ Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 1.11.50, 19–51, 2.

⁷⁴ See Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 4.28.82, 23–83, 5.

⁷⁵ See Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 4.27.79, 16–80, 6.

⁷⁶ See again Opsomer (2000: 363).

⁷⁷ On this triad, see, e.g., d'Hoine (2017) and again Opsomer (2000).

se a number, one would have to admit distinction and also otherness in those gods, which we said were placed (...) above the wholeness of things. Since every section and division begins with the intellectual gods, hence otherness proceeds.⁷⁸

This reasoning stems from the fact that, if Plato describes the Living Being in itself as one and one-begotten,⁷⁹ then Otherness cannot yet have manifested itself. Hence, number does not belong to the intelligible triad but has to be settled in intellectual realities: more precisely, it is the very first (τὸ πρότιστον) among them⁸⁰ – thereby it is an intelligible-intellectual reality – and everything that follows is both numerically ordered and diversified.⁸¹ However, based on the asymmetrical pre-containment, the intellectual number has its cause as an occult number (κρύφιον)⁸² – which is not yet a number in the proper sense – in the ontologically higher level.

Concerning the ontological degrees from which the intellectual number proceeds, Proclus traces back to the *Philebus* the idea that all that exists descends from the different causal action of the same two principles, namely the Limit and the Unlimited,⁸³ by which numbers while increasingly grow and are sequentially ordered, yet remain finite. Furthermore, the two intelligible principles determining the distinction between odd and even numbers, i.e., the monad and the dyad, must be considered, which are not numbers in themselves but transcendent causes of numbers, arising from the unitary manifoldness of the intelligible.⁸⁴

To find the principles of mathematical being as a whole, we must ascend to those all-pervading principles that generate everything from themselves: namely, the Limit and the Unlimited. (...) This is why in these orders of being there are ratios proceeding to infinity but controlled by the principle of the Limit. For number, beginning with unity, is capable of indefinite increase, yet any number you choose is finite.⁸⁵

Firstly, the intelligible number is disclosed to us. (...) Every number is manifold, but other is the multiplicity that subsists unitarily; other is that subsisting in a differentiated way. (...) Hence it has been noted that there are the monad and the dyad, the very first and transcend-

⁷⁸ Procl. *Theol.Plat.* 4.32.96, 9 ff.

⁷⁹ See Pl. *Ti.* 31b3.

⁸⁰ See Procl. *Theol.Plat.* 4.33.98, 2–3, and Terezis, Tempelis (2017: 54–58). Even in Euclid Commentary, numbers are associated with realities marked by otherness; in that case, the soul. See *in Euc.* 36, 23–25.

⁸¹ See, e.g., Procl. *Theol.Plat.* 4.29; 34.

⁸² See Procl. *Theol.Plat.* 4.32.95, 20.

⁸³ See Procl. *in Euc.* 5, 11 ff., and Cleary (2000: 88); Butler (2008: 132–133); Nikulin (2019: 133); Kutash (2011: 69–70).

⁸⁴ On the possibility of identifying monad and dyad with the Limit and the Unlimited, see Terezis, Tempelis (2017: 56).

⁸⁵ Procl. *in Euc.* 5, 14 ff.

ent principles of numbers, and that in these principles manifoldness is found in a unified way. Indeed, the monad, the source of numbers, and the dyad causally possess all multiplicity (...), and it is for this reason that intelligible multiplicity is not yet number but intelligible multiplicity.⁸⁶

Finally, the intellectual number – intermediate between the intelligible and further lower ontological levels – is what is actually divided by Otherness according to even, odd, and their combinations, from which the diversified divine orders of both the intellectual and encosmic levels follow. In this way, not only is the numerical structure of the World Soul and the Cosmos itself justified⁸⁷ but the mathematical activity of the individual soul as discussed in Euclid Commentary finds its basis.⁸⁸

To conclude, such a descending τάξις, marked at each level by number,⁸⁹ involves the Proclean theory of intermediate mathematical entities conceived as activities of the soul. In this multiplication of ontological levels causally produced by one another, derivation and return become symmetrical paths that allow the soul, when reflecting on mathematical objects and engaging with mathematics through them, to rise toward its roots. For since the soul and its objects depend on higher realities, when the soul unfolds what it possesses within itself, it is unfolding something that primarily and unitarily pre-existed in it and before it.⁹⁰ In this way, both the theological mathematics is grounded and the ascent of the soul through mathematics is assured: indeed, numbers have a *natural* relationship with truth (πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν ὁλκόν) and an aptitude to elevate (τὸ ἀναγωγόν) that anchors the soul to its causes.⁹¹ Not surprisingly, in his Commentary on Euclid, Proclus emphasizes the role of mathematics in the moral sphere.⁹²

Within this framework, the theological role that Proclus assigns to geometrical figures – even though recognizing the ontological priority of arithmetical entities⁹³ – can be better understood. Precisely because figures are more unfolded than numbers, it is above all through figures that the embodied soul, after *scattering in leaves* its innate principles, can orderly ascend from effects to their causes, first gathering the unfolded principles into itself, and then tracing them back to their further roots.⁹⁴

⁸⁶ Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 4.28.81, 3 ff.

⁸⁷ See, e.g., the discussion in Oosthout (2025: 99–105) and Kutash (2011: 64 ff.).

⁸⁸ On number, World Soul, and individual soul, see Finamore, Kutash (2017: 129–134).

⁸⁹ See Cutino (2023: 135 ff.; 197–204).

⁹⁰ And it is precisely because, whereas the Intellect proceeds by collecting (συνηρημένως), the soul by dividing (διηρημένως) (see Procl. *in Euc.* 16, 15–16), that mathematical objects would undergo that multiplication, which, like Aristotle (see Arist. *Metaph.* 1.6.987b14–18), Proclus ultimately acknowledges, although he makes it derive from a new exegetical accommodation.

⁹¹ See Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 4.34.101, 16–26.

⁹² See Procl. *in Euc.* 24, 4–14. On this ethical aspect, which is an essential part of the exegesis of Platonic dialogues, see, e.g., Baltzly (2016).

⁹³ See, e.g., Procl. *in Euc.* 48, 9–12.

⁹⁴ See O'Meara (1989: 167).

In this perspective, knowledge of geometry and understanding the nature of the image of its objects become crucial. For it is true that geometry disposes in space and matter the soul's intellectual objects, but it is even truer that, without resorting to these ultimate images of the intelligible-intellectual levels, the embodied soul could not fully realize in itself the circle of procession and return.⁹⁵

4. Some Conclusions

In Proclus' approach, the onto-theological foundation of numbers and figures ensures that the soul's mathematical activities are a necessary condition for its return to itself and, through this, to its roots. Is there a limit to mathematical theology? If the intelligible number precedes all divisions and is therefore unknowable by discursive reason,⁹⁶ we should conclude that the epistemological-theological function of intermediates stops at (intelligible-)intellectual realities.

Actually, it has already been mentioned that mathematics plays an ancillary role to dialectic.⁹⁷ An involvement of mathematics in those negative procedures by which discursive reason attempts to approach what transcends it can also be acknowledged. In this perspective, Proclean investigation of irrationals deserves to be thoroughly addressed. These *mysterious* numbers – the irrational number is defined as ἄρρητος⁹⁸ – which can be neither even nor odd lack the fundamental characteristics proper to intellectual numbers. Precisely for this reason, they might find space at those levels where discursive reason is forced to face its limits. Accordingly, investigating those mathematical categories through which dialectic – even negative dialectic – seeks to discursively circumscribe what transcends its domain could broaden the role that Proclus assigns to mathematical theology and confirm the extent to which mathematics becomes a fundamental tool in a theological system that does not renounce rationality, while highlighting its limitations.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ See again Cleary (2000: 88). These considerations could also support those who, drawing on *Parmenides* Commentary and *Platonic Theology*, sought evidence of a theurgical use of mathematics in Euclid Commentary and proposed viewing the theory of imagination presented here as a tool for an inner form of theurgy, offered to initiates in mathematics as a strategy for elevating the soul. See Goulding (2022).

⁹⁶ See Procl. *Theol. Plat.* 4.34.100, 2–8.

⁹⁷ See above, § 2.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Procl. *in Euc.* 6, 21, where the term is applied to incommensurable magnitudes.

⁹⁹ See, e.g., Procl. *in Prm.* 7.1206, 1 ff., where the consequences arising from denying the One's participation in the Identical are investigated, thus depriving it of a measure and producing aporias similar to those of incommensurability.

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Proclus and the Intelligible-Intellectual Roots of Mathematical Theology

The purpose of my paper is to investigate some aspects of Proclus' foundation of the theological role of mathematics. In the first section, I briefly discuss the question of the foundation project of mathematics in Plato, as I believe it is also from the dialogues that Proclus derives the crucial status of mathematical entities in the ascent of the soul. In the second part, after presenting the four ways that Proclus recognizes as theological and pointing out that mathematics is made part of theology through images, I analyze in particular the theological power of two geometrical images, that of the divided line and that of the circle. Lastly, the third section firstly emphasizes that the theological status of mathematics finds its ontological validation in the Proclean theory of mathematical entities as intermediates. Then, it focuses on the intelligible-intellectual roots of the intermediates themselves, which ensure that the soul's ascent is surely directed toward the highest realities.

KEY WORDS

Proclus, Mathematical Theology, Images, Intermediates, Intellectual Number, Intelligible Number.

Le système logique des hypothèses du Parménide de Platon dans le Commentaire de Georges Pachymère

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Introduction

Le *Parménide* est, certes, un des plus obscurs, des plus exigeants et des plus stimulants dialogues de Platon, non seulement sur le plan sémantique, mais principalement en raison de son caractère aporétique, des nombreux paradoxes qui sont déduits sur le statut des idées dans la première partie du dialogue, et de tout le système complet d'hypothèses et de syllogismes que le vieux philosophe construit autour de l'Un dans la seconde partie. À la fin de la première partie, Parménide annonce son but de montrer à ses jeunes interlocuteurs (en particulier au jeune Socrate) quelle est la bonne manière dont un jeune homme enthousiaste utilise son élan vers la philosophie et la dialectique : exercer son esprit dans les épreuves exhaustives de la dialectique en examinant un objet donné dans toutes les possibilités et toutes les hypothèses qui peuvent se présenter au cours des enquêtes, dans le but d'aboutir finalement à un point sûr de discernement de

la vérité qui se cache derrière les idées¹. Pour atteindre cet objectif, il faut également une méthodologie précise, un système entièrement structuré d'hypothèses et d'arguments. Parménide est ainsi motivé par ses propres études sur l'Un-qui-est (ἓν ὄν), sur lequel il va fonder toute son argumentation de la deuxième partie du dialogue : si l'Un est et si l'Un n'est pas, que s'ensuit-il pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même et aux Autres (en d'autres termes, tout ce qui n'est pas l'Un), et que s'ensuit-il pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes et à l'Un ?²

Au fil de l'histoire, le système intégral de l'exercice dialectique a tiré l'attention des philosophes Néoplatoniciens, qui en ont profité pour structurer de manière philosophique et scientifique leurs systèmes métaphysiques et théologiques. C'est pour cette raison que presque tous les personnages éminents (après Plotin) des Écoles Néoplatoniciennes (Amélius, Porphyre, Jamblique, Théodore d'Asinè, Plutarque d'Athènes, Syrianus³, Proclus, Damascius [dont nous sont parvenus les Commentaires des deux derniers]) élaborèrent leurs propres Commentaires au *Parménide* avec leurs propres interprétations, lesquelles, même dans leurs nuances sur le plan des hiérarchies dans la structure théologique et métaphysique du monde, convergent vers un terrain d'entente : ils lisent une section d'un dialogue platonicien, où des arguments purement logiques sont développés, avec des dispositifs de décryptage « scientifique » qui font se dévoiler les messages censément théologiques du discours philosophique de Platon⁴.

Bien que dès l'époque antique, des exégètes (inconnus aujourd'hui) aient insisté sur une interprétation purement logique des hypothèses du *Parménide*⁵, dans la tradition littéraire nous est parvenu seulement un Commentaire qui ose une telle entreprise : le

¹ Voir Pl. *Prm.* 135c8–136c5, et plus précisément la phrase dernière : εἰ μέλλεις τελέως γυμνασάμενος κυρίως διώεσθαι τὸ ἀληθές (« si tu es destiné, après t'être parfaitement entraîné, à proprement discerner la vérité. »).

² Voir Pl. *Prm.* 137a7–b4: πόθεν οὖν δὴ ἀρξόμεθα καὶ τί πρῶτον ὑποθιόμεθα; ἢ βούλεσθε, ἐπειδὴ περ δοκεῖ πραγματιώδη παιδιὰν παίζειν, ἀπ' ἑαυτοῦ ἀρξώμεαι καὶ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ὑποθέσεως, περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς αὐτοῦ ὑποθέμενος, εἴτε ἓν ἐστὶν εἴτε μὴ ἓν, τί χρὴ συμβαίνειν; (« Quel va être notre point de départ et qu'est-ce que l'on va supposer au début ? Ou voulez-vous peut-être, puisque l'on a décidé de jouer un jeu épuisant, que je commence par moi-même et par mon hypothèse, en supposant si l'Un est et si l'Un n'est pas, qu'est-ce qui doit s'ensuivre ? »).

³ Les Commentaires de ces philosophes sont perdus (hormis quelques fragments du Commentaire de Porphyre), mais Proclus nous donne brièvement la structure de base des correspondances que chaque philosophe établit entre les hypothèses du Parménide et les classes divines et ontologiques de la réalité ou/et les paradoxes émergeant de l'hypothèse négative « si l'Un n'est pas » (voir Procl. in *Prm.* VI 1052.25–1064.11, même s'il ne nomme pas les philosophes, à l'exception de son maître, Syrianus [1061.21], et d'un 'philosophe de Rhodes', qui pourtant doit s'identifier avec Théodore d'Asinè d'après Saffrey (2000: 101–117) ; tous les restes sont identifiés par certains scribes qui ont ajouté leurs noms dans des gloses marginales des manuscrits (voir Saffrey – Westerink [1968: lxxx–lxxxix]).

⁴ Par exemple, au 4^e chapitre du premier Livre de la *Théologie Platonicienne* Proclus énumère quatre modes théologiques selon lesquels Platon élabore un discours et un enseignement philosophique au sujet des dieux : (i) le mode symbolique (aux dialogues *Gorgias*, *Banquet*, *Protagoras*) ; (ii) par le biais d'images (*Timée*, *Politique*) ; (iii) le mode divinement inspiré (*Phèdre*) ; (iv) le mode scientifique et dialectique (*Parménide*, *Sophiste*) dont la philosophie platonicienne est abordée en tant qu'un enseignement complet et précis sur le statut de l'Un au-dessus de l'être, ainsi que sur les ordres divins et leur progression aux étapes inférieures de la réalité.

⁵ Pour un exposé détaillé des arguments des exégètes-tenants d'une interprétation logique du dialogue et de la critique de Proclus sur eux, cf. Steel (1997).

Commentaire de l'historien éminent du début de l'ère paléologue, érudit, philosophe et théologien Byzantin, Georges Pachymère (1242–1310/1315). Réputé pour sa culture profane et son admiration pour les lettres helléniques, mais surtout pour la philosophie d'Aristote⁶, le philosophe Byzantin a joué aussi un rôle vital pour la conservation et la copie des certains commentaires de Proclus, manifestant ainsi son intérêt à la philosophie Néoplatonicienne⁷. À titre indicatif, après avoir copié à son manuscrit personnel (le *Parisinus gr.* 1810) les sept livres du Commentaire inachevé de Proclus (ff. 97^r-214^r), qui arrête à la première hypothèse⁸, Pachymère assumait la « continuation » de l'exégèse jusqu'à la fin du dialogue, c'est-à-dire sur le texte 142b5–166c5 de Platon (ff. 214^r-224^v) : il y commente brièvement les schémas syllogistiques du reste des hypothèses de Parménide, de la deuxième à la toute dernière, et il donne une forme fixe à l'ensemble du système d'hypothèses en classant les arguments par niveaux, en fonction de leur enchaînement logique et surtout en suivant le modèle déjà développé par Proclus.

i) Remarques brèves sur la morphologie et le contenu général du Commentaire

Au f. 214^r du manuscrit autographe *Parisinus gr.* 1810 de Pachymère, nous observons que la mise en page se transforme de l'apposition distincte lemme-commentaire (le commentaire lemmatisé de Proclus) en une autre forme : tout le texte de Platon se situe désormais au centre de chaque page, entouré par les scholies à chaque argument. Nous pouvons assurément attribuer cette spécificité de mise en page de cette partie du manuscrit à la méthode que Pachymère y poursuit : à un premier niveau, il a écrit le texte de Platon et ses commentaires au propre ordre (dans une forme lemmatisée) dans un exemplaire de travail (dont le *Parisinus* est la copie) ; ensuite, il a copié tout le texte de Platon au centre de chaque page et enfin tous les commentaires respectifs aux trois marges. Cette reconstruction est vérifiée par l'exégèse de Pachymère elle-même : bien qu'au début de chaque commentaire la plupart des mots de liaison soient tels que « Il montre désormais / ici / maintenant... » (« Ἐντεῦθεν δείκνυσιν », « Ἐνταῦθα δείκνυσιν », « Νῦν δείκνυσιν »), lesquels confirmeraient que la première mise en page soit celle du *Parisinus*, dans un seul cas Pachymère passe d'un commentaire au lemme suivant avec un mot de liaison à la fin du commentaire et non plus au début (« ...Par conséquent, Parmé-

⁶ Pour une biographie concise de Pachymère et des informations sur sa formation et son œuvre philosophiques, je renvoie aux auteurs suivants : Failler (1984: xx–xxii) ; Constantinides (1982: 61–64) ; Lampakis (2004: 24–30) ; Golitsis (2008) ; Golitis (2018).

⁷ Pour plus d'informations sur l'œuvre de copie des manuscrits philosophiques entrepris par Pachymère avec l'aide de son cercle étroit des élèves, voir Golitsis (2010).

⁸ Au passage 141e7–10 du *Parménide*.

nide continue... » [« Τοιγαροῦν ἐπιφέρει... »⁹]; on doit ainsi présupposer une mise en page dans laquelle lemmes et commentaires alternent¹⁰.

Or, une telle « continuation » ne saurait être prise en compte que du point de vue codicologique. Bien sûr, Pachymère ne pourrait continuer l'interprétation de Proclus elle-même, puisque les idéologies théologiques et philosophiques de chacun des deux philosophes sont diamétralement opposées l'une à l'autre : en fait, Proclus suit une interprétation théologique et métaphysique des hypothèses de Parménide, dans le cadre du polythéisme de la théologie antique¹¹; plus précisément, dans la deuxième hypothèse, tous les diacosmes des dieux, de la supérieure à l'inférieure, sont révélées à travers les couples des prédicats affirmés de l'Un. Évidemment, Pachymère ne suivrait pas cette tradition 'païenne' ; or, il se borne à donner une interprétation entièrement logique de chaque argument de Platon, qu'il entrecoupe de doctrines aristotéliennes, puisées dans la philosophie physique et métaphysique ainsi que dans les traités logiques du Stagirite, et selon lesquelles il tente souvent d'en corriger les erreurs sophistiques¹². L'identité interprétative de l'exégèse de Pachymère s'articule donc en deux directions : d'un côté, une analyse scrupuleuse de la structure logique des raisonnements platoniciens, qui s'attache entièrement à la lettre du texte et rarement en dérive, et, de l'autre, un renforcement de l'exercice dialectique du dialogue par les nombreuses références à d'autres doctrines logiques, ontologiques, physiques et métaphysiques, axé sur la philosophie d'Aristote¹³.

⁹ G. Pachymeres, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 48.29.

¹⁰ Pour cette reconstruction de la méthode de copie de Pachymère, voir Westerink (1989: XVIII); Luna, *Seconds* (2007: CLXI–CLXV).

¹¹ Selon les philosophes Néoplatoniciens, le but du *Parménide* est relatif aux réalités (πραγματειώδης). Ce terme provient du passage 137b2 du *Parménide* : le philosophe, après avoir été invité par ses interlocuteurs d'assumer la tâche dialectique de traiter l'Un à travers les hypothèses, compare cette tâche à un jeu épuisant (πραγματειώδη παιδὶν παίζειν). Les exégètes Néoplatoniciens changent considérablement le sens du terme πραγματειώδης en l'attachant au terme πᾶγμα, sa racine étymologique ; c'est ainsi qu'ils l'interprètent comme « jouer un jeu relatif aux réalités », car ils insistent constamment à souligner la relation étroite du dialogue de Platon avec les principes, la réalité métaphysique elle-même. Cf. Procl. in *Prm.* V 1036.4–12 : « θεῖον γὰρ οὖν δὴ καὶ τοῦτο [scil. τὸ πραγματειώδη παιδὶν παίζειν], τὰς ἐμφανεῖς καὶ πολυμερίστους ἐνεργείας παιδίας καλεῖν· παίγνιον γὰρ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐκάστων ὁπόσα κατὰ τὰς ἔξω προοιούσας αὐτῶν ἐνεργείας ὑφίστηται· παιδία μὲν οὖν διὰ ταῦτα πᾶς ὁ ἐξῆς λόγος πρὸς τὴν ἡμερον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡνωμένην τοῦ ὄντος νόησιν, πραγματειώδης δὲ ὁμῶς, ὅτι τῆς τῶν ὄντων ἀπτεται θεωρίας καὶ ἀνελίττει τὸ ἀπλοῦν τῆς ἐνδον νοήσεως, καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἢ νοήσεων οἷον ἐξάπλωσις καὶ τῆς ἀμεροῦς γνώσεως σπαραγμός. » Cf. aussi Procl. in *Prm.* V 1018.18–22 ; VI 1051.29–1052.11, 1058.21–22 ; Procl. *Theol. Plat.* I 40.20–23, 56.3–10, III 83.3–13.

¹² Pour les interventions correctives de Pachymère dans les syllogismes platoniciens basées sur le modèle aristotélien des *Réfutations sophistiques*, ainsi que pour la réception de la dialectique platonicienne par le philosophe Byzantin envers la dialectique d'Aristote, voir Savoidakis (2024: 383–427).

¹³ Pour une analyse détaillée sur ces nombreuses allusions de l'exégète à des doctrines aristotéliennes dans son Commentaire au *Parménide* voir Savoidakis (2024: 387–415). En parallèle, Pachymère fait aussi allusion à des notions théologiques du pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite, comme « Un en soi » (αὐτοέν), « Être en soi » (αὐτοόν) et « Substance au-dessus de la substance » (οὐσία ὑπερούσιος), qui sont attribuées à l'Un dans le premier argument de la deuxième hypothèse (*Prm.* 142b5–c7) : Pachymère y semble réfuter l'argument de Platon, selon lequel l'Un participe à la substance (οὐσίας μετέχει), puisqu'il affirme que l'Un ne participe pas à la substance, mais il *est* substance, dans laquelle tout l'être, y compris l'*être* (τὸ εἶναι) et « l'*est* » (τὸ ἔστι), est conçu, ce qui la rend supra-substantielle ainsi qu'« être en soi » (cf. Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 1.19–23, 3.24–29) ; de même, le prédicat « un en soi » se réfère à l'un-qui-est-un (ἐν ἐν) différent de l'un-qui-est (ἐν εἶναι), à savoir sa substance (ἡ οὐσία τοῦ ἐνός), qui découle de l'argument spécifique de Parménide (Pl. *Prm.* 142b5 sqq.). Le couplage de la substance et du supra-substantiel attribués à l'Un, reflète l'application simultanée des négations de la première

ii) Les principes interprétatifs du Commentaire de Proclus et la mise en forme des hypothèses du *Parménide* en termes de logique et de métaphysique

Avant de poursuivre, il convient de tenter de faire la distinction entre les deux Commentaires concernant le nombre des hypothèses de Parménide, puisque Platon lui-même, à vrai dire, n'énumère pas de façon explicite les hypothèses qu'il suggère, hormis une distinction de base des hypothèses faite au début de chacune d'elles, aussi bien que la référence à la troisième question du « jeu dialectique »¹⁴ (ce qui suggérerait peut-être une troisième hypothèse).

D'un côté, Proclus en énumère neuf¹⁵ :

- Si l'Un est : on examine cinq hypothèses à propos de la réalité-existence diverse de l'Un (καθ' ὑπαρξιν), dont on peut déduire les principes de la réalité tout entière :

1. *Prm.* 137c4–142a8 : conclusions négatives pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même et aux Autres (l'Un au-dessus des intelligibles).
 2. *Prm.* 142b1–155e3 : conclusions affirmatives pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même et aux Autres (les diacosmes des dieux, attachés à l'Être [τὸ τῷ ὄντι συνόν]).
 3. *Prm.* 155e3–157b5 : conclusions affirmatives et négatives pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même et aux Autres (les âmes, hormis les divines, en tant qu'inférieures à l'Être-Intellect [τὸ ἐν τὸ καταδεέστερον τοῦ ὄντος]).
 4. *Prm.* 157b5–159b1 : conclusions affirmatives pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes et à l'Un (les formes dans la matière [τὰ ἐνυλα εἶδη]).
 5. *Prm.* 159b1–160b4 : conclusions négatives pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes et à l'Un (la matière).
- Si l'Un n'est pas : on examine quatre hypothèses affirmant les paradoxes à propos de l'inexistence de l'Un (μὴ ὄν) :

hypothèse et des affirmations de la deuxième au même sujet, à savoir Dieu lui-même, principe unique de l'univers, ce qui marque une différenciation essentielle de l'interprétation de Pachymère par rapport au modèle théologique des Néoplatoniciens, comme celui de Proclus (sujet de la première hypothèse : l'Un ; sujets de la deuxième hypothèse : la multitude des hénades, intelligibles, intelligents, hypercosmes, encosmes etc., qui sont au-dessous de la première Hénade et chacune constitue le principe d'une classe de dieux [voir Procl. *Theol. Plat.* I 9, I 11, 53.3–6, 55.23–56.10]). Pour les notions « Un en soi » (αὐτόέν), « Être en soi » (αὐτοόν) et « Substance au-dessus de la substance » (οὐσία ὑπερούσιος), cf. Dion. Ar., *d.n.* 109.13–14, 180.10, 184.10, 221.13–223.3 ; Pachym. *Paraphrasis*, PG 3, 832A–B, 841B, 965D, 968A–C – dont les deux premières sont puisées dans l'œuvre de Proclus (cf. Procl. *Theol. Plat.* II 42.24–43.1, 66.7–12 ; in *Prm.* VI 1096.19–23, 1109.12–14) et la troisième dans Damascius (*Pr.* I 228.8–14) ; toutefois, ces références théologiques de Pachymère sont repérées seulement dans deux de ses scholies à tout son Commentaire au *Parménide*.

¹⁴ Voir Pl. *Prm.* 155e3 : "Ἐτι δὴ τὸ τρίτον λέγωμεν... (« De plus, passons à la troisième question... »).

¹⁵ Le reste des philosophes Néoplatoniciens (y compris Damascius) préservent le même nombre d'hypothèses dans leurs systèmes interprétatifs, excepté Amélius (8 hypothèses) et Théodore d'Asiné (10 hypothèses) ; cf. Procl. in *Prm.* VI 1052.32–1053.27, 1057.5–1058.16.

6. *Prm.* 160b4–163b6 : conclusions affirmatives pour l’Un par rapport à lui-même et aux Autres (l’Un en tant que relativement non-être). Conséquences absurdes : élimination des intelligibles.
7. *Prm.* 163b6–164b4 : conclusions négatives pour l’Un par rapport à lui-même et aux Autres (l’Un en tant qu’absolument non-être). Conséquences absurdes : élimination des âmes.
8. *Prm.* 164b4–165e1 : conclusions affirmatives pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes et à l’Un (les Autres en tant que relativement non-êtres). Conséquences absurdes : élimination des sensibles.
9. *Prm.* 165e1–166c5 : conclusions négatives pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes et à l’Un (les Autres en tant qu’absolument non-êtres). Conséquences absurdes : élimination des ombres des sensibles¹⁶.

Néanmoins, Proclus ne se limite pas à la formation d’un système métaphysique, mais s’étend également à l’esquisse de tout le réseau des arguments dialectiques qui articulent et font se composer chacune des neuf -selon lui- hypothèses. Il divise et classe ainsi les hypothèses en 24 « modes dialectiques » (διαλεκτικοὶ τρόποι), c’est-à-dire en 24 arguments, sous la forme suivante : L’hypothèse « si l’Un est », ainsi que l’hypothèse négative « si l’Un n’est pas », a trois formes : (1) conclusions affirmatives, (2) conclusions négatives, (3) conclusions affirmatives et négatives. On obtient ainsi six hypothèses. Mais chacune de ces six hypothèses doit être quadruplée, suivant que l’on considère les conclusions (1) pour l’Un par rapport à lui-même, (2) pour l’Un par rapport aux Autres, (3) pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes, (4) pour les Autres par rapport à l’Un. On obtient ainsi les 24 arguments énumérés par Proclus (deux formes d’hypothèse x trois formes de conclusion x quatre relations)¹⁷. En effet, le Diadoque analyse exhaustivement ces 24 arguments en les séparant en quatre groupes de six (*hexades*), dont les deux premières s’appliquent aux hypothèses 1–5 et les deux dernières aux hypothèses 6–9¹⁸ :

1^{re} hexade (appliquée aux hypothèses 1–3) :

¹⁶ Pour le système complet des neuf hypothèses de Proclus voir Procl. *in Prm.*, V 1034.29–1035.18 ; VI 1039.15–1040.17, 1054.22–30, 1058.19–1060.29, 1063.15–1064.11 ; *Theol. Plat.* I 41.7–23.

¹⁷ Cf. Procl. *in Prm.* I 622.24–623.15 ; V 1002.4–1003.2.

¹⁸ Cf. Procl. *in Prm.* V 1000.27–1003.2. Selon Proclus, l’examen de tous les arguments des hypothèses débouche sur la réalisation du but de la méthode de Platon, de faire se révéler la nature de l’Un et les propriétés qu’il fournit, en tant que cause de toute la réalité, à lui-même et aux autres choses (V 1006.20–22 : « καὶ τοῦτο γίνεται τῆς ὅλης μεθόδου τέλος, ἀνευρεῖν τὴν ιδιότητα τοῦ πράγματος, καὶ ὅσων ἐστὶ καὶ ἑαυτῷ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις παρεκτικόν »). Il explique ce modèle dialectique en l’appuyant sur des exemples, comme l’âme (si l’âme est et si elle n’est pas, que s’ensuit-il pour elle et pour les corps... etc.), les termes ‘plusieurs’, ‘semblable-dissemblable’, ‘mouvement en soi-repos en soi’, ‘génération-destruction’ (ces termes sont examinés dans le contexte du passage 136a3–c5), aussi bien que l’immortalité de l’âme (si l’âme est immortelle/n’est pas immortelle) et la providence (si elle est/n’est pas), en examinant ainsi toutes les conclusions qui s’ensuivent pour eux, dont on suppose l’existence ou la non-existence ; assurément, selon Proclus, les conclusions logiques qui s’ensuivent chaque fois font

1. Si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même ?
2. Si l'Un est, que ne s'ensuit-il pas pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même ?
3. Si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même ?
4. Si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il pour l'Un par rapport aux Autres ?
5. Si l'Un est, que ne s'ensuit-il pas pour l'Un par rapport aux Autres ?
6. Si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas pour l'Un par rapport aux Autres ?

2^e hexade (appliquée aux hypothèses 4–5) :

7. Si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes ?
8. Si l'Un est, que ne s'ensuit-il pas pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes ?
9. Si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes ?
10. Si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il pour les Autres par rapport à l'Un ?
11. Si l'Un est, que ne s'ensuit-il pas pour les Autres par rapport à l'Un ?
12. Si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas pour les Autres par rapport à l'Un ?

3^e hexade (appliquée aux hypothèses 6–7) :

13. Si l'Un n'est pas, que s'ensuit-il pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même ?
14. Si l'Un n'est pas, que ne s'ensuit-il pas pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même ?
15. Si l'Un n'est pas, que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même ?
16. Si l'Un n'est pas, que s'ensuit-il pour l'Un par rapport aux Autres ?
17. Si l'Un n'est pas, que ne s'ensuit-il pas pour l'Un par rapport aux Autres ?
18. Si l'Un n'est pas, que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas pour l'Un par rapport aux Autres ?

4^e hexade (appliquée aux hypothèses 8–9) :

19. Si l'Un n'est pas, que s'ensuit-il pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes ?
20. Si l'Un n'est pas, que ne s'ensuit-il pas pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes ?
21. Si l'Un n'est pas, que s'ensuit et ne s'ensuit-il pas pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes ?
22. Si l'Un n'est pas, que s'ensuit-il pour les Autres par rapport à l'Un ?
23. Si l'Un n'est pas, que ne s'ensuit-il pas pour les Autres par rapport à l'Un ?
24. Si l'Un n'est pas, que s'ensuit et ne s'ensuit-il pas pour les Autres par rapport à l'Un ?

Or, il faut mettre l'accent sur le fait que Proclus fait la distinction entre les 24 arguments, avec lesquels Parménide 'exerce' logiquement les hypothèses « si l'Un est » et « si l'Un n'est pas »,¹⁹ et les 9 hypothèses, qui divulguent les classes diverses de la réalité.

se révéler en fin de compte la nécessité ontologique de l'existence du sujet en question ainsi que ses propriétés fondamentales (V 1004.10–1017.29).

¹⁹ Proclus appelle cette division 'τὸ λογικόν', puisqu'elle ne se fait qu'au cadre de l'exercice logique (λογικὴ γυμνασία) de Parménide (cf. Procl. in *Prm.* V 1000.27).

En effet, il critique tous les exégètes (inconnus aujourd'hui) qui tentent de confondre les deux termes, arguments et hypothèses, en acceptant ainsi 24 hypothèses :

C'est ainsi, selon les douze modes, qu'il exerce chacune des deux hypothèses. En tenant compte de ces modes, certains ont pensé que les hypothèses étaient vingt-quatre ; mais nous les contesterons, lorsque nous aborderons les hypothèses, et nous séparerons les modes dialectiques de ce que l'on appelle des 'hypothèses'²⁰ :

iii) Points clés de l'interprétation pachymérienne des hypothèses du *Parménide*

À première vue, Pachymère paraît déployer une telle exégèse 'confuse', car il accepte la division en 24 « arguments-hypothèses », tandis qu'il se tait par rapport au nombre des 9 hypothèses, étant donné, effectivement, qu'il est censé continuer le Commentaire partiellement conservé de Proclus. En effet, Pachymère ne parle nulle part dans son Commentaire de nombre précis d'hypothèses. Sans aucun doute, il n'y fait pas référence, car il s'intéresse plutôt à une analyse de la structure et de la méthode logique de chaque argument, qu'à une interprétation métaphysique (une réalité assignée à chacune des cinq premières hypothèses), comme l'a tentée Proclus. C'est exactement pour cette raison qu'il lui emprunte sa méthode interprétative de diviser et de classer les hypothèses en 24 arguments.

En effet, ayant distingué par trois chacune des hypothèses « si l'Un est » et « si l'Un n'est pas », selon les trois formes de conclusions affirmatives, négatives, affirmatives et négatives (toutes appuyées sur l'Un et sur les Autres), il accepte au total 24 arguments-hypothèses, dont les 12 premières forment la structure de la première forme d'hypothèse « si l'Un est » et les 12 dernières forment la structure de la deuxième forme d'hypothèse « si l'Un n'est pas ». À titre indicatif, lorsqu'il arrive à la troisième hypothèse « si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il et que ne s'ensuit-il pas pour l'Un et pour les Autres ? », il fait la distinction entre celle-ci et les deux hypothèses précédentes, quant à leur structure, établissant ainsi le principe interprétatif de base sur lequel repose toute son exégèse logique de la deuxième partie du *Parménide* :

Il a dit à juste titre *passons à la troisième question* ; car nous raisonnons en trois parties « si cette chose-ci est », et en trois parties aussi « si elle n'est pas » ; ce que nous examinons en quatre modes. 1) « Que s'ensuit-il ? », en quatre modes : pour ceci par rapport à lui-même ou

²⁰ Voir Procl. in *Prm.* I 624.14–18 : « (...) οὕτως ἐκεῖνος κατὰ τοὺς δώδεκα τρόπους ἐκατέραν γυμνάζει τῶν ὑποθέσεων· πρὸς οὓς καὶ ἀπιδόντες τινὲς τέτταρας καὶ εἴκοσι περιγίγνεσθαι τὰς ὅλας ὑποθέσεις ᾤθησαν· ἀλλὰ πρὸς μὲν τούτους, ὅταν περὶ τῶν ὑποθέσεων λέγωμεν, διαγωνιούμεθα καὶ διακρινόμεν τοὺς τε τρόπους τοὺς διαλεκτικούς καὶ τὰς καλουμένας ὑποθέσεις. »

pour ceci par rapport aux contraires, et aussi pour ses contraires par rapport à eux-mêmes et par rapport au sujet en question. 2) « Que ne s'ensuit-il pas ? », aussi en quatre modes : pour les choses par rapport à elles-mêmes et par rapport aux autres, et pour les autres par rapport à eux-mêmes et par rapport au sujet en question. 3) « Que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas ? », aussi en quatre modes. Après avoir donc examiné ce qui ne s'ensuit pas pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même et aux Plusieurs [scil. les Autres] et pour les Plusieurs par rapport à eux-mêmes et à l'Un, et ce qui s'ensuit aussi en quatre modes, Parménide arrive désormais à examiner la troisième question, « que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas ? »²¹.

De cette manière, au point de transition de la forme d'hypothèse « si l'Un est » à la forme « si l'Un n'est pas », Pachymère fait la distinction entre les 12 arguments-hypothèses de la première et les 12 arguments-hypothèses suivants :

Donc, si l'Un est, on complète les 12 arguments. (...) Parménide a complété les 12 hypothèses précédentes « si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il et que ne s'ensuit-il pas et que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas ». Et chacune de ces trois formes de conclusion quadruplée : que s'ensuit-il pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même et par rapport aux Autres et pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes et à l'Un ; et que ne s'ensuit-il pas, de même, en quatre modes, et que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas, de même, en quatre modes. Donc, il passe maintenant à la forme d'hypothèse « si l'Un n'est pas », dont il établira les 12 dernières hypothèses.²²

À ce point-là, avant de passer à l'analyse de la totalité des hypothèses articulée par Pachymère comme modèle d'interprétation de la deuxième partie du *Parménide*, nous considérons qu'il est important d'éclairer les divers sens du terme 'hypothèse' que Pachymère vraisemblablement utilise dans son Commentaire. En réalité, Pachymère utilise ce terme dans un sens différent de celui dans lequel il est utilisé par les commentateurs antérieurs. En effet, selon ces derniers, 'hypothèse' désigne chaque ensemble d'arguments relevant de la même forme de prédication et se rapportant au même sujet (Un ou Autres), tandis que pour Pachymère, 'hypothèse' peut assumer trois significés :

²¹ Pachym., *Comm. on Parm.* 36.19–29 : « Καλῶς εἶπε, τὸ τρίτον λέγωμεν· εἰ γὰρ ἔστι τόδε τι, τρισσῶς ἐπιχειροῦμεν, ὁμοίως καὶ εἰ οὐκ ἔστι, τριχῶς ἐπιχειροῦμεν· ταῦτα δὲ τετραχῶς. Τίνα ἐπονται, καὶ ταῦτα τετραχῶς· ἢ γὰρ αὐτὸ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἢ αὐτὸ πρὸς τὰ ἀντικείμενα, καὶ αὖθις τὰ ἀντικείμενα πρὸς αὐτὰ καὶ τὰ ἀντικείμενα πρὸς τὸ προκείμενον. Τίνα οὐχ ἔπεται, καὶ αὐτὰ τετραχῶς· τίνα τε πρὸς ἑαυτὰ καὶ τίνα πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα, καὶ αὐτὰ πρὸς ἑαυτὰ, καὶ αὐτὰ πρὸς τὸ προκείμενον. Καὶ τίνα ἔπεται τε καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται, καὶ αὐτὰ τετραχῶς. Εἰπὼν γοῦν πρῶτως τίνα οὐχ ἔπεται καὶ αὐτῷ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ καὶ αὐτῷ πρὸς τὰ πολλὰ καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς πρὸς τὸ ἓν, καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς πρὸς ἑαυτὰ, καὶ αὖθις τίνα ἔπεται, καὶ αὐτὰ τετραχῶς, ἥδη ἤκει καὶ περὶ τοῦ τρίτου λέγει, τίνα ἔπεται τε καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται. ».

²² Pachym., *Comm. on Parm.* 47.33, 48.12–17 : « οὕτω εἴπερ ἔστι τὸ ἓν, αἱ ἱβ' ἐπιχειρήσεις πληροῦνται. [...] Πεπλήρωκε τὰς προτέρας ἱβ' ὑποθέσεις τοῦ εἰ ἓν ἔστι, τί ἔπεται καὶ τί οὐχ ἔπεται, καὶ τίνα ἔπεται τε καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται· καὶ ταῦτα τετραχῶς, τίνα ἔπεται πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα, καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις πρὸς τε ἄλληλα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἓν· καὶ τίνα οὐχ ἔπεται, ὁμοίως τετραχῶς· καὶ τίνα ἔπεται τε καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται, ὁμοίως τετραχῶς. Λοιπὸν εἰσβάλλει καὶ περὶ τοῦ εἰ ἓν οὐκ ἔστιν, ἐξ ὧν τὰς ἐτέρας ἱβ' ὑποθέσεις συστήσει. »

a) la phrase de priorité logique comme principe directeur dans un syllogisme hypothétique, et antécédente des conclusions nécessaires,²³ c'est-à-dire, dans notre modèle, chacune de deux formes d'hypothèses de base : « si l'Un est » et « si l'Un n'est pas ». Pachymère utilise ce sens du terme deux fois :

*Donc, si l'un est selon l'hypothèse...*²⁴.

...car lorsque l'on dit que l'Un est (il s'agit, en fait, de l'hypothèse *si l'un est*), il participe à l'être...²⁵.

b) chacune des trois hypothèses qui émanent de la forme « si l'Un est » et des autres trois qui émanent de la forme « si l'Un n'est pas » par le biais de la forme différente des conséquences déduites chaque fois (affirmatives, négatives, affirmatives-négatives). En effet, lorsqu'il arrive à la dernière hypothèse « si l'Un n'est pas, que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas pour les Autres ? », il parle désormais de la troisième hypothèse de la forme « si l'Un n'est pas » en comparaison avec la troisième hypothèse de la forme « si l'Un est » :

Quant à la troisième hypothèse « si l'Un n'est pas, que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas ? » (comme à la troisième hypothèse « si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il et ne s'ensuit-il pas ? »), il examine premièrement, d'une manière séparée, les conclusions affirmatives [scil. ce qui s'ensuit] et, ensuite, les conclusions négatives [scil. ce qui ne s'ensuit pas]²⁶.

c) toutes les 24 *ad hoc* hypothèses-arguments qui naissent de la combinaison de (1) la bipartition « être / ne pas être », (2) la tripartition des conséquences (affirmatives, négatives, affirmatives et négatives), et (3) la quadripartition des rapports. Je voudrais attirer l'attention sur quelques exemples tirés par le Commentaire :

i. « Par conséquent, il s'ensuit que l'Un est un et plusieurs, qu'il n'est ni un ni plusieurs ; et puisque l'Un participe au temps, comme Parménide a montré dans les deuxièmes hypothèses

²³ Les Stoïciens appelaient cette partie du syllogisme hypothétique « τὸ ἡγούμενον ».

²⁴ Pachym., *Comm. on Parm.* 14.33 : « *Εἰ ἄρα πάντῃ τὸ μὲν ἔν ἐστι κατὰ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν...* ».

²⁵ Pachym., *Comm. on Parm.* 2.18–19 : « ...ἔτι ἐπεὶ λέγομεν ἔν ἐστι (τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ ἡ ὑπόθεσις, *εἰ ἔν ἐστιν*), οὐσίας μετέχει... ».

²⁶ Pachym., *Comm. on Parm.* 61.30–62.2 : « Ἐπὶ τῆς τρίτης ὑποθέσεως τῆς *ἐν εἰ μὴ ἔστι*, τί ἔπεται τε καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται (καθὼς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς τρίτης ὑποθέσεως ἔν ἐστι, τί ἔπεται τε καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται), διακεχωρισμένως λέγει πρῶτον μὲν τίνα τὰ ἐπόμενα, καὶ ἔπειτα τίνα τὰ μὴ ἐπόμενα ».

[sc. de la forme d'hypothèse « si l'Un est »], il s'ensuit, d'une part, que l'Un participe à la substance selon le terme 'est' (en fait, le verbe 'est' désigne le fait que quelque chose existe ainsi que la substance), mais, puisque l'Un n'est pas, selon les premières hypothèses, et qu'il s'ensuit que l'Un *est et n'est pas* selon les hypothèses présentes (en effet, il est clair que le terme 'est' s'ensuit et ne s'ensuit pas), il s'ensuit, d'autre part, que parfois l'Un ne participe pas à la substance. »²⁷.

ii. « Et en partant du fait que l'Un *devient semblable* (comme il a construit dans les hypothèses précédentes, quoique de manière vague, et il ne dit pas ici *par rapport à lui-même ou aux Autres*, comme il disait là-bas²⁸...) il montre que l'Un *est assimilé*. ... En devenant donc *plus grand ou plus petit ou égal* selon les hypothèses précédentes²⁹ *il est augmenté et diminué et rendu égal* »³⁰.

iii. « Donc, même si la participation aux propriétés contraires³¹ est probablement impossible, pourquoi la participation à une seule forme, qu'il s'agisse à la similarité ou à la dissemblance, est-elle impossible ? On répond : c'est ainsi selon les hypothèses-arguments précédents³². En effet, si les Autres-que-l'Un participeront à la similarité ou à la dissemblance, la similarité ou la dissemblance sera quelque chose différente hormis l'Un et les 'Autres-que-l'Un', à laquelle participeront les Autres-que-l'Un, ce que l'on ne peut pas supporter, *car nous avons tout inclus*, dit-il, *lorsque l'on dit 'l'Un et les Autres'*, comme il a dit auparavant »³³.

iv. « Et cette partie du dialogue concerne une seule et unique hypothèse, '*si l'Un n'est pas*, que s'ensuit-il pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes et par rapport à l'Un-qui-n'est-pas ?' »³⁴.

²⁷ Pachym., *Comm. on Parm.* 36.29–37.5 (sur le passage Pl. *Prm.* 155e4–156a4): "Ἐπεταί τοίνυν τῷ ἐνὶ ἓν τε καὶ πολλὰ εἶναι, καὶ μήτε ἐν μήτε πολλὰ, καὶ μετέχον χρόνου, καθὼς ἐπὶ τῶν δευτέρων ὑποθέσεων ἔλεγε, κατὰ μὲν τὸ ἔστι τοῦ οὐσίας μετέχειν (τὸ γὰρ ἔστιν εἶναι τι καὶ οὐσίαν δηλοῖ), ὅτι δ' οὐκ ἔστι κατὰ τὰς προτέρας ὑποθέσεις, καὶ ὅτι ἔπεται αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ ἔστι καὶ τὸ οὐκ ἔστι κατὰ τὰς παρούσας ὑποθέσεις τὰς ὅτι ἔπεται τι καὶ οὐκ ἔπεται (ἔπεται γὰρ δῆλον τὸ ἔστι καὶ οὐκ ἔπεται τὸ ἔστι) μὴ μετέχειν ποτὲ οὐσίας.

²⁸ Cf. Pl. *Prm.* 139e7–140b5, où l'on déduit que l'Un n'est ni semblable ni dissemblable à lui-même et aux Autres ; cf. aussi 147c1–148d4, où l'on déduit que l'Un est semblable et dissemblable à lui-même et aux Autres. La remarque « quoique de manière vague » de Pachymère fait allusion à la phrase *devient semblable*, en ce sens que, dans les deux arguments susmentionnés, on déduisait les conclusions « l'Un *n'est pas* semblable et dissemblable » et « l'Un *est* semblable et dissemblable » respectivement, et non pas son *devenir/non-devenir*, comme on en parle dans l'argument présent.

²⁹ Cf. Pachym., *Comm. on Parm.* 21.1–26.8.

³⁰ Pachym., *Comm. on Parm.* 37.30–38.2, 38.5–7 (sur le passage Pl. *Prm.* 156a4–b8) : « Καὶ ἐκ τοῦ γίγνεσθαι ὁμοιον (ὡς ἔλεγε κατὰ τὰς προτέρας ὑποθέσεις, πλὴν ἀορίστως, καὶ οὐ λέγει ἑαυτῷ ἢ τοῖς ἄλλοις, ὡς ἐκεῖ ἔλεγε...) ὁμοιοῦσθαι · (...) ἐν τῷ γίγνεσθαι γοῦν ἡ μείζον ἢ ἔλαττον ἢ ἴσον κατὰ τὰς προτέρας ὑποθέσεις ἀξάνεσθαι τε καὶ φθίνειν καὶ ἰσοῦσθαι ».

³¹ Il fait référence aux prédicats 'semblable' et 'dissemblable'.

³² Cf. Pl. *Prm.* 159b3–c2 et Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 45.34–46.5.

³³ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 47.9–15 (sur le passage Pl. *Prm.* 159e1–160a3) : « Τὸ γοῦν μετέχειν τῶν ἐναντίων ἰσῶς ἀδύνατον, τὸ δὲ μετέχειν ἐνὸς εἶδους, εἴτε ὁμοιότητος εἴτε ἀνομοιότητος, πῶς ἀδύνατον; "Ἡ κατὰ τὰς προτέρας ὑποθέσεις· εἰ γὰρ ὁμοιότητος μεθέξει τὰ ἄλλα τοῦ ἐνὸς ἢ ἀνομοιότητος, ἔσται ἡ ὁμοιότης ἢ ἡ ἀνομοιότης τι καὶ παρὰ τὸ ἐν καὶ παρὰ τὰ ἄλλα τοῦ ἐνός, ἧς μεθέξει τὰ ἄλλα τοῦ ἐνός· ὅπερ οὐκ ὑπόκειται· πάντα γὰρ εἴρηται, φησὶν, ὅταν ῥηθῇ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὰ ἄλλα, ὡς πρότερον ἔλεγεν ».

³⁴ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 58.8–9 (sur le passage Pl. *Prm.* 164b5–e3) : « Καὶ τοῦτο περὶ τῆς αὐτῆς καὶ μιᾶς ὑποθέσεως, ἐν εἰ μὴ ἔστι, τί ἔπεται τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ πρὸς αὐτὰ καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἐν μὴ ὄν ».

iv) Convergences et divergences du schéma pachymérien par rapport à un système d'examen dialectique « parfait »

Nous pouvons ainsi schématiser le système pachymérien des hypothèses de Parménide, assurément dans le deuxième sens du terme 'hypothèse' que Pachymère implique sans doute, en associant chaque hypothèse-argument particulier à l'argument correspondant de l'ensemble des 24 arguments des 4 hexades de Proclus, comme suit :

– SI L'UN EST, on examine 12 conséquences-arguments :

1) Ce qui ne s'ensuit pas

- i) pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même (1^{re} hex., 2^e arg.),
- ii) pour l'Un par rapport aux Autres (1^{re} hex., 5^e arg.),
- iii) pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes (2^e hex., 8^e arg.),
- iv) pour les Autres par rapport à l'Un (1^{re} hex., 11^e arg.).

2) Ce qui s'ensuit

- v) pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même (1^{re} hex., 1^{er} arg.),
- vi) pour l'Un par rapport aux Autres (1^{re} hex., 4^e arg.),
- vii) pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes (2^e hex., 7^e arg.),
- viii) pour les Autres par rapport à l'Un (2^e hex., 10^e arg.).³⁵

3) Ce qui s'ensuit et ne s'ensuit pas

- ix) pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même (1^{re} hex., 3^e arg.),
- x) pour l'Un par rapport aux Autres³⁶ (1^{re} hex., 6^e arg.),
- xi) pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes (2^e hex., 9^e arg.),
- xii) pour les Autres par rapport à l'Un ?³⁷ (2^e hex., 12^e arg.).

À ce point-là, et plus précisément en ce qui concerne les deux premières hypothèses (« si l'Un est, que ne s'ensuit-il pas... ? », « si l'Un est, que s'ensuit-il... ? »), on serait porté

³⁵ Pour toute l'exégèse de la deuxième hypothèse voir Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 1.1–36.8.

³⁶ Cf. Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 36.29 *sqq.* : « Il s'ensuit donc pour l'Un d'être un et plusieurs et de n'être ni un ni plusieurs... » (« Ἐπεται τοίνυν τῷ ἐν ἓν τε καὶ πολλὰ εἶναι, καὶ μήτε ἓν μήτε πολλὰ... »).

³⁷ Toute l'exposition des conclusions déduites pour les Autres est divisée en 3 parties : 1) les conclusions affirmatives : cf. Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 41.19–21 *sqq.* (en totalité il s'agit du passage 41.19–45.13 du Commentaire) : « Il exerce son discours argumentatif aussi sur les Autres-que-l'Un par rapport à l'Un affirmant que les Autres (...) *appartenait à l'Un*. » (« Γυμνάζει τὸν λόγον καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων τοῦ ἐνὸς πρὸς τὸ ἓν λέγων ὅτι τὰ ἄλλα [...] τοῦ ἐνὸς ἦν. ») ; 2) les conclusions négatives : cf. Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 45.29–34 *sqq.* (en totalité il s'agit du passage 45.29–47.15 du Commentaire) : « Il omet donc les autres prédicats pour être concis. Il examine aussi ceux-ci, à savoir le mouvement et le repos, l'illimité et le limité, le semblable et le dissemblable, l'identique et le différent, et toutes les autres conditions contraires, si elles sont valables pour les *Autres* ou aussi si elles ne le sont pas, de sorte qu'elles s'avèrent à la fois affirmatives et négatives, en quatre modes, tout comme auparavant. » (« Τὰ γοῦν πολλὰ διὰ συντομίαν ἔῃ. ἐπισκοπεῖ δ' αὖθις περὶ τούτων αὐτῶν, τοῦ τε κινεῖσθαι καὶ ἐστάναι, τοῦ ἀπείρου καὶ τοῦ πεπερασμένου, τοῦ ὁμοίου καὶ τοῦ ἀνομοίου, τοῦ ταυτοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἐτέρου, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐναντίων παθῶν, εἴτερ οὕτω μόνον ἔχει ἢ καὶ οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει ταῦτα· ὥς φανῆναι τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπόμενά τε καὶ

à reconnaître 'l'ingénierie exégétique' de Pachymère, qui parvient à résoudre toutes les confusions possibles qui pourraient être tirées par les arguments de Platon eux-mêmes. Effectivement, Pachymère applique toutes les quatre relations (de l'*Un* et des *Autres*) à chacune des deux premières hypothèses de la forme « si l'*Un* est », même si cette 'initiatrice' de sa part constituerait une erreur interprétative de son exégèse, si l'on se focalise sur le texte de Platon lui-même. En effet, chaque hypothèse, d'après Parménide, déduit des conclusions soit exclusivement pour l'*Un* soit exclusivement pour les *Autres*, non pas pour tous les deux. Plus précisément, quant aux deux premières hypothèses, à leur début, Parménide annonce que le sujet des conclusions est l'*Un*, non pas aussi bien l'*Un* que les *Autres*³⁸. Par conséquent, à première vue, survient la question : pourquoi Pachymère fait-il s'attacher toutes les quatre relations ensemble ? Évidemment, l'exégète Byzantin a observé que, lorsque l'*Un* se met en relation avec les *Autres*, à la fois les *Autres* se mettent aussi en relation avec l'*Un*, en étant ainsi soumis aux conditions identiques ou contraires à celles de l'*Un*.³⁹ En réalité, Pachymère paraît inverser correctement la relation « Un-Autres » dans nombreux cas de la 2^e hypothèse, comme aux prédicats 'diffé-

οὐχ ἐπόμενα, καὶ ταῦτα τετραχῶς κατὰ τὸν πρότερον τρόπον. ») ; 3) les conclusions affirmatives et négatives ; cf. Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 47.24–33 : « Il montre désormais que les *Autres ne sont ni en mouvement ni en repos*, lesquels il montrait auparavant être en mouvement et en repos, et qu'ils *ne deviennent ni ne périssent*, lesquels il montrait auparavant devenir et périr, et qu'ils *ne sont ni plus grands ni plus petits ni égaux*, lesquels il montrait bien auparavant être plus grands et plus petits et égaux. En effet, dit-il, si les *Autres sont soumis à une telle condition, ils participeront aussi à l'un, à deux, à trois, au nombre impair et au nombre pair*. En effet, s'ils participent à l'*Un*, toutes ces conclusions s'ensuivront ; mais si l'*Un* n'est pas, comment les *Autres* seront-ils en mouvement, comment seront-ils en repos, comment naîtront-ils, comment périront-ils, comment seront-ils plus grands, comment plus petits, comment égaux ? Si l'on élimine l'*Un* selon les hypothèses précédentes, toutes ces conditions seront éliminées aussi ; donc si l'*Un* est, on complète les douze arguments. » (« Ἐντεῦθεν δεῖκνύει οὐδὲ κινούμενα οὐδὲ ἐστῶτα, ἅπερ ἐδείκνυε κινούμενα καὶ ἐστῶτα· καὶ οὐδὲ γινόμενα οὐδὲ ἀπολλύμενα, ἅπερ καὶ γινόμενα καὶ ἀπολλύμενα ἔλεγεν· οὐδὲ μείζω οὐδ' ἐλάττω οὐδ' ἴσα, ἅπερ καὶ μείζω καὶ ἐλάττω καὶ ἴσα ἐδείκνυε. Εἰ γὰρ τι τοιοῦτόν τι, φησί, πεπονημένοι ὑπομένει τὰ ἄλλα, καὶ ἐνὸς μεθέξει καὶ δυοῖν καὶ τριῶν καὶ περιττοῦ καὶ ἀρτίου. Εἰ γὰρ μεθέξει τοῦ ἐνός, ἀκολουθήσει ταῦτα πάντα· εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἐν, πῶς κινήσεται, πῶς στήσεται, πῶς γενήσεται, πῶς φθαρήσεται, πῶς μείζον, πῶς ἐλάττω, πῶς ἴσον· τοῦ δ' ἐνός ἀναιρεθέντος κατὰ τὰς ἀνωτέρας ὑποθέσεις, καὶ ταῦτα ἀναιρεθήσεται· οὕτω ἕτερον ἔστι τὸ ἐν, αἱ ἱβ' ἐπιχειρήσεις πληροῦνται. »).

³⁸ Voir Pl. *Prm.* 137c4–5 (1^{re} hypothèse) : « Commençons, dit-il, si l'*Un* est, l'*Un* pourrait-il être plusieurs ? – Assurément non ! » (« Εἴεν δὴ, φάναί· εἰ ἐν ἐστίν, ἄλλο τι οὐκ ἂν εἴη πολλὰ τὸ ἐν ; – Πῶς γὰρ ἂν ; »). La première phrase de la 2^e hypothèse est aussi claire : « Veux-tu que nous retournions au début de l'hypothèse, s'il nous paraîtra nécessaire d'examiner désormais quelque chose d'autre ? – Bien sûr. – Donc, si l'*Un* est, dit-on, nous devons admettre quelles puissent être ses propriétés, n'est-ce pas ? – Oui. » (*Prm.* 142b1–5 : « Βούλει οὖν ἐπὶ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐπανέλθωμεν, ἐάν τι ἡμῖν ἐπανιοῦσιν ἀλλοῖον φανῇ ; – Πάνυ μὲν οὖν βούλομαι. — Οὐκοῦν ἐν εἰ ἐστίν, φαμέν, τὰ συμβαίνοντα περὶ αὐτοῦ, ποῖα ποτε τυγχάνει ὄντα, διομολογητέα ταῦτα· οὐχ οὔτω ; — Ναί. »).

³⁹ Il faut souligner que les Néoplatoniciens acceptent aussi ce phénomène. Selon Proclus, même si le sujet de chaque hypothèse est déterminé (qu'il soit l'*Un* ou les *Autres*, chacun d'eux comme un principe distinct), il ne rejette pas en général le cas éventuel que les *Autres* puissent subir les mêmes propriétés de l'*Un*, ou les propriétés contraires, puisqu'ils se mettent en relation. Plus précisément, Damascius répondant à la question pourquoi les *Autres* de l'hypothèse n° 5 ne se mettent en relation qu'avec eux-mêmes, fait la distinction entre la relation (σχέσις) et la participation (μέθεξις), et il conclue ainsi : « ἀλλ' αἱ σχέσεις ἄρχονται ἀπὸ ταυτοτήτος καὶ ἑτερότητας. Ἄλλ'· ἐκεῖνο εἰπεῖν ἀληθέστερον, ὃ καὶ αὐτὸς φησιν [scil. ὁ Πρόκλος], ὥς εἰ ταῦτόν τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα τὰ αὐτὰ τῷ ἐνί, καὶ εἰ ἕτερον, ἕτερα καὶ πάντα οὕτως. Καὶ γὰρ ἡδὴ καὶ τὴν ἀντιστροφὴν τῶν ἄλλων πρὸς τὸ ἐν πολλαχοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Παρμενίδης συνήγαγεν, ὥς ἂν οὐ μέλλων καὶ ἰδίᾳ πραγματεύεσθαι ταῦτα. » (Dam. in *Prm.* 287.13–17). En effet, cette inversion a lieu aux passages 147c3–5, 149d3–5, 151b1–5, 152e10–153b7, 153b8–d5, 154a1–2, 154c5–155b4, 155b4–c8 de la deuxième hypothèse. D'ailleurs, à la première hypothèse, Proclus ne s'arrête pas à l'exégèse comment l'*Un* n'est pas différent des *Autres* (139e4–

rent', 'dissemblable', 'séparé', 'n'ayant ni de grandeur ni de petitesse' ('égal'), 'plus petit et plus grand', 'plus jeune et plus vieux'.⁴⁰ Néanmoins, à première vue, nous pourrions constater que la question, comment la relation « Autres-eux-mêmes » surgit aux deux premières hypothèses, où les Autres ne sont pas examinés en soi, reste ouverte. Mais cette constatation peut être assurément contredite, si l'on se rend compte que le premier but de Pachymère ici, face à cette 'confusion', est de chercher à appliquer partout le schéma des 24 hypothèses de la méthode de Parménide, expliqué par Proclus, et de faire s'associer le texte de Platon avec la méthode logique du Diadoque, laquelle préside en tant que directive préliminaire dans son Commentaire. Et puisque, même dans les hypothèses n^{os} 1 et 2, où l'on déduit des conclusions concernant l'Un par rapport à lui-même, il est question du rapport entre l'Un et les Autres, Pachymère peut facilement déduire des conclusions concernant les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes, en recherchant de traces dans le texte de Platon lui-même. Autrement dit : la clé de l'exégèse de Pachymère est le système des 24 hypothèses-arguments qu'il essaie de retrouver par n'importe quel moyen dans le texte de Platon. Alors que Proclus avait expliqué pourquoi les 24 hypothèses de la méthode de Parménide se réduisent à neuf dans le dialogue, Pachymère essaie de retrouver dans le texte de Platon toutes les 24 hypothèses⁴¹. Par ailleurs, comme nous le verrons ci-dessus, le système d'hypothèses de Parménide n'est pas exempt lui-même de problèmes, et c'est ainsi que l'exégète doit ajuster à son tour son interprétation face à ces défis. Voici quelques exemples tirés par le Commentaire de Pachymère, où des conclusions sur la relation des Autres entre eux peuvent vraisemblablement surgir :

- i. « Nous nous souvenons que Parménide, dans sa présentation des arguments tirés de l'hypothèse *si l'Un est*, examine *ce qui s'ensuit* aussi bien *pour l'Un par rapport à lui-même*, que *pour l'Un par rapport aux Autres*, et de nouveau *pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes* et *pour les Autres par rapport à l'Un*. »⁴² Il s'agit d'une allusion au passage 136a4–7⁴³, laquelle fait ici office d'une constatation préliminaire de base pour les conclusions affirmatives « l'Un est identique et différent », afin que Pachymère puisse établir, de cette manière, certains autres arguments suivants, comme les conclusions affirmatives « les Autres sont semblables et dissemblables ».

6), mais il examine aussi comment les Autres, à leur tour, ne sont pas différents de l'Un (voir Procl. *in Parm.* VII 1190.4–1191.3).

⁴⁰ Cf. Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 16.3–5 (Pl. *Parm.* 147c3–5), 20.30 (Pl. *Parm.* 149d3–5), 24.29–25.1 (Pl. *Parm.* 151b1–5), 29.15–26 (Pl. *Parm.* 152e10–153b7), 30.7–26 (Pl. *Parm.* 153b8–d5), 31.23–24 (Pl. *Parm.* 154a1–2), 33.25–27, 34.31 (Pl. *Parm.* 154c5–155b4), 35.10–11 (Pl. *Parm.* 155b4–c8).

⁴¹ Bien que la question de savoir s'il y parvient tout à fait reste ouverte, en raison de certaines lacunes dans son exégèse (voir *infra*, p. 20 *sqq.*).

⁴² Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 12.6–9 : « Μενήμεθα λέγοντος τοῦ Παρμενίδου ἐν τῇ παραδόσει τῶν ἐκ τοῦ εἰ ἔστιν ἐπιχειρημάτων καὶ τὸ τί συμβήσεται καὶ αὐτῷ πρὸς ἑαυτό, καὶ αὐτῷ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα, καὶ αὐθις τοῖς ἄλλοις πρὸς ἑαυτά, καὶ αὐτοῖς πρὸς ἑκεῖνο. »

⁴³ Référence de Parménide à l'argumentation de Zénon : s'il y a pluralité (d'êtres), on examine ce qui s'ensuit pour les plusieurs par rapport à eux-mêmes et à l'un (le terme contraire aux plusieurs) et ce qui s'ensuit pour l'un par rapport à lui-même et aux plusieurs ; il en est de même pour l'hypothèse « s'il n'y pas de pluralité ».

ii. « Et de nouveau, à l'inverse, les Autres sont différents de l'Un, et donc ils sont soumis à des conditions dissemblables par rapport à eux-mêmes et dans leur relation entre eux, tout comme l'Un est dissemblable par rapport à lui-même et par rapport aux Autres »⁴⁴. Même s'il parle de la conclusion affirmative « l'Un est dissemblable par rapport aux Autres » (cf. Pl. *Prm.* 148a6–c2), Pachymère trouve l'occasion d'affirmer le prédicat « dissemblable » aussi aux Autres, de sorte que les conclusions « les Autres sont dissemblables par rapport à l'Un et par rapport à eux-mêmes » puissent être tirées.

iii. « Donc, comme les Autres n'ont ni de grandeur ni de petitesse, ils ne seront ni plus grands ni plus petits que l'Un ; ni l'Un par rapport à lui-même ni les Autres dans leur relation entre eux n'ont la force de dépasser ou d'être dépassé, car c'est en ayant de la grandeur qu'ils peuvent dépasser et c'est en ayant de la petitesse qu'ils peuvent être dépassés. Mais ni l'Un n'aura cette force dans les Autres, ni aucun des Autres ne sera plus grand et plus petit que l'Un, *puisque ceci n'a ni de grandeur ni de petitesse*. Par conséquent, si l'Un n'est ni plus grand ni plus petit que les Autres, il est nécessaire que l'Un ne dépasse les Autres ni ne soit dépassé par eux. *Mais ce qui ne dépasse ni n'est dépassé est d'égale portée, et ce qui est d'égale portée sera égal* »⁴⁵. Nous mettons ici l'accent sur le fait que le commentaire particulier concernant le rapport des Autres entre eux paraît être inclus dans le commentaire du passage 150c6–d4 en tant que prémisse spécifique pour que la conclusion affirmative « l'Un n'est ni plus grand ni plus petit que les Autres, donc il est égal par rapport à eux » soit enfin déduite. De plus, il faut aussi remarquer que la construction de cette prémisse est due à l'écriture particulière du texte du *Parménide* que Pachymère avait devant lui et copiait dans son manuscrit : « Donc, les Autres ne sont ni plus grands ni plus petits que l'Un, puisqu'ils n'ont ni de grandeur ni de petitesse, ni cela [sc. l'Un] par rapport à l'Un ni les Autres dans la relation entre eux n'ont la force de dépasser ou d'être dépassés ; cela [sc. l'Un] ne participerait à ces deux choses ni ne serait plus grand ou plus petit que les Autres, puisqu'il n'a ni de grandeur ni de petitesse »⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 17.11–14 : « Καὶ αὐθις ἀντιστρόφως τὰ ἄλλα τοῦ ἐνὸς ἕτερα, καὶ πέπονθεν ἄρα ταῦτα ἀνόμοια πάθη καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὰ καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα, ὥστε τὸ ἐν καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ἀνόμοιον ».

⁴⁵ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 23.20–26 : « Ἐπεὶ γοῦν τὰ ἄλλα οὔτε μέγεθος ἔχει οὔτε σμικρότητα, οὔτε μείζω οὔτε ἐλάττω τοῦ ἐνὸς ἔσται· οὔτε αὐτῷ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ οὔτε τὰ ἄλλα πρὸς ἄλληλα τὴν τοῦ ὑπερέχειν καὶ ὑπερέχεσθαι ἔχουσι δύναμιν, ὥς μὲν μέγεθος ἔχοντα, τὴν τοῦ ὑπερέχειν, ὥς δὲ σμικρότητα, τὴν τοῦ ὑπερέχεσθαι· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τῷ ἐνὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις, οὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων μείζον τι καὶ ἔλαττον εἶη πρὸς τὸ ἐν μὴ μέγεθος μὴδὲ σμικρότητα ἔχον. Ἄρα εἰ μὴτε μείζον μὴτε ἔλαττον τὸ ἐν τῶν ἄλλων, ἀνάγκη τὸ ἐν τῶν ἄλλων μὴτε ὑπερέχειν μὴτε ὑπερέχεσθαι. Τὸ δὲ μὴτε ὑπερέχον μὴτε ὑπερέχόμενον ἐξ ἴσου, τὸ δὲ ἐξ ἴσου ἴσον ἂν εἶη ».

⁴⁶ Cf. Parisinus gr. 1810, f. 218r : « Οὔτε ἄρα τὰ ἄλλα μείζω τοῦ ἐνὸς οὐδὲ ἐλάττω, μὴτε μέγεθος μὴτε σμικρότητα ἔχοντα, οὔτε αὐτῷ τούτῳ πρὸς τὸ ἐν ἔχεται τὴν δύναμιν τὴν τοῦ ὑπερέχειν καὶ ὑπερέχεσθαι <οὔτε τὰ> ἄλλα πρὸς ἄλληλα, οὔτε αὐτῷ ἐν τούτοις οὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων μείζον ἂν οὐδὲ ἔλαττον εἶη, μὴτε μέγεθος μὴτε σμικρότητα ἔχον ». J'ai choisi de prendre en compte ici le ms. autographe de Pachymère, car l'édition critique suit un texte qui ne correspond pas à l'interprétation du commentaire respectif de Pachymère. En effet, la citation de Pachymère, juxtaposée à son exégèse, permet de comprendre que de problèmes d'interprétation se posent, puisque la citation ainsi que le commentaire affichent d'erreurs syntaxiques (le sujet de trois propositions est au datif) et une répétition superflue (cf. « αὐτῷ τούτῳ πρὸς τὸ ἐν », à savoir l'Un par rapport à l'Un). Ces problèmes nous permettent de déduire plutôt une interprétation précipitée de la part de Pachymère sur ce texte, qui est intégré, en fait, à un passage long, 149d8–150e5. D'ailleurs, il faut intervenir au texte platonicien cité par l'exégète, et ajouter entre crochets angulaires les mots « οὔτε τὰ » avant la phrase « ἄλλα πρὸς ἄλληλα », reconstruisant toute la phrase comme suit « οὔτε αὐτῷ τούτῳ πρὸς τὸ ἐν ἔχεται τὴν δύναμιν τὴν τοῦ ὑπερέχειν καὶ ὑπερέχεσθαι <οὔτε τὰ> ἄλλα πρὸς ἄλληλα », afin qu'elle corresponde au sens du commentaire respectif (cf.

– SI L’UN N’EST PAS, on examine aussi 12 conséquences-arguments :

1) Ce qui s’ensuit

xiii) pour l’Un par rapport à lui-même (3^e hex., 13^e arg.),

xiv) pour l’Un par rapport aux Autres (3^e hex., 16^e arg.),

xv) pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes (4^e hex., 19^e arg.),

xvi) pour les Autres par rapport à l’Un ? (4^e hex., 22^e arg.).

2) Ce qui ne s’ensuit pas

xvii) pour l’Un par rapport à lui-même (3^e hex., 14^e arg.),

xviii) pour l’Un par rapport aux Autres (3^e hex., 17^e arg.)

xix) pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes (4^e hex., 20^e arg.),

xx) pour les Autres par rapport à l’Un (4^e hex., 23^e arg.).

3) Ce qui s’ensuit et ne s’ensuit pas

xxi) pour l’Un par rapport à lui-même (3^e hex., 15^e arg.),

xxii) pour l’Un par rapport aux Autres (3^e hex., 18^e arg.),

xxiii) pour les Autres par rapport à eux-mêmes (4^e hex., 21^e arg.),

xxiv) pour les Autres par rapport à l’Un (4^e hex., 24^e arg.).

Contrairement aux 12 premiers arguments, les 12 suivants ne sont pas présentés et traités en un flux continu, l’un après l’autre, mais dans des parties séparées. Plus précisément, afin de pleinement examiner la deuxième partie du schéma dialectique des hypothèses, nous devons d’abord identifier à quelles parties particulières du texte platonicien correspondent les 12 *ad hoc* hypothèses-arguments selon la forme et le caractère particulier de chacune des hypothèses-arguments de Parménide, et puis reconstruire et réassembler rétrospectivement leur bon ordre d’examen en se basant sur le schéma d’analyse des 12 premiers arguments de la forme d’hypothèse « si l’Un est », comme déjà présenté par Pachymère lui-même. Effectivement, au point de transition entre la première douzaine d’arguments et la seconde, Pachymère ne reprend pas explicitement le même plan d’analyse. Cependant, nous devons supposer que la même méthode est appliquée par analogie à la deuxième douzaine, puisque Pachymère lui-même répète la triple distinction des

Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 23.21–24). La plupart des *Codices Platonis* affichent la phrase « αὐτὸ τοῦτο πρὸς τὸ ἐν ἔχον ... ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἀλλήλῳ » (voir Diès 1965 : 150c), donnant un sens différent, qui correspond, en fait, au passage 133c8–134a1 : les idées (comme ici les idées de la grandeur et de la petitesse) sont en relation les unes avec les autres et ne se mettent pas en relation avec les choses du monde sensible, et, plus précisément, avec les « idées-concepts », simulacres des vraies idées, que nous avons en nous-mêmes. Un problème similaire se pose en ce qui concerne la différence substantielle entre le texte cité « οὐτε αὐτῷ ἐν τοῦτοιν οὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων μείζον ἂν οὐδὲ ἔλαττον εἴη, μήτε μέγεθος μήτε σμικρότητα ἔχον » et le commentaire respectif « ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τῷ ἐνὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις, οὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων μείζον τι καὶ ἔλαττον εἴη πρὸς τὸ ἐν μὴ μέγεθος μηδὲ σμικρότητα ἔχον », avec pour conséquence que la relation de l’Un avec les deux formes est modifiée à sa relation avec les Autres (le type du texte platonicien « αὐτῷ ἐν τοῦτοιν » se trouve aussi au *Codex Platonis* Bodleianus Clarkianus 39, bien que la plupart de *Codices Platonis* affichent le type « αὐτὸ ἐν τοῦτοιν », cf. A. Diès 1965 : 150d).

conclusions (et puis la quadruple) déduites de la forme d'hypothèse « si l'Un n'est pas », qu'il vient de commenter, juste avant de traiter les 12 arguments suivants⁴⁷, et nous offre même quelques indices dans la suite, dans des points dispersés dans ses scholies, sur la façon dont l'ensemble des 12 arguments devrait être structuré. Par conséquent, il est important de jeter un regard plus attentif sur le flux des syllogismes de Parménide et des commentaires respectifs de Pachymère.

La deuxième partie du Commentaire commence donc par les arguments xiii et xiv, c'est-à-dire les conclusions affirmatives déduites pour *l'Un-qui-n'est pas* (ἐν μὴ ὄν) par rapport à lui-même et par rapport aux Autres. Au sein de ces arguments, Pachymère examine de plus près les prédicats affirmés de l'Un : connaissable, différent des Autres⁴⁸, participant à la multitude via les dénominations 'quelque chose', 'ceci', 'cela', toutes attribuées à l'Un qui le différencient des Autres⁴⁹, dissemblable par rapport aux Autres et semblable par rapport à lui-même⁵⁰, inégal et égal, grand et petit par rapport aux Autres⁵¹, participant à l'être et au non-être⁵², changeant et mouvant de l'être au non-être⁵³, immobiler⁵⁴, altéré, devenant et périssant⁵⁵.

Ensuite, Pachymère passe à l'analyse des arguments xvii et xviii, à savoir des conclusions négatives déduites pour *l'Un-qui-n'est pas* par rapport à lui-même et par rapport aux Autres. En effet, il souligne bien ce point de transition :

« Après avoir dit ce qui s'ensuit pour l'Un-qui-n'est pas, *il revient à son point de départ* et traite ce qui ne s'ensuit pas pour l'Un-qui-n'est pas... »⁵⁶.

Dans une seule scholie, Pachymère examine, de manière brève, les prédicats négatifs attribués à l'Un⁵⁷ : non-participant à l'être, non-devenant, non-périssant, non-altéré, non-mouvant, non-immobilier, non-participant à des dénominations qui s'attachent à l'être, ineffable, inconnaissable, insensible etc., de sorte que l'Un s'avère absolument non-être (μηδαμῇ μηδαμῶς ὄν).

Puis, en ce qui concerne les conclusions affirmatives et négatives déduites pour l'Un-qui-n'est pas (les arguments xxi et xxii), on pourrait les attribuer, selon toute vraisemblance, aux arguments du passage 163a2–b6. En effet, il s'agit du seul passage possible où nous pourrions reconnaître que Parménide traite, à la fois, les conclusions affirma-

⁴⁷ Cf. Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 48.12–17 (cité *supra*, n. 22).

⁴⁸ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 48.16–49.14 (Pl. *Prm.* 160b5–d2, 160d3–e2).

⁴⁹ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 49.25–50.9 (Pl. *Prm.* 160e2–161a5).

⁵⁰ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 50.21–28 (Pl. *Prm.* 161a6–c1).

⁵¹ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 51.5–21 (Pl. *Prm.* 161c3–161d3, 161d3–e2).

⁵² Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 52.9–53.8 (Pl. *Prm.* 161e3–162b8).

⁵³ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 53.16–21 (Pl. *Prm.* 162b9–c6).

⁵⁴ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 54.4–17 (Pl. *Prm.* 162c6–e3).

⁵⁵ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 55.1–12 (Pl. *Prm.* 162e4–163b6).

⁵⁶ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 56.15 : « Εἰπὼν τίνα ἔπεται τῷ ἐνὶ μὴ ὄντι, αὐθις ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἦσι καὶ σκοπεῖ τίνα οὐχ ἔπονται τῷ ἐνὶ μὴ ὄντι... ».

⁵⁷ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 56.27–57.16 (Pl. *Prm.* 163b7–164b4).

tives et négatives, puisque dans le passage suivant (Pl. *Prm.* 163b7–164b4), il se concentre exclusivement sur les conclusions négatives. En fait, après avoir établi que l'Un s'altère en se mouvant, Parménide fait coïncider les conclusions affirmatives et négatives : l'Un s'altère en se mouvant et ne s'altère pas en ne se mouvant pas, et il devient et périclît en s'altérant et ne devient ni ne périclît en ne s'altérant pas. Nous pourrions constater donc que l'on fournisse à Pachymère la bonne opportunité d'attribuer les arguments xxi et xxii à ce passage. Cependant, le texte de Pachymère ne nous permet pas de confirmer si clairement une telle interprétation. Effectivement, l'exégète Byzantin semble appliquer, à ce point, le principe logique de la contradiction :

« Donc, l'Un s'altère en se mouvant et il ne s'altère pas en ne se mouvant pas ; ce qui s'altère, devient différent de ce qu'il était auparavant, et ce qui est devenu différent, perd sa propriété précédente et devient autre, mais ce qui ne s'altère pas ne subit pas ces changements. Et c'est ainsi qu'il devient et ne devient pas, qu'il disparaît et ne disparaît pas, ce qui est impossible »⁵⁸.

Au passage suivant (Pl. *Prm.* 163b7–164b4), où l'on introduit l'hypothèse « si l'Un n'est pas, que ne s'ensuit-il pas pour l'Un ? », Pachymère explique pourquoi les conclusions « l'Un ne s'altère ni ne devient ni ne périclît » du passage précédent, quoique négatives, ne doivent qu'être aperçues comme de preuves des conclusions affirmatives « l'Un s'altère, devient et périclît » par l'impossibilité de déduire à la fois les conclusions contraires. Autrement dit, selon Pachymère, l'utilisation par Parménide des conclusions négatives montre que c'est contradictoire de prédiquer à la fois des prédicats affirmatifs et négatifs au même sujet, de sorte qu'il faudra enfin prouver que « l'Un-qui-n'est pas » se meut et s'altère, devient et périclît. Par conséquent, si cette hypothèse de Parménide nécessite de déduire des conclusions exclusivement affirmatives, il faut rejeter les conclusions négatives comme non valables dans ce cas⁵⁹. Néanmoins, nous ne pouvons trouver d'autre

⁵⁸ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 55.12–16 : « Λοιπὸν καὶ ἀλλοιοῦται μὲν ὡς κινούμενον, οὐκ ἀλλοιοῦται δὲ ὡς μὴ κινούμενον· τὸ ἀλλοιούμενον δὲ ἕτερον γίνεται ἢ πρότερον, τὸ δὲ ἕτερον γεγόμενον ἀπόλλυται ἐκ τῆς προτέρας ἕξεως καὶ ἄλλο τι γίνεται, τὸ δὲ μὴ ἀλλοιούμενον οὐ. Καὶ οὕτως γίνεται τε καὶ οὐ γίνεται, καὶ ἀπόλλυται καὶ οὐκ ἀπόλλυται, ὅπερ ἀδύνατον ».

⁵⁹ Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 56.15–27 : « Après avoir dit ce qui s'ensuit pour l'Un-qui-n'est pas, il revient au point de départ et traite ce qui ne s'ensuit pas pour l'Un-qui-n'est pas, de sorte que tous les prédicats dont il parlait auparavant (ce qui ne se meut absolument pas, ne s'altère absolument pas, et ce qui ne s'altère pas, ne devient ni ne périclît) n'étaient pas mis en avant comme des prédicats négatifs attribués à l'Un-qui-n'est pas, mais il s'en est servi comme preuve des conclusions affirmatives par le biais de l'impossible. Autrement dit : ce qui se meut, s'altère ; en effet, ce qui ne se meut pas, ne s'altère pas, et ce qui ne s'altère pas, ne devient pas différent de ce qu'il était auparavant, et cela ne devient ni ne périclît, mais il devenait et périssait et était dans une autre condition ; par conséquent, le même Un-qui-n'est pas s'est avéré devenir et périclît selon les hypothèses précédentes, mais, selon l'hypothèse présente qui montre que l'Un ne se meut ni ne s'altère, s'est avéré ne pas devenir et ne pas périclît, ce qui est impossible ; par conséquent, l'Un se meut et s'altère, si l'on compte maintenir les hypothèses précédentes. Et partant de ce point, Parménide démontre ce qui ne s'ensuit pas pour l'Un-qui-n'est pas. » (« Εἰπὼν τίνα ἔπειτα τῷ ἐνὶ μὴ ὄντι, αὐθις ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἦσι καὶ σκοπεῖ τίνα οὐχ ἔπονται τῷ ἐνὶ μὴ ὄντι, ὥστε, ἅπερ πρότερον ἔλεγε (τὸ μὴ δαμῇ κινούμενον οὐδαμῇ ἀλλοιοῦται, καὶ τὸ μὴ ἀλλοιούμενον οὐτε γίνεται οὐτε ἀπόλλυται) οὐκ ἀπέφαινε ταῦτα τοῦ ἐνὸς μὴ ὄντος, ἀλλ' ἀπόδειξιν ἐποιεῖτο τῶν καταφατικῶν ὧν ἔλεγε διὰ τοῦ ἀδυνάτου. Ὅτι λέγω δηλονότι· τὸ κινούμενον ἀλλοιοῦται· τὸ γὰρ μὴ κινούμενον οὐκ ἀλλοιοῦται, τὸ δὲ μὴ ἀλλοιούμενον οὐ γίνεται ἕτερον ἢ πρότερον, τοῦτο δὲ οὐτε γίνεται οὔτ' ἀπόλλυται, ἀλλ' ἦν καὶ γινόμενον καὶ

issue à cette question interprétative que de se concentrer sur la méthode que Pachymère lui-même nous fournit dans un passage suivant : de même que la distinction entre les conclusions affirmatives et les conclusions négatives pour les Autres, aux derniers arguments de tout le dialogue, débuche, dans un niveau *a posteriori*, sur un combinaison des deux sortes de conclusion⁶⁰, de même la distinction entre les arguments-hypothèses *précédents* (les conclusions affirmatives) et les arguments-hypothèses *présents* (les conclusions négatives) et leur juxtaposition dans le même point du texte, suggèrent, en fin de compte, que ces conclusions s'associent dans une étape intermédiaire, de sorte que les arguments xxi et xxii sont construits⁶¹. L'application du principe de la contradiction et de « la preuve via l'impossibilité »⁶² qu'il implique, ne doit pas être considérée ici comme une entrave au combinaison des prédicats contraires, puisque Pachymère y semble impliquer une sorte de liaison entre eux, au moins dans un niveau distinct, étant donné la distinction claire entre les hypothèses *précédentes* et *présentes* ; en toute état de cause, sans cette solution, il faudrait admettre que le Commentaire aurait pu présenter une lacune considérable dans la structure totale du système dialectique de Parménide. La valeur probante de la solution proposée, quoique moins plausible aux commentaires en question, peut être renforcée par une interprétation similaire de Proclus. Selon le philosophe Néoplatonicien, la déduction des conclusions affirmatives et négatives ne doit pas être considérée contradictoire, au cas où l'on accepterait qu'elles s'ensuivent à la fois, mais comme une application des premières d'une manière spécifique et des autres d'une autre manière distincte :

« Il faut donc considérer la conclusion logique soit comme s'ensuivant, soit comme ne s'ensuivant pas, soit comme s'ensuivant et ne s'ensuivant pas à la fois. En effet, la conclusion est soit affirmative, soit négative, soit d'une certaine façon affirmative et d'une autre façon négative, puisque l'argument ne montre pas que des propositions contradictoires sont vraies

ἀπολλύμενον καὶ ἐτέρως ἔχον. Ὡστε τὸ αὐτὸ ἐν μὴ ὄν εὐρήται κατὰ μὲν τὰς προτέρας ὑποθέσεις καὶ γινόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, κατὰ δὲ τὴν νῦν τὴν μὴ δεχομένην ὅτι οὐ κινεῖται οὐδ' ἁλλοιοῦται, καὶ μῆτε γινόμενον μῆτε ἀπολλύμενον, ὅπερ ἀδύνατον· ὥστε κινεῖται ἄρα καὶ ἁλλοιοῦται, εἰ μέλλομεν φυλάττειν τὰς προτέρας ὑποθέσεις. Ἐκ τούτου δὲ ἀποδείκνυσσι τὰ μὴ ἐπόμενα τῷ ἐνὶ μὴ ὄντι. »).

⁶⁰ Cf. Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 61.30–62.2 (cité *supra*, n. 26) et 62.19–24 (cité *infra*, n. 66).

⁶¹ En effet, les conclusions affirmatives-négatives précèdent les conclusions négatives pour l'Un-qui-n'est pas, ce qui ne sera pas le cas quant aux conclusions affirmatives-négatives pour les Autres (cf. *infra*, p. 23 et n. 66).

⁶² Pachymère expose la procédure de « la preuve via l'impossibilité » dans son ouvrage philosophique *Philosophia*, dans les sections consacrées aux enseignements logiques d'Aristote. Il souligne que ce principe est un axiome philosophique et « crédible en soi » (αὐτόπιστος ἔννοια) qui ne peut être contourné que dans le cas des « troubles sophistiques » (σοφιστικαὶ ἐνοχλήσεις). Donc, les arguments philosophiques de Parménide ne peuvent pas échapper à la règle en tant qu'exception. Je cite les remarques du philosophe Byzantin tirées et transcrites de son manuscrit autographe de la *Philosophia*, *Berolinensis Hamilton* 512, ff. 1^{er} : « Ἡ δὲ δὲ ἀδυνάτου δεῖξις, ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ἀντιφατικῶς ἢ ὑπόθεσις τίθεται, καθὼς ἐρρέθη, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν προσδιορισμῶν, καὶ αὐτῶν ἀντιφατικῶς· ἢ γὰρ πᾶς ἢ οὐ πᾶς, καὶ ἢ τις ἢ οὐδεὶς. οὐδέποτε γὰρ συναληθεύει ἢ κατάφασις τῇ ἀποφάσει. τοῦτο γὰρ ἀξίωμα φιλοσόφων ἐστὶ καὶ αὐτόπιστος ἔννοια, ὅτι οὐδέποτε ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ συμβαίνει ἢ κατάφασις τῇ ἀποφάσει, εἰ μὴ σοφιστικῶς κατὰ τὰς σοφιστικὰς ἐνοχλήσεις· ἢ καθ' ὁμωνυμίαν (...)· ἢ κατὰ ἄλλον καὶ ἄλλον χρόνον (...)· ἢ κατὰ τὸ δυνάμει καὶ τὸ ἐνεργείᾳ (...)· ἢ κατὰ διαφορὰν τῶν μερῶν (...). ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα σοφιστικαὶ ἐνοχλήσεις εἰσὶν. ἄλλως δὲ οὐ συντρέχει ποτὲ ἢ κατάφασις τῇ ἀποφάσει. ἐπὶ τοίνυν τῆς δὲ ἀδυνάτου δεῖξεως ἰσχυρὸν τὸ ἀξιοῦν ἢ καταφάναι ἢ ἀποφάναι... ».

en même temps, mais que le même attribut existe d'une certaine façon dans une chose et qu'il n'existe pas d'une autre façon dans la même chose »⁶³.

À la suite des conclusions déduites pour l'Un-qui-n'est pas, Pachymère passe au traitement des conclusions affirmatives pour les Autres par rapport à l'Un et par rapport à eux-mêmes, à savoir aux arguments xv et xvi⁶⁴. Enfin, les conclusions négatives pour les Autres (arguments xix et xx) sont examinées par Pachymère à la scholie dernière de son Commentaire⁶⁵, avant les conclusions affirmatives-négatives pour les Autres (arguments xxiii et xxiv)⁶⁶. C'est ainsi que tout le modèle dialectique des 24 arguments de Parménide, élaboré par Proclus et développé dans sa perfection par Pachymère, est achevé.

Conclusions

Après cette tentative de reconstruction, on pourrait se poser la question légitime suivante : pourquoi accorder de la perfection à ce modèle, puisque nous avons identifié certains problèmes qui remettent en cause la constitution d'une interprétation intégrale qui pourrait construire, ou du moins soutenir, tout l'édifice philosophique de l'exercice dialectique de Platon ? La perfection que nous venons de reconnaître dans l'ouvrage exégétique du philosophe Byzantin réside davantage dans son attitude d'interprète prêt à adapter aux défis du texte interprété, à savoir dans ses efforts honnêtes, impartiaux et laborieux pour concilier le texte de Platon, qu'il a estimé qu'il est de son devoir d'interpréter, avec les directives herméneutiques de Proclus (qui ordonne et normalise l'exercice

⁶³ Procl. in Prm. V 1001.14–20 : « τὸ τοῖνον συμβαῖνον ἢ ὡς ἐπόμενον ληπτέον, ἢ ὡς μὴ ἐπόμενον, ἢ ὡς ἅμα καὶ ἐπόμενον καὶ οὐχ ἐπόμενον· ἢ γὰρ καταφατικόν ἐστι τὸ συμβαῖνον, ἢ ἀποφατικόν, ἢ πῇ μὲν καταφατικόν, πῇ δὲ ἀποφατικόν· οὐ γὰρ τοῦτο φησὶν ὁ λόγος, ὅτι ἡ ἀντίφασις συναληθεύει καὶ ἅμα τὰ ἀντικείμενα ἔπεται, ἀλλ' ὅτι τὸ αὐτὸ πῶς μὲν ὑπάρχει τῷ αὐτῷ, πῶς δ' οὐ. » Proclus utilise l'expression « ἡ ἀντίφασις συναληθεύει » (des propositions contradictoires sont vraies en même temps) en faisant ainsi allusion à la Métaphysique d'Aristote (K 6, 1063a21) : « τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ἀντίφασιν μὴ συναληθεύεσθαι ». Proclus avait aussi abordé la tripartition des conclusions affirmant que la nature des conclusions affirmatives et négatives montre qu'une propriété peut se trouver dans une chose et ne pas s'y trouver, à la différence des propriétés exclusivement affirmatives qui lui sont nécessairement attribuées, ainsi que des propriétés négatives qui lui sont totalement étrangères : « ὑποθεμένους δὲ τι, περὶ οὗ ὁ λόγος, διαίρειν ἔτι τῇ ἀντιφάσει ταύτην τὴν ὑπόθεσιν, ὥς καὶ ὁ Παρμενίδης παρακελεύεται, εἶναι τὸ πρᾶγμα ἢ μὴ εἶναι λέγοντας, καὶ λαβόντας ὅτι ἔστιν, ζητεῖν τί ἔπεται αὐτῷ καὶ τί οὐχ ἔπεται καὶ τί ἔπεται τε ἅμα καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται—τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἔστιν ἐκαστοῦ παντελῶς ἀλλότρια πράγματος, τὰ δὲ ἐξ ἀνάγκης αὐτῷ παρόντα, τὰ δὲ οἷον ἐνδεχόμενα καὶ ὑπάρχειν αὐτῷ καὶ μὴ ὑπάρχειν » (in Prm. I 622.24–623.4).

⁶⁴ Cf. Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 58.8–61.6, sur le passage Pl. *Prm.* 164b5–165e1. Cf. aussi la déclaration préliminaire de Pachymère au point de transition, Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 58.8–9 (cité *supra*, n. 34).

⁶⁵ Cf. Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 62.2–19.

⁶⁶ Cf. Pachym. *Comm. on Parm.* 62.19–24 : « En effet, nous montrions ci-dessus que les Autres sont au contact et séparés, semblables et dissemblables, identiques et différents, et maintenant qu'ils ne sont ni au contact ni séparés, ni semblables ni dissemblables, ni identiques ni différents ; donc, comme nous avons analysé auparavant ces apparences des Autres, maintenant ils ne sont ni ne paraissent ce qu'ils paraissaient être. » (« Ἐκεῖ γὰρ καὶ ἀπτόμενα καὶ χωρὶς ἐδείκνυμεν, καὶ ὅμοια καὶ ἀνόμοια, καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ἕτερα, νῦν δὲ οὔτε ἀπτόμενα οὔτε χωρὶς, οὔτε ὅμοια οὔτε ἀνόμοια, οὔτε τὰ αὐτὰ οὔτε ἕτερα· ὥς γοῦν πρότερον διήλθομεν τὰ φαινόμενα αὐτὰ τῶν ἄλλων, νῦν ταῦτα δὴ ἅπερ ἐφαίνοντο εἶναι, οὔτε εἰσὶν οὔτε φαίνονται. »).

dialectique de Platon en un système logique complet et autonome), que dans une obsession d'interpréter les syllogismes de Platon de manière 'orthodoxe' et de méconnaître ainsi leurs erreurs, leurs faiblesses et leurs lacunes⁶⁷. Cette démarche herméneutique n'est qu'une manifestation du pédantisme imprégnant son travail. Après tout, même si Proclus a organisé l'ensemble des arguments en un système normalisé, il reconnaît lui-même qu'une telle règle comporte des exceptions, qui se traduisent, dans ce cas, par des lacunes, des omissions et des adaptations aux modes dialectiques au système d'hypothèses, mais lesquelles, selon le Néoplatonicien, sont si insignifiantes qu'elles n'atteindraient jamais le point critique où elles pourraient ébranler considérablement l'intégrité de l'exercice logique, de la dialectique 'appliquée', si l'on peut dire, de Platon. Je cite l'observation de Proclus :

« Mais le développement des hypothèses ne suit pas tout à fait les modes de la méthode, mais en omet certains et en modifie d'autres. Pourtant, s'il [scil. Parménide] a présenté la doctrine de l'Un-qui-est comme un exemple de la méthode, n'aurait-il pas été ridicule de ne pas suivre la méthode et de ne pas traiter son exemple selon les règles annoncées ? Et comment pourrait-on le qualifier d'exemple s'il ne suivait pas tout l'ordre des règles de la méthode ? En parcourant les soi-disant hypothèses, nous verrons comment il [scil. Parménide] ne suit pas tout à fait sa méthode à mesure qu'il les parcourt, mais qu'il en supprime certaines, en ajoute d'autres et en modifie encore d'autres »⁶⁸.

⁶⁷ D'ailleurs, Pachymère met en doute la validité logique de trois arguments de Platon, soulignant leur véritable nature sophistique d'après le système logique d'Aristote ; voir l'analyse de Savoudakis (2024: 405–414).

⁶⁸ Procl. in *Prm.* I 637.20–638.2 : « ἡ δὲ τῶν ὑποθέσεων διέξοδος οὐ παντάπασιν ἔπεται τοῖς τῆς μεθόδου τρόποις, ἀλλὰ τοὺς μὲν παραλείπει, τοὺς δὲ ἐξαλλάττει. καίτοι γε εἰ παραδείγματος ἕνεκα τὸν περὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς ὄντος εἰσῆγε λόγον, πῶς οὐ γελοῖον ἦν μὴ ἔπεσθαι τῇ μεθόδῳ, μηδὲ κατὰ τοὺς εἰρημένους κανόνας αὐτῆς μεταχειρίζεσθαι τὸ παράδειγμα; <πῶς δ' ἂν παράδειγμα> λέγοιτο μὴ ἐπόμενον τῇ πάσῃ τάξει τῶν τῆς μεθόδου κανόνων; Ἀλλ' ὅπως μὲν οὐ παντάπασιν ἔπεται τῇ μεθόδῳ διὰ τῶν καλουμένων ὑποθέσεων προΐων, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ἀφαιρεῖ, τὰ δὲ προστίθῃσι, τὰ δὲ ἐξαλλάττει, γνωσόμεθα δι' αὐτῶν μέσων ὁδεύοντες. » Comme C. Steel fait remarquer à juste titre, Proclus se limite ici à « signaler un argument de ses prédécesseurs contre l'interprétation qui prend le *Parménide* pour un entraînement à une méthode. Si tel avait été le but du dialogue, on aurait pu espérer que l'exemple proposé pour l'illustrer, se conforme tout à fait à cette méthode, ce qui ne semble pas être le cas » (Steel 1997: 83).

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**The Logical System of Hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides* in the
Commentary of George Pachymeres**

George Pachymeres' Commentary on the second part of the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* is from a codicological point of view a continuation of the lost part of Proclus' Commentary, but it can be characterized in its essence as an autonomous exegetical effort by the polymath and Aristotelian philosopher that aims to deal with the demanding text of the Parmenidean hypotheses by codifying this argumentative system of Platonic dialectic. The purely logical identity of his interpretation, which is far from being influenced by the Neoplatonists' metaphysical and theological approaches, is manifest through the logical system of the "24 arguments" that he borrows though from Proclus' interpretation and tries to apply *ad hoc* to the Platonic system of hypotheses, following it as closely as he can. This article maps the landscape of Pachymeres' hermeneutical effort, i.e., it tries to structure in a clear and complete scheme the skeleton of his methodological approach on the whole of *Parmenides*' arguments, by seeking to establish the appropriate correspondences with Proclus' logical system of the "24 dialectical modes" and by following step by step the course of the Byzantine commentator's reasoning strategy, especially his ingenious adjustments between Plato's demanding text and Proclus' schematization-model. To what extent, then, would the skeleton of the system of hypotheses that Pachymeres reconstructs from the Proclean schemes be perfect or sufficiently robust? This problem is the starting point of the present study.

KEY WORDS

Byzantine philosophy, Georgios Pachymeres, Commentary, Plato's *Parmenides*, one-being, hypotheses, arguments, Proclus, Neoplatonism, dialectics, logic, Aristotle, Palaiologan era

DYSKUSJE

Che cosa intendiamo per “filosofia”?

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Luca Grecchi ha dedicato un bell’articolo ai primi passi della filosofia in Grecia, sostenendo che “se già nei presocratici era presente l’alberello della filosofia pur senza il nome (...) anche loro dovrebbero essere considerati, almeno in parte (...) »filosofi«”¹. Su questa premessa Grecchi ha anche provato a scrivere, nel 2022, un libro sulla “filosofia prima della filosofia”, che si sarebbe delineata addirittura secoli prima che la nozione corrispondente facesse la sua comparsa: nell’isola di Creta, in età minoica. E se la società minoica seppe esprimere una sua filosofia, beh, forse ebbe ragione Aldo Lo Schiavo a parlare, a sua volta, di *Omero filosofo* (1983; 2021²).

Osservo, per cominciare, che è bello (o sembra bello) poter parlare di Omero filosofo, quindi anche della filosofia di Omero e, perché no, della filosofia della Creta minoica. Per carità, tutto *ante litteram* ma, posto che una filosofia affiori perfino dai poemi omerici e posto che si possa parlare di Omero, beh, questi mi appare anche più meritevole dei cretesi perché i poemi omerici hanno effettivamente forgiato una cultura, e che cultura!²

¹ In Grecchi 2024: 22.

² All’argomento ho dedicato il primo capitolo di Rossetti 2023a.

Per di più, parlare della loro potenziale rilevanza filosofica aiuta a riconoscere in essi dei pregi che la tradizione esegetica era riuscita a non vedere.

In effetti il tipo di cultura di chi ha coltivato studi omerici e si è fatto una competenza specifica, con tanto greco arcaico ma con poco altro, rischia – nessuno si offenda – di dare prova di orizzonti ristretti: si vedono infiniti dettagli ma si finisce per perdere di vista l'insieme. Provo a spiegarmi brevemente. I poemi omerici riflettono una società tutt'altro che irrigidita in un assetto ben stabilito. Se il potere è relativamente instabile e conosce contestazioni anche importanti in terra, e talvolta perfino in cielo, molti canti (specialmente nell'*Odissea*) sono manifestamente concepiti per interessare e compiacere anche il pubblico femminile, e già questi tratti hanno qualcosa di sbalorditivo. Ogni possibile confronto con le società e i regimi coevi evidenzia, anche solo su questi due punti, una distanza abissale. Presso altri popoli e laddove si parlavano altre lingue non si ebbe sentore di niente che fosse almeno lontanamente paragonabile alla duttilità delle società e delle città in cui si parlava greco. In questo senso i poemi hanno delineato un mondo, nonché un modo di concepire e organizzare la vita quotidiana, che non sarebbe potuta essere più innovativa, né più coerente nella sua duttilità. Guarda caso, anche nella nostra società (quantomeno in Italia e nell'Europa occidentale) il punto di vista femminile viene tenuto in gran conto e accade che il potere politico ed economico – e così pure l'autorità religiosa – conosca contrasti e fattori di instabilità³. A mio modo di vedere, si tratta di un dato altamente significativo: ci dice che siamo in condizione di capire e gustare quel mondo così lontano e di affermare che dai poemi omerici emerge un'idea del mondo, della società e dell'uomo che ha una sua identità: identità che, per l'appunto, comprendiamo facilmente. E abbiamo le nostre buone ragioni se ci azzardiamo a presumere che questa idea eminentemente greca fosse retta da una sua filosofia *virtuale*.

'Virtuale' ho detto. Così facendo ho evocato una parola chiave, che si applica bene non solo a chiunque sia vissuto 'troppo presto', ma anche a chiunque sia vissuto 'troppo lontano' per poter venire a sapere alcunché sul conto della filosofia dei greci. E non solo. Si applica, in verità, anche a molte altre figure: per esempio a tutti coloro ai quali è accaduto di rimanere all'oscuro della filosofia greca (o anche della filosofia in quanto tale), e non solo. Infatti non c'è soltanto la filosofia dei filosofi 'conclamati', come Platone e Kant, che vengono tradizionalmente trattati con rispetto o addirittura con deferenza. C'è anche quella virtuale dei comuni mortali, quindi di tutti coloro che sono vissuti, che vivono o che vivranno da qualche parte. A chi non è mai accaduto di fermarsi a riflettere? Chi nei primi vent'anni di vita non ha almeno provato a farsi un'idea del suo vissuto e abbozzare più o meno alla buona una sua filosofia virtuale? Né Platone né Kant né altri, per quanto grandi siano stati, possono pretendere di dirci come dobbiamo ragionare noi. Il nostro vissuto, ricco o povero che sia, è troppo differente per non indirizzarci verso

³ Aggiungo, se posso, altre due annotazioni appena più circoscritte: la sensibilità con cui nei poemi omerici non viene esibito alcun insegnamento malgrado l'indubbia rilevanza che ha la componente didascalica di quella poesia; l'avvenuta desensibilizzazione per il "tu devi" e per il decalogo nella nostra società, da confrontare con quella società omerica di cui non si può certo dire che fosse impregnata di obbligazioni morali.

conclusioni che sono le nostre e non le loro. Mi è anzi accaduto di scrivere che “è filosofia anche il modo in cui ogni bambino/a e ragazzo/a prova quotidianamente a raccapezzarsi facendo ciò che in passato io, voi e un numero strabocchevole di altri adulti abbiamo provato (almeno provato) a fare, ciascuno durante la nostra infanzia/adolescenza, e alcuni anche da adulti, ogniqualvolta ci siamo dedicati a aggiornare, riassetare, riorganizzare la nostra enciclopedia personale e a capire un po’ meglio come stavamo ragionando e cosa stavamo facendo”⁴. Per cui una conclusione si delinea: di filosofie virtuali è pieno il mondo, talmente pieno da far vacillare la stessa ragion d’essere del termine.

Anche nel recente contributo vertente “sulla nascita della filosofia e sui presocratici” (Grecchi 2024: 19–24) Il nostro Grecchi mostra di assumere che associare i cretesi di una certa epoca alla filosofia fa loro onore e ce li rende più interessanti. In secondo luogo, che è bello scrivere un libro sulla loro filosofia (virtuale). Bello perché permette a molti di scoprire che quella società fu ‘filosofica’ in un’accezione lodevole (Grecchi ci parla degli indizi in base ai quali è ragionevole presumere che quella società sia stata così pacifica da non circondare di mura nemmeno i centri di governo dell’isola e da non avere un vero sovrano potente o potentissimo), ma si insinua una domanda: da questi indicatori si deduce forse che la società governata dai faraoni, molto più gerarchizzata, non fu altrettanto ‘filosofica’? Perché in entrambi i casi parliamo di una filosofia rigorosamente virtuale. È ben possibile che la filosofia degli egizi non sia stata così bella come quella dei cretesi, ma non per questo cesserebbe di essere (di lasciar intravedere) un’altra filosofia virtuale⁵.

Si affaccia, per queste vie, il problema della filosofia ‘bella’. Forse che esistono filosofie belle e filosofie brutte? In effetti io non riesco a sottrarmi all’idea che quella dei presocratici sia stata una filosofia ‘bella’ (= interessante, perché creativa e molto libera), mentre dai tempi di Platone in poi l’universo della filosofia ha progressivamente perduto molte delle sue attrattive (almeno ai miei occhi) per almeno due ragioni: in primo luogo per il fatto che la filosofia si organizzò in scuole e prevede che tutti gli allievi di una certa scuola adottassero e sostenessero il ‘credo’ di quella scuola (dopodiché l’allievo X si ritrovava a essere e doversi professare cirenaico, peripatetico o epicureo in base alle scelte familiari, essendo stato mandato a ‘studiare’ nell’una o nell’altra istituzione scolastica); in secondo luogo perché la filosofia si è tendenzialmente identificata con la cultura superiore, dando vita a una cospicua rendita di posizione, quindi a forme anche vistose di ripiegamento. Aggiungo che il bello e il brutto hanno non poco di soggettivo e sanno essere ben asimmetrici rispetto al vero e al falso (nonché al bene e al male e ad altri possibili criteri di valutazione).

Migliori e peggiori sono le filosofie virtuali, ma non si può non dire la stessa cosa anche dalle filosofie e dai filosofi dichiarati. Certo, chi scrive un libro di storia della filosofia o una monografia su Plotino probabilmente preferisce gli apprezzamenti alle stroncature, e spesso evita di evidenziare sia gli apprezzamenti sia le ragioni per cui apprezza,

⁴ Queste righe figurano in Rossetti 2023b: 112.

⁵ Ricordo che anche Montagnino (2024) dedica una penetrante disamina alla filosofia virtuale.

sorvola o indugia nel rilevare questa o quella caratteristica. Dopodiché tutto si confonde un poco. Quanto meno diviene dubbia la scelta di dedicarsi alle filosofie ‘belle’ – per esempio al potenziale filosofico della società cretese di un certo tempo passato – e non a quelle ‘brutte’ (cosa che ho fatto pure io!).

Grecchi (2024) esce da queste secche opponendomi che la filosofia ha una sua precisa identità, ma la definizione da lui proposta⁶ si limita a delineare un ideale regolativo e non si vede come possa applicarsi a chi è filosofo solo in modo virtuale. Né si traduce in criteri per stabilire quanto io sono lontano o vicino alla “conoscenza della verità dell’intero”, se sono sulla buona o sulla cattiva strada quanto alla “realizzazione della buona vita degli esseri umani”, o se le mie riflessioni si possono considerare dialettiche. Del resto, io posso ben essere ora più lontano e ora più vicino alla “conoscenza della verità dell’intero” e tu puoi ben dirmelo; a mia volta io posso anche dichiararmi d’accordo con te, ma cosa cambierebbe? Chi potrebbe dirci se noi due siamo, quanto meno, sulla buona strada? Da queste considerazioni mi sembra di poter dedurre che non solo la definizione, ma anche altri riferimenti alla filosofia sono scatole vuote di rilevanza trascurabile. Malgrado l’adagio di McLuhan, “il medium è il messaggio”, mi sento di affermare che, nel caso della filosofia, ciò che viene comunicato conta (se conta) molto più della sua qualificazione come “filosofico”.

Oltretutto, filosofia, filosofo e la-filosofia-di sono nozioni nate in tempi e contesti diversi. Ai tempi di Socrate e Gorgia (seconda metà del V secolo) si registrò, forse nella sola Atene, una certa diffusione di *philosophia* e *philosophēin* senza che la nozione si precisasse e acquistasse importanza. La svolta è avvenuta con il *Fedone* platonico, dove la nozione si è venuta precisando e non solo ha acquistato importanza, ma si è corredata dell’ulteriore nozione di *philosophos*. Svolta importantissima, perché permette di chiedersi se un tale è o non è *philosophos* (in *Phd.* 61c spicca la domanda retorica su Eveno, “Ma come, lui non è un filosofo?”) e di elaborare idee su ciò che si richiede, o si potrebbe richiedere, per poter dire di una persona che “è *philosophos*” (in questo caso l’implicito è: “come me”).

La domanda retorica su Eveno mi sembra importante perché ha immediatamente associato la possibilità di attribuirsi o vedersi attribuire la qualifica di filosofo a un impegno del tutto impraticabile, un impegno a adoperarsi per morire che, nel *Fedone*, Socrate abilmente coniuga prendendo le distanze dagli insegnamenti di Filolao e facendo riferimento al suo proprio destino. Se proviamo ad accantonare le contingenze del passo in esame, notiamo che la qualifica di filosofo è al momento non attribuibile a nessuno fuorché a Socrate, circostanza molto utile per capire come mai, *nella vulgata*, Socrate sia passato per un filosofo, anzi per un grande, ineguagliabile filosofo. Platone proverà

⁶ “Come ho ampiamente riferito nel mio *Il concetto di philosophia dalle origini ad Aristotele* (...) la *philosophia* (...) risulta essere un sapere: (a) avente come contenuto la conoscenza della verità dell’intero; (b) avente come fine la realizzazione della buona vita degli esseri umani nel rispetto del cosmo naturale; (c) avente come metodo principale di analisi della realtà la dialettica, ossia il continuo domandare e rispondere fino a che non si giunge, sul problema esaminato, ad una soluzione condivisa” (Grecchi 2024: 23).

ad abbassare almeno un poco l’asticella nella *Repubblica*, peraltro evitando di precisare i requisiti che bisognerebbe avere per potersi attribuire (o meglio: per poter lui attribuire) l’ambita qualifica. Ma intanto, per queste vie, è decollata la fase di creazione del mito della filosofia che, sola, permette di farsi un’idea addirittura del ‘Mondo delle idee’. Sono, d’altronde, proprio queste le ‘vie’ in virtù delle quali, a molti di noi del XXI secolo, viene da pensare che la qualifica di filosofo introduca una forzatura e un ‘troppo’ non desiderabili, per cui ci troviamo molto più a nostro agio con la ben più umile qualifica di ‘professore di filosofia’. Intanto, però, ‘filosofia’, ‘*philosophie*’ e ‘filosofo’ sono saliti nell’empireo e si sono comunque esposti alla pubblica ammirazione per il fatto di aprire la porta all’idea che la filosofia si configuri come un territorio protetto, un ‘salotto buono’ o qualcosa di più, forse addirittura una sorta di tempio (con i suoi sacerdoti e, naturalmente, con qualche ‘Gran Sacerdote’). Si può ben dire, pertanto, che la comparsa dell’aggettivo abbia costituito un evento qualificante⁷.

Una quarta parola chiave, “la filosofia di X”, è entrata nell’uso solamente in età ellenistica, un buon secolo dopo la comparsa di “filosofo”, quando personaggi come Platone, Aristotele ed Epicuro erano ormai saliti nell’empireo. Questa quarta nozione evoca un pensiero strutturato, una riflessione evoluta, delle idee meditate che hanno preso forma, e soprattutto la decisione di proporle all’attenzione di una qualche opinione pubblica, nonché una certa affermazione dell’insegnamento dell’uno o dell’altro, in modo che avesse senso parlare della filosofia (o delle teorie) di costoro. Rimane tuttavia che la proliferazione delle “filosofie-di” e dei filosofi (fino a includervi Omero) è abbastanza recente.

Proprio Grecchi ha riportato il parere di non pochi specialisti – Balaudé, Laks, Centrone, Sassi – che in anni non lontani si sono spesi per riconoscere la filosoficità dei presocratici⁸ in contrapposizione (virtuale) al mio punto di vista e a difesa della legittimità di titoli come *Early Greek Philosophy* (Laks, Most 2016), *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Kirk, Raven, Schofield 1984) e *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophers* (Graham 2010). Con queste intitolazioni – e, per estensione, con altri titoli, come *Omero filosofo* (Lo Schiavo 1983), *Gorgia ontologo e metafisico* (Mazzara 1982) e *Gorgias’s Thought* (Di Iulio 2023) – si è finito per assumere che i presocratici (tutti? E in più Omero) sono assimilabili a dei filosofi professionali, portatori di vere e proprie teorie filosofiche. Con ciò, si è dato vita a un piano inclinato che personalmente non mi entusiasma. Di Iulio, per esempio, nei titoli che ha attribuito a singoli capitoli, associa Gorgia a nozioni come epistemologia, scetticismo, fondazionalismo, epistemologia della persuasione e filosofia del linguaggio prendendosi, presumo, delle libertà eccessive. Per l’appunto i presocratici sono solo parzialmente (o molto parzialmente) noti ed è forte la tentazione di ricorrere a filosofemi moderni per capire meglio, ma è un po’ come quando il sapere matematico di altre epoche viene riscritto ricorrendo a simboli matematici moderni e senza rendere

⁷ Ho l’impressione che la sua importanza non venga ancora riconosciuta meno se ne tace nel mio libro del 2015, in Moore (2020) e in Grecchi (2023).

⁸ Grecchi 2024: 22–23.

conto di quanto diversi sono i mezzi espressivi di cui disponiamo noi oggi e quelli di cui si poteva disporre X centinaia o migliaia di anni fa.

Nel caso specifico, chi parla di filosofia presocratica è sempre sul punto di attribuire a questi antichi una terminologia incongrua e la capacità di prestare attenzione a specifiche di cui non ebbero in alcun modo idea. Appare pertanto desiderabile farne a meno e ricorrere a mezzi non così sovraccarichi di storia. Io per esempio non parlerei mai di 'metafisica platonica' (oppure aristotelica), visto che il termine è entrato nell'uso solo diversi secoli più tardi e in contesti lontanissimi dal mondo nel quale si trovarono immersi quei due. Analogamente, nel trattare di Omero ho cercato di cogliere il nuovo che sembrava affiorare senza indulgere in espressioni, come partito filo-troiano o anche pluralismo, che si prestavano a essere considerate troppo legate al nostro mondo. Per queste ragioni ritengo di dover mantenere il punto di dissenso da Grecchi ed anzi auspicare che egli stesso eviti espressioni suscettibili di essere considerate anacronistiche⁹. Dopotutto, i cretesi di circa tremila anni fa non avranno mancato di cercare e trovare nella loro lingua le parole con cui denominare aspetti diversi della loro società, così come altri avranno fatto nel loro paese, e anche noi facciamo tuttora.

⁹ Vedo che Grecchi parla volentieri di filosofi e filosofie "in potenza" e ricorre non meno volentieri all'immagine del seme che diverrà albero, e vorrei capire se c'è differenza rispetto alla filosofia virtuale che son venuto evocando io. Specialmente la differenza tra virtuale e potenziale è ben difficile da individuare.

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What Do We Mean by “Philosophy”?

Che cosa intendere per “filosofia”? In dialogo con Livio Rossetti

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Livio Rossetti, nel suo precedente articolo intitolato *Che cosa intendiamo per “filosofia”?* ha preso in carico, con approccio dialettico, alcune mie posizioni sulle origini e sulla definizione della filosofia, rispondendo a riflessioni da me elaborate soprattutto in due libri (Grecchi 2022; 2023), nonché in un articolo pubblicato nello scorso numero della rivista *Peitho* (Grecchi 2024). L'amico Livio ha espresso in merito il proprio dissenso, ponendo in essere molteplici interessanti problematizzazioni. Si tratta di una dissonanza che può a mio avviso risultare fruttuosa, per cui proverò, per quanto in maniera sintetica, a prolungare questo dialogo, per il quale lo ringrazio.

Il punto centrale della questione mi pare si snodi sul significato da attribuire al termine *philosophia*. Nei miei libri poc'anzi citati, cercando di mettere a fattore comune gli elementi che la parola veicola nelle opere di Platone e Aristotele – ovvero quando essa appare per la prima volta, nella cultura greca, in un gran numero di occorrenze –, la *philosophia* si presenta come un sapere avente: (a) come contenuto la conoscenza della verità dell'intero, articolato in parti; (b) come fine la realizzazione della buona vita degli esseri umani; (c) come metodo principale di analisi della realtà la dialettica. Nell'articolo cui Rossetti principalmente si riferisce (Grecchi 2024), composto proprio – in un numero monografico della rivista a lui dedicato – per confrontarmi con le sue tesi, invitavo il nostro studioso a prendere posizione su questo tema, dato che egli è fra i maggiori anti-

chisti al mondo ad essersi occupato ampiamente della nascita della filosofia. Lo esortavo, in particolare, a dire se concorda con la definizione da me proposta, oppure se ritiene che altra sia la definizione più corretta della filosofia, oppure ancora se considera la filosofia non definibile e, in tal caso, perché. Ritengo infatti che qualunque discorso sulla filosofia, effettuato senza chiarire bene – il che si può fare, a mio aristotelico avviso, solo giungendo ad una definizione – che cosa si intende per filosofia, sia poco dirimente.

Detto questo, a quanto almeno comprendo, nel presente articolo Rossetti non ha risposto in modo univoco al mio invito. Può darsi, tuttavia, che mi sbagli. Può infatti essere che, problematizzando ulteriormente la questione, egli affermi in sostanza che la filosofia non è unitariamente definibile, poiché caratterizzata da una molteplicità di aspetti, approcci, caratterizzazioni tali da non essere riconducibili ad un'unica definizione. Si può in effetti trattare, a suo avviso, solo di generiche “filosofie”, non definire specificamente la “filosofia”.

Il punto di discordanza tra me e Rossetti sta proprio qui. Non è possibile infatti, a mio avviso, parlare in maniera determinata di “filosofie” senza attribuire prima un significato determinato al termine “filosofia”, così come non è possibile parlare in maniera determinata di “medioevi” senza attribuire prima un significato determinato al termine “medioevo”, o parlare di cristianesimi senza delineare prima un significato di “cristianesimo”, o parlare di “marxismi” senza prima definire il “marxismo”, e così via. Per parlare in maniera sensata al plurale, insomma – cosa che pure l'ermeneutica contemporanea tende sempre più spesso a fare –, occorre prima saper parlare al singolare. Per potere, cioè, articolare le molteplici declinazioni di un termine (nella fattispecie, “le filosofie”), occorre innanzitutto avere definito il significato di quel termine (nella fattispecie, “la filosofia”). Senza questo chiarimento preliminare, ogni discorso in merito rischia, ad avviso di chi scrive, di muoversi in maniera incerta.

Sulla nascita della filosofia, peraltro, come sottolineavo in Grecchi (2024), la tesi più forte di Rossetti (2015), sostenente proprio la necessità di distinguere fra un significato generico, ossia virtuale, della filosofia, ed un significato specifico, ossia tecnico, della medesima – delineato per la prima volta da Platone e Aristotele –, mi trova pienamente in accordo. Non capisco, però, per quale motivo il Nostro appaia poi così reticente nel delineare tale significato specifico. Così facendo, infatti, gli rimane da analizzare soltanto il significato generico, ossia gli restano tra le mani solo le varie “filosofie virtuali”, locuzione che del resto costituisce, come egli stesso afferma, la parola chiave del suo discorso interpretativo.

Ebbene, chiediamoci allora: cosa intende Rossetti con “filosofie virtuali”? Egli ricomprende, con questa espressione, tutti i *logoi* di coloro “cui sia accaduto di fermarsi a riflettere (...) sul proprio vissuto”. A suo avviso, infatti, sono “filosofie” tutti i discorsi “dei comuni mortali, quindi di tutti coloro che sono vissuti, che vivono o che vivranno da qualche parte”, anche se ignari della filosofia costituitasi nel suo specifico significato greco.

La tesi di Rossetti suscita, tuttavia, qualche perplessità. Chiedo in merito all'amico Livio: tutti questi esseri umani devono essere considerati “filosofi” anche se non ricerca-

no la verità dell'intero articolato in parti? Devono esserlo anche se non si pongono come fine la buona vita degli esseri umani? Devono esserlo anche se si sottraggono al confronto dialettico, ossia al metodo del domandare e del rispondere? Senza rapportarsi infatti almeno a questi temi essenziali, a mio avviso, il significato generico di “filosofia”, assunto come riferimento dal nostro studioso, risulta davvero troppo generico, quindi indeterminato, per poter essere utilizzato.

E' vero, come ricorda Rossetti, che anche io ho parlato di una “filosofia prima della filosofia”, in merito alla cultura minoica della Creta palaziale. L'ho fatto però non in maniera generica, bensì in base ad una specifica definizione di filosofia – quella precedentemente riportata –, mostrando come nella cultura minoica ci fu in maniera implicita, in base agli argomenti riportati in Grecchi (2022), ciò che nella cultura classica ci fu poi in maniera esplicita. Nel titolo del libro, la “filosofia” prima della filosofia è proprio questa “filosofia in potenza”, tale in quanto appunto anticipa, come in certo senso fanno il seme e le radici, la piantina cresciuta poi in epoca presocratica e compiutamente formatasi in epoca classica, ossia la “filosofia in atto”. Il significato con cui ho utilizzato il termine, per quanto analogico – come nel libro chiarisco fin dall'inizio –, è dunque non generico, ma specifico. Anche sul piano storico, inoltre, risulta innegabile che la cultura minoica sta alla base della civiltà micenea, la quale sta alla base dell'epica omerica, la quale sta alla base (per quanto in maniera oppositiva, come accade, in misura maggiore o minore, per tutti i processi di derivazione culturale) della scienza presocratica, la quale sta alla base della filosofia classica, evidenziando, a mio avviso, un sostanziale sviluppo del fenomeno culturale dalla potenza all'atto.

La cosa curiosa è che Rossetti, il quale mi imputa, nella fattispecie, un utilizzo troppo generico del termine “filosofia”, pratica lo stesso utilizzo generico parlando di “filosofie virtuali”, ossia, come detto, ritenendo miliardi di esseri umani “tutti filosofi”. Su questo punto si focalizza infatti il nostro dissenso. Per me furono filosofi in senso specifico, in base alla definizione fornita, in primo luogo Platone e Aristotele, che effettuarono un uso esplicito molto consapevole del termine. Furono inoltre filosofi in senso specifico, per quanto solo in maniera implicita, in quanto non usarono il termine (in base almeno allo scarno materiale testuale rivenuto), molti socratici e presocratici, nonché coloro che strutturarono la cultura minoica. Risulta invece per me errato sostenere, a differenza di quanto ritiene l'amico Livio, che gli esseri umani esistiti siano stati “tutti filosofi”. Tale tesi si basa infatti su un significato troppo generico del termine, producendo l'erroneo risultato in base a cui, nel caso gli esseri umani fossero davvero stati genericamente “tutti filosofi”, non vi sarebbe stato specificamente “nessun filosofo” (*todos caballeros, ningun caballero*).

Un conto, in sostanza, è dire in che modo, ossia con quali determinazioni, la filosofia si è presentata nella storia umana, in base ad uno specifico significato di “filosofia” univocamente definito. Un altro conto è parlare genericamente di “filosofie”, dicendo che sono tali tutti i pensieri di tutte le persone sulla vita, sulla morte, sul mondo, ecc., come appunto fa Rossetti parlando di “filosofie virtuali”. Se non distinguiamo bene i due significati del termine, ma soprattutto se non chiariamo il primo, il rischio, a mio avviso, è quello

di far passare l'idea, errata, secondo cui non esiste alcuna essenza specifica della filosofia, come se Platone e Aristotele non avessero esplicitato il concetto in senso tecnico (mentre, invece, lo hanno fatto: Grecchi 2023).

Rossetti, nel suo articolo, apporta molte intelligenti problematizzazioni della questione. Esse, tuttavia, sempre a mio modo di vedere, non argomentano in modo adeguato la sua tesi implicita di una sostanziale impossibilità di definire la filosofia, che infatti non viene da lui esplicitata. Esplicitare, del resto, che la filosofia è indefinibile richiederebbe almeno il rispondere – metodo dialettico – alla preliminare istanza teoretica circa il che cosa, nella realtà, sia indefinibile, e perché, nonché come sia possibile anche solo parlare di un concetto indefinibile, dato che non si sa nemmeno bene cosa significhi. Rimanere reticenti su questi temi genera inevitabilmente problemi.

Rossetti afferma in merito che, se si considera “filosofica” la cultura minoica, allora lo può essere “altrettanto” la civiltà gerarchizzata dei faraoni dell'antico Egitto, “o una qualunque altra”. La cultura minoica, tuttavia, come ricordato, non è per me “filosofica” in senso generico, ma in senso specifico, in quanto anticipa, in base all'analisi storico-culturale da me effettuata, contenuti, finalità e metodi della filosofia classica, ossia della filosofia compiutamente formata. La civiltà dei faraoni dell'antico Egitto invece, almeno in base alle mie conoscenze, non anticipò tali elementi.

Mi si potrebbe certo ribattere che non ne so abbastanza dell'antico Egitto per affermare o negare ciò, ma il fulcro della questione non sta qui. Il punto focale sta nel fatto che per parlare di filosofia in modo determinato occorre specificare cosa si intenda per filosofia, ossia si deve esplicitare una definizione articolata della filosofia, ed argomentarla. Questo non viene fatto da Rossetti, né in questa sede né nei suoi due libri principali sull'argomento (Rossetti 2015; 2024), pur ricchi di notazioni illuminanti, per le quali non gli si sarà mai abbastanza grati.

Per concludere, devo aggiungere di non ritenere corretta la tesi del nostro secondo cui la definizione di filosofia da me proposta, strettamente derivata dall'opera di Platone e Aristotele, può essere inquadrata come un kantiano “ideale regolativo”, in quanto tale scarsamente applicabile sul piano pratico. Tale definizione, in realtà, risulta inapplicabile soltanto alle “filosofie virtuali” di cui parla Rossetti, ma, a mio avviso, a causa loro, ovvero in quanto esse sono troppo generiche, ossia indeterminate, per poter essere, appunto, determinabili come filosofie.

Non posso infine concordare con Rossetti nemmeno quando afferma che “non solo la definizione, ma anche altri riferimenti alla filosofia sono scatole vuote di rilevanza trascurabile”, se si tratta di comprendere cosa sia la filosofia. La definizione, atto di chiarezza, rappresenta invece, a mio avviso, il maggiore gesto di “onestà” del filosofo, per cui dovrebbe sempre, laddove possibile, essere ricercata, in quanto si rivela importante per il lavoro dialettico, propriamente filosofico. Ciò non mi impedisce, in ogni caso, di concordare con l'amico Livio quando sostiene che, “nel caso della filosofia, ciò che viene comunicato conta (se conta) molto più della sua qualificazione come filosofico”.

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What is Meant by “Philosophy”? A Dialogue with Livio Rossetti

