

Michalis Tegos

How does the *Sophist* reply to the *Parmenides*? Or,
Why the One is not among the *Megista Gene**

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ABSTRACT. This paper explores the relation of the *Sophist* to the *Parmenides*: in what ways the *Sophist* responds to the questions, aporias and demands raised in the *Parmenides*. It aims to show how the problems encountered in the first part and the categories used in the second part of the *Parmenides*, relate to the solutions proposed in the *Sophist*. The *Parmenides* has been interpreted in various ways: as a logical exercise and as a theory about gods, even as an example of perfect symmetry in impossibility. It has been acclaimed as the best collection of antinomies ever produced, but also, as an impossible map sketching how the theory of forms should not be thought. Its purpose, a parody, or training, a pedagogic exercise necessary for the proper way to truth. Not, however, in order to discard forms, but, on the contrary, to affirm their necessity and to refine them, lest we end up abandoning forms and, with them, the possibility of dialectic and Philosophy. Throughout the *Parmenides*, the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, we are led through a complex argumentative and dramatic strategy to the refutation of the Eleatic doctrine and the mature ontology of the *Timaeus*. We shall seek to show that the sections on *dunamis*, the *megista gene* and the community of forms that follow the Gigantomachia episode about *ousia* in the *Sophist*, propose a way out of the aporias of participation and the 'greatest difficulty' of the *Parmenides*, a way to salvage the theory of forms, and, with them, the possibility of knowledge, logos and Philosophy altogether.

KEYWORDS: the *Sophist*, the *Parmenides*, *dunamis*, *megista gene*.

© M. Tegos (Athens). michalistegos@yahoo.gr. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Платоновские исследования / Platonic Investigations 11.2 (2019)

DOI: 10.25985/PI.10.2.02

* A shorter version of this paper was presented at the XII Symposium Platonicum in Paris, 16 July 2019.

I

1. Introduction

The first part of the *Parmenides* famously raises several problems with regards to forms and participation, yet it also makes clear the case for the necessity of forms, in order for the possibility of dialectics, for *logoi* and *logos*, for Philosophy, to be saved. These problems culminate in the ‘greatest difficulty’, the total separation of our world and the world of gods, the unknowability of forms and its devastating consequences for *logos*.

Many commentators have drawn attention to the layout of the categories employed in the second part of the dialogue by Parmenides, to perform the exercise of dialectic on his own doctrine of the One. When seen in the light of the posterior list of the *megista gene* in the *Sophist*, it may provide significant clues pointing to a way out of the aporetic ending of the dialogue.

Most of these clues are to be found in the *Sophist*, in the Gigantomachia episode (246a–249d) and the definition of being as *dunamis*. The relation between soul and *ousia*, the movement of knowledge, the soul knowing *ousia*, is configured as a relation of *dunamis*, as the capacity to act and suffer; the soul knows, and *ousia* is known. To the gods, the Stranger responds that being must move enough to be known, since knowing is a form of acting and suffering — of *dunamis*. Otherwise being, the one, could not be known, and moreover, there could be no contact between the two worlds; we are back to the greatest difficulty of the *Parmenides*: the total destruction of the possibility of *διαλέγεσθαι δύναμις* and Philosophy altogether. To the giants, the answer is that it must stand still enough to be minimally known, since knowledge is knowledge of something enduring — stable, *αεί*, a proposition about something that, while fleeting, must have a solid, communicable meaning, if we are to say and know anything about anything at all.

In the relation between soul and *ousia*, both movement and rest are involved. For if *ousia* only moved, we would have no stable knowledge, nowhere to stand, as even the propositions of language would have al-

ready slipped away. Having no knowledge of the αἰὲ ὄν, of something stable, we could know nothing and thus say nothing of either being or *ousia*. Equally, if *ousia* was only in rest, we could not know anything, as we would not be able to be affected by being nor affect it, since knowing is a form of acting and suffering. There would be no connection between the two worlds and we would fall back into the greatest difficulty.

In the *Sophist*, logos was born in the soul from the interconnection and weaving of ideas, κοινωνία καὶ συμπλοκή τῶν εἰδῶν. Plato says that to posit the whole as lacking νοῦς, life and movement, as if it stands σεμνὸν καὶ ἅγιον, solemn and sacred, knowing nothing, would be a great mistake, and fundamentally so, since it would completely destroy the possibility of Philosophy and logos in general. If there is no movement, there is no νοεῖν at all. And if everything moves, it is impossible to know anything at all, as knowledge is knowledge of the αἰὲ ὄν, of that which always is. The supposition that everything communicates with everything is equally untenable, for then we would know everything; all things would be reduced to the same. As is the assumption that nothing communicates, for, again, then we could know nothing.

The definition of being as *dunamis*, radical as it is, appears at various stages of the dialogue to be treated as provisional. It is used to bridge the positions of giants and gods, materialists and idealists, but in so doing accomplishes much more. *Dunamis* reveals both movement and rest to be necessary conditions for the knowledge of *ousia* and clears the way not only to the ‘Parricide’ and the existence of non-being, but also from the non-dialectical pre-Socratic couple of movement and rest, to the dialectical couple of the Same and the Other — the kernel of the *megista gene* that dominates Late Platonism, as in the *Timaeus*. In this move, Plato advances beyond the Eleatic doctrine and the stories of his predecessors about the nature and number of being. This surpassing, through the persona of the Eleatic Stranger, we shall argue, represents the surpassing and parricide of Parmenides, of Eleatic dialectics, a refutation of the thesis of the One itself.

Indeed, the Stranger in the *Sophist* encourages us to disobey the pa-

ternal advice not to stray into non-being, never to admit that things that are not exist: we should rather disjunct the whole from the One and affirm the existence of non-being, in the form of being of difference. However, the steps building up to this move have been prepared meticulously throughout the dialogue — arguably, throughout the whole work of Plato, but more specifically, in the *Parmenides*, the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, comprising the theoretical core concerning the issue of the One, the whole, movement and rest, being and logos.

Responding to the greatest difficulty, the stakes are high; if there is no relation between the world of gods, of forms and our own, if the One is, then we can know nothing. In other words, either the One is, or there are forms and knowledge, *dunamis*, causality and communication between soul and *ousia*, between forms themselves. If there are no forms, if they exist but are isolated or if we have no access to them, no Philosophy, no logos is possible. What occurs/resonates between the two dialogues, may be seen as a devastating critique of Eleatic dialectics — not in order to discard forms, but on the contrary, to affirm their necessity and the correct way of their articulation, which if not properly understood, and exercised, may lead to the abandonment of forms, of dialectic and of Philosophy altogether: a total ruin of thought.

Can the *megista gene* be a random list from which the One is absent? Is the One to be considered as a form at all? We shall argue that this complex and fragmented, disparate between dialogues, attack on the Eleatic doctrine, is reflected and culminated in the *Sophist*: in the Parricide and in the reasons for which the One does not figure in the list of the *megista gene*.

2. The Parmenides

The *Parmenides* has been interpreted as a logical exercise and as a theory about gods (Proclus), even as an example of perfect symmetry in impossibility. It has been acclaimed as the best collection of antinomies ever produced (Russell), or as a guide on how the theory of forms should not be thought. Its purpose, a parody, or training, a pedagogic exercise necessary for the proper way to truth. Not, however,

in order to discard forms, but, on the contrary, to affirm their necessity and to refine them, lest we end up abandoning forms and, with them, the possibility of Philosophy altogether.

It has been hailed as a bewildering aesthetic masterpiece, the most demanding and overwhelming exercise in abstraction, in forms, in dialectic. Of equal weight are the dramaturgy and the levels of interpretation (frames), the removal, Plato inserting a distance at several levels: temporal (a meeting that occurred several years ago), fictional (a meeting which probably never happened), logical (we are to believe that Cephalus cites this from Pythodorus' narration of the whole exercise to Antiphon, from memory). But this removal has added to the proliferation of explanations, a notable example being Proclus, for whom these characters represent daemons of the lower order, aiding, mediating the ascending exercise towards the One.¹

Accordingly, different types of interpretations have been recently proposed for the exercise, based on what is discussed and what conclusions are found acceptable or otherwise. Gill, for example, defines the following five groups of interpretations: (1) everything is a parody, (2) all or most conclusions are acceptable discussing different Ones, (3) all or most are acceptable discussing the same One, (4) all are acceptable discussing the same One — all frame a cosmological argument, (5) all are unacceptable — an antinomy. Brisson, on the other hand, divides the interpretations into four areas: logic, ontology, theology, and cosmology. We shall return to this point in the end of this paper.²

One should also emphasize the importance of the *Parmenides* and its link to the *Sophist* as essential for the Neoplatonists: Plotinus deals with the *megista gene*, Proclus sees a crucial link between the second hypothesis/deduction and the criticism of Eleatic monism.³

Is the *Parmenides* aporetic? impossible? contradictory? If so, which is the 'primal contradiction'; is there overdetermination? The One and

¹ See Procl. *In Prm.* I for the importance of this removal, this distancing. The frames are not only dramatic, some stress the necessity of mediation while others, the importance of the aleatory nature of the transmission.

² Cf. Gill 2014 and Brisson 2019.

³ Plot. *Enn.* VI.2; Procl. *Theol. Plat.* III.20–21; see also Notomi 1999: 4.

the others: One and multiple, whole and parts, being and logos. The One is, in the work of Plato, divided. Weary of any unity, in the *Republic*, Socrates says every city is at least two cities (422e, 551d).

Three points, in order to proceed:

- The ambiguous status of the One: it is and it is not. The famous problem of the two conclusions: ‘if the one is not nothing is’ (*Prm.* 166bc), and ‘the One is and is not’ (166c), and their apparent symmetry.
- The *Parmenides* is among other things an exercise in dialectical thinking. The word γυμνασία occurs several times between 135d–136c; an exercise that is necessary, if truth is not to escape one, and rewarding with a complete and perfect view of the truth (τελέως γυμνασάμενος κυρίως διόψεσθαι τὸ ἀληθές, 136c).
- In this dialogue, Parmenides is in the position of the master, confronting the theory of forms with several obstacles and indicating the way to surmount them, proposing the dialectical exercise. If philosophy, logoi and knowledge are to be of any worth at all, forms must be saved, that is to say reformed, reworked to be able to respond to these aporias. The greatest of these is, of course, what is known as the greatest difficulty, the total separation and unknowability of the world of forms, the world of gods and the world of men (130a–135e).

3. The Theory of Forms and Its Critique

A mention by Socrates in the *Sophist* (217c) of the encounter with old Parmenides signals (also in the *Theaetetus*, 183e–184a) that the *Sophist* is posterior and will attempt to refute the dialectic deployed or the aporias reached in the *Parmenides*, which if successful, completely destroy the possibility of διαλέγεσθαι δύναμις, philosophy and logos in general.

Most commentators agree that the two greatest obstacles raised against the theory of forms in the *Parmenides* are the third man argument, popularised by Aristotle as a valid critique, and the greatest difficulty. It seems, however, and it is one of the main consequences of our argumentation, that once the greatest difficulty is solved, the

third man argument, as well as the whole theory of separate and immobile forms, collapse. The first part of the dialogue introduces several issues: the whole and parts dilemma (131a); the light, the day and the sail (131c); forms in themselves, the idea of size, the size of size, the third man argument (131c–131e); the model and copy analogy (132d); the forms of mastery and slavery, the mastery of slavery as different from the mastery of slaves (133de). These accumulate in the following devastating proposition: if there is no connection between the forms and us but only the connections between forms themselves, no mastery and no knowledge is possible. God who is the absolute master and knower, is not (134d–135a):

Παρμενίδης. Οὐκοῦν εἰ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀκριβεστάτη δεσποτεία καὶ αὕτη ἡ ἀκριβεστάτη ἐπιστήμη, οὐτ' ἂν ἡ δεσποτεία ἢ ἐκείνων ἡμῶν ποτὲ ἂν δεσπόσειεν, οὐτ' ἂν [134e] ἐπιστήμη ἡμᾶς γνοίη οὐδέ τι ἄλλο τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν, ἀλλὰ ὁμοίως ἡμεῖς τε ἐκείνων οὐκ ἄρχομεν τῇ παρ' ἡμῖν ἀρχῇ οὐδὲ γινώσκομεν τοῦ θείου οὐδὲν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ἐπιστήμῃ, ἐκείνοι τε αὐτὰ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον οὔτε δεσπότηαι ἡμῶν εἰσὶν οὔτε γινώσκουσι τὰ ἀνθρώπεια πράγματα θεοὶ ὄντες. Σωκράτης. Ἀλλὰ μὴ λίαν, ἔφη, <ῆ> θαυμαστός ὁ λόγος, εἴ τις τὸν θεὸν ἀποστερήσει τοῦ εἰδέναι.

PARMENIDES. Then if this most perfect mastership and this most accurate knowledge are with God, his mastership can never rule us, nor [134e] his knowledge know us or anything of our world; we do not rule the gods with our authority, nor do we know anything of the divine with our knowledge, and by the same reasoning, they likewise, being gods, are not our masters and have no knowledge of human affairs. SOCRATES. But surely this, said he, is a most amazing argument, if it makes us deprive God of knowledge.⁴

With regards to the whole and parts, in the *Parmenides*, being-one is a whole with two parts, being and one, as the whole is what is one and has parts (142d). In the *Theaetetus*, we see the difference between the whole and all (τὸ ὅλον τε καὶ πᾶν, 205a): the whole as a collection of parts, the whole, being what is one and has parts, of which none are

⁴ Trans. by Harold North Fowler.

absent, whereas the all, the truly one, is indivisible (201a–205a). Finally, in the *Sophist*, the whole is indivisible — it is either ‘truly one’ or has parts. In the Parricide episode (241de, the refutation of Parmenides’ ἐν τὸ πᾶν), as we shall see, the one is dissociated from the whole, the whole is more than one.

In the Parricide passage, the one is found to be different from the whole, opening the way to acknowledging a being of non-being. The Stranger argues that the one and the name of the one are two things, thus when speaking of being-one (ἐν τὸ πᾶν), we only utter the one of the name. The steps leading up to this are, firstly, the critique of monism as self-refuting, showing that being and the name of being, the one and the name of the one are two things, i.e. the difference between numerical and speculative monism. Secondly, there is the disjunction of the one and the whole (*Sph.* 243e–245e, see also the reference to the sphere as all round, thus having topological coordinates or parts, 244e). Being can either be whole or one, and since it is necessarily whole, as everything that was made was made whole (245d), it is not one. The whole/all is more than one (245b), so either being is devoid of being or the one is solely the one of the name (244d).

The second great couple operating in the argument is that of movement and rest, which dominates, in the form of a struggle, both the Gigantomachia about *ousia* in the *Sophist* and the *Theaetetus*. After the ‘secret doctrine’ of the fluxists (*Tht.* 156a), Plato describes a vivid image of the palaestra and the game of *διελκυστίνδα*, an obstinate tug-of-war under the Trojan wall (181ab). It seems, there is no exit from this couple, as we have indicated what is at stake from the beginning: whether everything is still or everything moves, either way we could know nothing. In the *Theaetetus*, nothing is one or invariable. We are led to an *aporia* that is both philosophical and dramatic (we shall return to this toward the end). In the *Sophist*, however, the definition of being as *dunamis* serves to bypass precisely this deadlock. As is shown in the ‘Children’s plea’ and the following section on the dialectician’s task, there is a science, or knowledge, and expertise, of forms which can and which cannot communicate (253bc). The Stranger, while looking for

the sophist, famously stumbles on the philosopher and the ‘science of free men’.

We are conducted from the opposition of movement and rest, which seems non-dialectical (the opposites do not communicate, or participate in each other), to the dialectical couple (participating in each other) of identity and difference, the Same and the Other of the later Platonic phase, operating in the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus*. But are movement and rest truly opposites? Or are all of the *megista gene* traversed by the ‘dialecticity of the dialectic’, being and difference, a *dunamis* to act and suffer, to know and be known, and thus are all of them necessarily in movement, even, what would appear most contradictory, the form of rest?⁵

4. The Megista Gene

In the *Sophist*, logos is born, in us, from the interconnection of forms, that are the means by which the soul cognizes *ousia*; forms communicate and move. However, not all forms can mix with all the other forms. As we have seen above, the assumption that none communicates with none is untenable, for we would be able to know nothing, or we could say nothing. Neither can all communicate indiscriminately with all; for again, we could say anything.

To divide everything from everything (the greatest difficulty of the *Parmenides*), would be the utter obliteration of any discourse or reason, since logos was born in us from the interconnection of ideas (*Sph.* 259e); and if we are deprived of reason, of logos, we are deprived, more gravely, of Philosophy. That nothing communicates is untenable – we would know nothing. That everything communicates is equally untenable – all things would be reduced to the same, but movement and rest are opposites. Only the third option, that some communicate and some do not is possible (*Sph.* 259de):

Ξένος. Καὶ γάρ, ὦ ἀγαθέ, τό γε πᾶν ἀπὸ παντὸς ἐπιχειρεῖν [259e]
ἀποχωρίζειν ἄλλως τε οὐκ ἐμμελές καὶ δὴ καὶ παντάπασιν ἀμούσου
τινὸς καὶ ἀφιλοσόφου.

⁵ See Gill, Ryan 1996 and Gill 2012: 214 for further elaboration.

Θεαίτητος. Τί δή;

Ξένος. Τελεωτάτη πάντων λόγων ἐστὶν ἀφάνισις τὸ διαλύειν ἕκαστον ἀπὸ πάντων· διὰ γὰρ τὴν ἀλλήλων τῶν εἰδῶν συμπλοκὴν ὁ λόγος γέγονεν ἡμῖν.

STRANGER. For certainly, my friend, the attempt to separate everything from everything else is not only not in good taste but also [259e] shows that a man is utterly uncultivated and unphilosophical.

THEAETETUS. Why so?

STRANGER. The complete separation of each thing from all is the utterly final obliteration of all discourse. For our power of discourse is derived from the interweaving of the classes or ideas with one another.⁵

Identity and difference are thus introduced to clarify the relation of opposites, of movement and rest, to being, to aid and guide in bringing about the operations of mixing in a correct way, appropriate to the one who has mastered this most difficult, yet primary and exceptional among the sciences, science of free men (*Sph.* 253bc), the dialectic. Plato accomplishes here a very significant step forward. As we have mentioned, we have been moving within the pre-Socratic oppositions between One and Multiple (see Ionian and Sicilian Muses, 242c, and the Parricide, 241d), and movement and rest (the Gigantomachia, 246a–249d). In responding at once to Parmenides, Empedocles and Heraclitus, and surpassing the oppositions handed down to him, Plato uncovers the kernel of his dialectical matrix – the *megista gene*, the dialectical couple of identity and difference. We have, within the *Sophist*, via the definition of being as *dunamis* (247e), the movement of Plato towards the late dialectic of the Same and Other that operates in the *Timaeus* and links to the *Philebus*.

Movement and rest both are, both participate in being. Movement is, and rest is, but movement is not rest. Movement and rest are opposites; both participate in being, so neither is being, nor do they participate in each other. Being must be a third kind, alongside movement and rest, in which both participate. The assumption that they are opposites on all levels is to be revisited, as we shall see.

⁵ *Sph.* 259de. Trans. by H.N. Fowler. For further elaboration see Mouzala 2019.

Most commentators agree that the definition of being as *dunamis* serves to turn the discussion from the opposition of corporeal and incorporeal to the couple of movement and rest (still opposites). It also serves to expose, therefrom, the true kernel of dialectic, which is the (dialectical) couple of identity and difference. But the definition of being as *dunamis* is thus neither entirely provisional nor naive; it reveals both movement and rest to be necessary conditions for the being of knowledge, of logos and *legein*, which is the way the soul cognizes *ousia*. Neither movement nor rest can, on their own, explain what being is. Being is δύναμις κοινωνίας (*Sph.* 251e), capacity/possibility of participation and being-together.

This is best exemplified in the Children's plea for reconciliation of the two camps; the child, when confronted with a choice, wants both at once. Thus, as children that were told stories (see *Gigantomachia*), the Stranger exclaims: like children we shall respond (*Sph.* 249cd):

Ξένος. Τῷ δὴ φιλοσόφῳ... ὡς ἔοικεν, ἀνάγκη διὰ ταῦτα μήτε τῶν ἐν ἧ καὶ τὰ πολλὰ [249d] εἶδη λεγόντων τὸ πᾶν ἐστηκὸς ἀποδέχεσθαι, τῶν τε αὖ πανταχῆ τὸ ὄν κινούντων μηδὲ τὸ παράπαν ἀκούειν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν τῶν παιδῶν εὐχήν, ὅσα ἀκίνητα καὶ κεινημένα, τὸ ὄν τε καὶ τὸ πᾶν συναμφότερα λέγειν.

STRANGER. Then the philosopher... must necessarily, as it seems, because of them refuse to accept the theory of those who say the universe is at rest, whether as a unity or in many [249d] forms, and must also refuse utterly to listen to those who say that being is universal motion; he must quote the children's prayer, "all things immovable and in motion," and must say that being and the universe consist of both.⁶

Being and all, τὸ πᾶν, are all things unchanged and changed, both at once.⁷ 'It seems we have effectively captured being with logoi', in a definition, ἐπιεικῶς ἤδη φαινόμεθα περιειληφέναι τῷ λόγῳ τὸ ὄν (249d) — in truth, the Stranger will go on to explain the greatest of difficulties

⁶ Trans. by H.N. Fowler.

⁷ See Gill, Ryan 1996; Gill 2012: 98–100, 227–244 for the different renderings and the importance of this crucial passage, the 'reconciliation' of Parmenides and Heraclitus, for the Platonic project.

and aporias about being, now that we think to have said something about it. We are no different from the ones that posit the two, a pair of opposites like hot and cold. The discussion will go into the territory of non-being, where the true parricide will take place.

Identity and difference are thus introduced to clarify the relation between them (movement and rest) and being: which kinds can communicate with which and which cannot. Identity and difference, the Same and the Other: some genera, like being and identity, can be said καθ' αὐτά and πρὸς ἄλλα, in relation to themselves and in relation to the others, in an absolute and in a relative sense, can be used to explain the other genera; rest is sameness to itself, rest is being in identity, movement is difference from itself, movement is being in difference. Thus being, the αἰὶ ὄν, *ousia* for the gods, is eternally same to itself, whereas becoming, the sensible, genesis, the *ousia* of the giants, is always different from itself.

Difference can only be said πρὸς ἄλλα, in a relative sense. Difference can only be conceived as a relation, difference of, in relation to something else. Hence, all kinds are different from each other, yet same to themselves; and we have communicable meaning. No genus slides into the other. In movement, in communication with other forms, yet in rest, self-sameness, being is said, as Aristotle perhaps would agree, in many ways. Different uses of the 'is' are explored by Plato – existence, identity, copula, predication.⁸ That is to say, existence is not the same as identity, not everything that is *is* the same. Thus, we have the all-pervasiveness and communicability of some genera, their priority and independence over and above the others; being and difference operate on a different level, permeating all the others – see the passage on the dialectician's task: one form through all, etc. (*Sph.* 253b–d)⁹

The Stranger goes even further, to posit the relation between the most supreme of genera, being and difference, and their priority over

⁸ See Ackril 1957.

⁹ For a different reconstruction of this ambiguous passage see Karfik 2011. Karfik, however, rejects that movement is introduced once and for all into the intelligible realm, that it is a structural feature of forms and the way the soul comes into contact with them, of knowledge as a special kind of *dunamis*. Cf. Wiitala 2018.

the rest. Furthermore, there is a being of difference, and this would be a difference of being, that is to say, a being of non-being. Not negation of being but its difference, not οὐκ ἔστιν but μὴ ὄν, non-being as the ever-present capacity/possibility of its being other.

Non-being, in the form of difference, is present in all relations between the great genera, it permeates the relations of communication between them and is present as much as being (as what causes the separation?), perhaps infinitely more. Non-being exists as difference of being. The being of the Other in all the others, they are other than the rest, yet nothing is other than itself; at the core of being, otherness, difference. Every identification passes through its opposite, every thing is what it is not: a movement, an interconnection between being and non-being. Like the position of the Stranger, *xenos*, in each society, Philosophy, part of no-part, is inside and outside of society at the same time. Pious, holy and yet subversive, transgressive; faithful, yet parricidal, Plato shows the movement of the non-identical, difference within each identity, the *xenos* subverting the polis, non-being at the core of being.

Thus we have the account of difference, διαφορότητος ἔρμηνεία, promised in the end of the *Theaetetus* (209a): logos, as the interconnection of forms, of the *megista gene*, as *sumploke* and community, as interweaving between forms, between being and non-being. A radical conception of logos; an interconnection, a web of being and logos, in which the relation is causal, the way the soul cognizes *ousia*, knowledge is a relation of *dunamis*. This is on par with the theory of forms, with participation as a causal relation (as in the second sail of the *Phaedo*, 99d), though we must say that whereas the participation model is vertical, hierarchical, the community of ideas is more horizontal. But not symmetrical, as we shall see.

Logos, the Stranger affirms, was born in the soul from the interconnection of ideas. We must notice here the role of the soul in cognizing *ousia*, both in movement and rest (in the *Timaeus*, the soul is itself composed of circles of same and other, in the *Philebus*, of infinite and finite, τὸ μεικτόν). To acknowledge an existence of this relative non-being, all

that is left is to affirm negation itself, non-being, logos as a great kind of being, as one of the *megista gene* — as a sixth, as is impiled in *Sph.* 260a? In the *Philebus*, there is a hint at a fifth as cause of division. And indeed, this is one of the possible meanings of logos.

In the *Theaetetus*, except for the refutation of the Heraclitean and the Protagorean positions, and despite the veneration of Parmenides as a lonely and courageous Priam, we encounter many clues towards the parricide that will ensue (the whole of the *Theaetetus* is marked by death, everybody is either already dead or goes towards their death by the time the dialogue has ended). In the *Theaetetus*, the battle between idealists and materialists is in the background, interrupted by two digressions. In the *Sophist*, the battle is posed as interruption in the middle of the search for the sophist (as in the *Statesman*, where another parricide, this time of Cronos by Zeus, signals the passage between two eras).¹⁰

In the *Theaetetus*, the secret doctrine reveals that nothing is one or invariable (ἐν μὲν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ οὐδέν ἐστιν, 152d). But in the digression, the dream of a dream (201d–202c), we are introduced to the atomistic structure of the universe of logos, elements and compounds, where the elements are unknowable, except through their combinations in compounds; like letters and syllables, like names and sentences; knowledge of the one and indivisible through the multiple and its divisions. Logos is discussed towards the end as an explanation, an account of difference, tying in an account of its cause of difference, an account of why it is different. Logos is a combination of stasis and flow, same and other; knowledge, in the soul, of the laws concerning their combinations. And of course, the weaving analogy is taken up in the *Statesman* where the Stranger re-appears. In the *Sophist*, this is shown through the Musical analogy of harmony and dissonance (continued in the *Philebus*) and the structure of language, vowels and consonants in words, names and verbs in propositions, indicating actions performed. Logos is envisioned as consisting of both name and verb (*Tht.* 201d):

¹⁰ For further elaboration on the role of digressions in Plato's other dialogues see Notomi 1999: 27–42.

name as thing (stasis) and verb as action, ῥῆμα, ῥοή, flow — movement (*Cra.* 426c–427b). The one, monas, μένει, stays same, the dyad, δύναται, dynamic, changing (see below on the unwritten doctrines), ταῦτον καὶ ἕτερον, identity and difference. Being: negated.

5. Why is not the One among the Megista Gene

Having reconstructed what, in our view, are the most important threads of argumentation linking the *Parmenides*, the *Theaetetus*, and the *Sophist*, we shall propose five connected reasons — logoi, for which the One is absent from the list of the *megista gene*.

1. It is the topic of a different dialogue, exhausted, not to be discussed in the *Sophist*. This naturally raises the issues of chronology and connections between the dialogues. As, of course, the issue of the exhaustiveness of the topic; there is no consensus on the *Parmenides*. Nor on the purpose, σκοπός, of the *Sophist*, for that matter. The *Sophist* could still be a parody of the sophistic method as applied, for example, by Gorgias.¹¹
2. Linked to the above, the *megista gene*, the speculative kernel of the *Sophist*, is a random list: a meaningless digression after the digression of the myth and the confrontation of the stretching problem. Highly unlikely. Yet, the list is probably not exhaustive, since the whole is not one, i.e. it is multiple. There are probably other structural forms, forms that can mix with all others, transcending Aristotle's categories.
3. The parricide (as a response to the stretching problem), taking place throughout the *Parmenides*, the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, which is essentially a refutation of Eleatic monism through their own means. In the later, as we have seen, this occurs in two steps and a final blow: i. the being of the name; name and being as two beings, ii. the disjunction of the One and the whole, and subsequently, iii. the affirmation of the being of non-being through the being of difference.

¹¹ See Notomi 1999, also Brémond 2019.

4. The problematic status of the One; in the *Parmenides*, the One is and is not. Aporetic, contradictory or impossible: one can think of Hegel and Lacan's reading and appraisal of the *Parmenides* as a Parthenon of symmetry, expressing the absolute nature of nothing but contradiction itself.¹² The One is and is not, ἅμα πάντα, at the same time. Contradiction describes the relation of inside and outside, the subject and the external world – its reflection, reduplication of the subject in speech and count. Primarily, the contradiction of logos, diction itself, the relation between being and logos – between what is and what can be said about it – exposing therefrom the problem of lies and non-being, which is addressed in the *Sophist*.
5. Is the One a form at all? Is there a form of One, the One-itself? In the first part of the *Parmenides*, in the *Philebus* (64c–65a) and in parts of the *Republic*, the Good is treated as a form, exceeding the other forms in *dunamis*. In the *Sophist*, it is an operation, the counting as one, oneness – the One of the name setting any multiplicity. In the *Republic*, the idea of the Good (the Good itself is not essence, οὐκ οὐσίας ὄντος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, 509b) is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας, beyond essence, exceeding *ousia* in seniority and in capacity. (For some Neoplatonists, the One is identified with the Good, the agathon, God, for others, God is *nous*/creator). Regardless, it would be odd for it to figure in a discussion about *ousia*.

If the One is a form, that is to say, something, whose interconnections give birth to logos, which is the way the soul cognizes *ousia*, it must be a causal relation, a relation of *dunamis*. If it is a form, which class is it partaking of? S1, S2? Is it like being? Like difference? Like movement and rest? Which interconnections does it form? Gill describes as structural concepts oneness, sameness, difference, the ones known as transcendentals (beyond Aristotle's categories applying to all, formal concepts).¹³ In *Parmenides*' third deduction (158c), the One

¹² For further elaboration on this position see Priest 2012.

¹³ Gill 2012: 28. See also Plot. *Enn.* VI.2.10.6–11: the One not a genus; its being genus destroys its being one, either the One is genus or it is one. When we say being, we say

is treated as a form – structural or categorial – only to affirm its impossibility or contradiction.

The greatest difficulty, the total separation of the world of forms from our world, may be seen in this light as the outcome of the affirmation of the One: either the One is, or the theory of forms, which are the way we cognize the world of gods (clear vision of the $\alpha\epsilon\iota\ \delta\upsilon\nu$, instead of fuzzy and ephemeral world of phenomena). We are thus faced with a decision, to save the One and discard the theory of forms, or the One is not (ontologically). But there has to be the One as an operation (epistemologically), if there is to be knowledge at all, the setting together of multiplicities according to same and different, to name and count. In other words, if there is to be meaning, logos, Philosophy, there is no One, only the count-as-one.

The *Parmenides* is thus precisely the impossible map of the One's relations and interconnections. If the One is a form, how do we know the One? Against the greatest difficulty, there is either the One or there is knowledge. Either forms exist and communicate, or there is no logos and Philosophy altogether. For Parmenides, all is one, the One is, one and whole are the same. For Plato, treating the One as a form thus famously produces two conclusions. First, if the One is not, nothing is; second conclusion: the One is and is not. Both cases have grave consequences for logos, contradictory. For Plato, there is no One but of an operation: the unity of living, moving thought, *nous*, a living whole.

one. The One: beyond essence, not even a cause. The unity of movements of the parts of the whole; a movement of knowledge as a $\delta\upsilon\nu\alpha\mu\iota\varsigma\ \theta\alpha\nu\mu\alpha\sigma\tau\eta$ (II.9.8.25). For further discussion of the use of *dunamis* in the *Enneads* of Plotinus see Spanu 2014.

II

The *Parmenides*' Greatest Difficulty and the *Sophist*'s Greatest Calamity:
Participation, *Dunamis* and the Community of Forms

The community of forms can be seen as an attempt to sketch out the theory of participation, which was left wanting in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* and derelict in the *Parmenides*. It is easy to detect a political resonance throughout the whole work of Plato; participation in ideas, things participate in ideas as ideas in higher ideas, as the citizens partake in the polis. Each thing is what it is, acquires its name, by participating in something higher than itself; it is caused, obtains its sense, by its participation in forms. What is important is the necessity of their movement and interconnection, their relations; their political and communal existence, that is, not as separate, immobile and incommunicable individuals. The question of the polis is central to Plato's Philosophy. One could draw a parallel between the *Republic* and the *Laws* — the second sail, reflecting the attempts to solve the problems of the theory of participation, which, like politics itself, is subject to constant reworking. Participation is a vertical, hierarchical model, whereas the community model is horizontal, not egalitarian or democratic, nor symmetrical, but nonetheless necessarily mobile. Being and difference operate on a different level, permeating the others — as operations of unity and separation?

In *Republic* iv, sensibles partaking of opposites prompt the intellect to reflection. Forms partaking of opposites, however, was the trouble in the first part of the *Parmenides*, and was held as an assumption throughout the *Sophist*: that movement and rest are opposites, and forms cannot partake of both at the same time, ought to be carefully examined.¹⁴

¹⁴ R. 436b: "It is obvious that the same thing will never do or suffer opposites in the same respect in relation to the same thing and at the same time" (trans. by Paul Shorey). *Prm.* 129b: is it astonishing if forms can partake both of one and many — partake of opposites? An early version of the law of non-contradiction, for a different and an immensely more complete account see Gill, Ryan 1996, Gill 2012. Non-contradiction is not a law yet in Plato, only later, with Aristotle (see

As we have seen above, in the Children's plea (*Sph.* 249d), being and the all are all things unchanged and changed, both at once. To arrive at this, what is necessary is a certain reconciliation of opposites, a viewpoint, from which they are no longer opposites: a synthesis, a surpassing of the opposition onto a higher level, the acceptance of both movement and rest as great kinds — of being, and the proposal to introduce identity and difference as notions, on a different level, to clarify their relation to being.

The distinction between structural and categorial forms, S1–S2, between being and difference and the rest, implies a difference in operative aptitude of the concept, a difference of levels. However, movement and rest can also be seen as structural, not merely categorial features; they turn out to be necessary conditions for the being of knowledge, that is of *dunamis*, and thus the distinction collapses. If we are not discussing a difference of levels, there would have to be a time where being neither moves nor rests, a transition. But this would mean that movement and rest partake of each other, that being participates in both, at the same time, or rather, at the time of no time, out of time and space. The moment *qua* moment is *atopon*, it neither moves nor rests, the moment of *dunamis* — ἐξάιφνης, the *stigma*, is neither in space nor time, ἐν χρόνῳ οὐδὲνι οὔσα (*Prm.* 156de). The *stigma* is and is not, it is between being and non-being.

Thus Plato, by forcing us to think forms-in-themselves and towards-others through difference, at the same time is aiming at the dissolution of the distinction between the one-in-itself and the others. The dialectical argument posits knowledge-*dunamis* against separation, their

Priest 2012). Whereas for Aristotle contradiction is something to be avoided, Plato explores its ambiguities and power, should we say, its *dunamis* in *koinonia*. According to Priest 2012, the historical Parmenides was the first to propose the principle of non-contradiction. In the *Parmenides*, he appears to criticize Plato in the figure of young Socrates. But by the end, the contradictoriness of forms is defended, and Plato in the voice of Parmenides has accomplished a devastating critique of the Parmenidian doctrine and Eleatic thought, the cornerstone of which is the principle of non-contradiction. This interpretation might also explain the parricide taking place in the *Sophist*, shedding light on the significance of the surpassing taking place.

surpassing as an opposition. This already occurs in logos, language, through the different uses of the verb ‘is’ (identity, predication and self-predication, transitive, intransitive). What is at stake is the very friction between being and logos: a contradiction, and dialectic? Δι-αλέγεσθαι δύναμις is fundamental, not only dialectic, but the force, *dunamis* of dialectic (R. 533a–d), a special kind of *dunamis*: knowledge, between soul and *ousia*, friction, as between the twigs that spark the flame — suddenly, yet silently — in the *Seventh Letter*. Cognizing its self and the object, itself in the object and the object in oneself; generating momentarily, perhaps evanescently, an identity of knower and thing known; ὁμοίωσις θεῶν. Science of free men, where this freedom should be associated with the idea.¹⁵

Dunamis, we should note, is not peculiar to Philosophy, but imported from disciplines, which Plato values highly: mathematics and medicine, Pythagoras and Hippocrates. As medicine is to treat the body of diseases, Philosophy, is a medicine for the soul, for the city, to treat the diseases (vices), nutrition (habits), in a holistic way. One thinks of the political Asclepius of the *Republic* (407e). “Hippocrates and true logos agree,” Plato writes in the *Phaedrus*, that knowledge of each *physis* comes through its *dunamis*, the *dunamis* of each *physis* (*Phdr.* 270b–e, *Prt.* 311b — the first ever mention of Hippocrates of Cos). In the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, *dunamis* is not only associated with the physical and the senses. In the *Theaetetus*, it is associated with mathematics but also with the doctrine of Heraclitus and Protagoras. In the *Sophist*, knowledge as *dunamis* also accounts for participation, causal relations between forms in the community of forms, mental phenomena. In the *Republic*, except for political power (δύναμις πολιτική, 473d), we have seen the Good exceeding *ousia* in *dunamis* and superiority. In the *Phaedrus*, the soul is presented as self-motion, as *dunamis*, as capacity to move itself, but also as λόγου δύναμις (271c), the capacity of discourse and reason, through which seeds of dialectic are born in others infinitely, contributing to a form of immortality. *Dunamis* and self-movement are

¹⁵ See below *Sph.* 248e6, 249b5, the whole as solemn and sacred. The living whole, living thought; the dialogue, a logos created to resemble the cosmos.

linked to the immortality of soul. Throughout the *Laws*, for example (books 9–12: the soul as *δυναμένην αὐτὴν αὐτὴν κινεῖν κίνησιν*, 896a), and specifically in the section on atheism and impiety, the Athenian Stranger treats legislation as a cure for the logical and moral flaws that follow from materialist views.¹⁶ But the parallel/rivalry with medicine deepens further; the final myth of the *Phaedrus* stresses the ambiguity of *pharmakon* — as both remedy and poison, being an issue of a correct mixture; remedy as *μέτρον* of the poison.¹⁷ *Metron* is distinctly linked to *nous* in the *Republic* (*nous* is linked to the capacity of judging *κατὰ τὰ μέτρα*, 603a); but also to the third kind of the *Philebus*, its cause and the demiurge of the *Timaeus*.

A further connection could be made between *dunamis* and the *ἐξάιφνης*, further linking the *Sophist* and the *Parmenides*. The sudden, the moment in the *Parmenides* (156de) is a moment between movement and rest, outside of movement and rest; the instant, the *ἐξάιφνης*, is out of time and space. The moment of *dunamis* would likewise have to be a moment between movement and rest, out of time and place, between being and non-being.¹⁸ The instant is in between movement and rest, intelligible and sensible — thus the proposal of knowledge as movement, as *dunamis*, instantaneous and evanescent can be seen as a momentary lifting from *or* back into the greatest difficulty of the *Parmenides*, and the greatest *aporia* of the *Sophist*, rendering knowledge impossible and being as puzzling as non-being. The instant is between being and non-being, it is in movement and rest at the same time, *ἅμα πάντα*, the moment which is and is not; a contradiction, a forceful collision. It is there, always at the edges of the rational that the

¹⁶ Cleary 2013: 235–238.

¹⁷ See Scolnicov 1998, VonStaden 1998, Macé 2003, also Brisson 2016: 140–141, for uses of *dunamis* in the Platonic corpus and Aristotle; on being as *δυνάμει* and *ἐνέργεια* see Cleary 2013: 251–297. Cf. also Derrida's well-known *Pharmacy*.

¹⁸ Priest 2012 argues that the third deduction where the instant appears is the attempt to answer the objection that contradiction can be resolved by appealing to different times. Even if a form cannot partake of opposites at the same time, the instant is out of time. By summing up the results of the first two hypotheses in the third as contradictory, Plato wishes to show that the instant itself is a contradictory entity.

Platonic myth interrupts. Such a case, a moment of opposites meeting in forceful collision, of a cosmic force personified, causing a great earthquake and disaster, is presented in the myth of the change in the motion of the universe in the *Statesman* (268d–274e). The digression of the *Statesman*, in which the Eleatic Stranger continues the discussion of the *Sophist*, presents a mythological vision of this moment. Is not the myth of Cronos a presentation of precisely the moment of *dunamis*; a moment, ἐξαίφνης, in which the revolution of the universe halts violently, the moment of *dunamis*, of the world stopping and turning the other way around?

Dunamis reveals movement and rest to be structural features of forms. Forms rest, as they are αἰεί, eternally same to themselves, and yet move, communicate with others, act and suffer, insofar as they are being known as *ousia* by a knower, soul (*Sph.* 248d). Forms move and rest, insofar as they are knowable, insofar as they are. Plato thus attempts to answer the problem of lies, sophistry and false reason by appealing to the interconnections between being and the knowledge of being, being and logos. Thus, *dunamis*, bypassing the aporia about being is to be salvaged, and knowledge to be reconfigured as a special kind of *dunamis* – Plotinus’ δύναμις φανταστική? The *megista gene* is not a combinatorial, nor a complete and closed matrix. Rather, it should perhaps be conceived doubly: as structure and as operation at the same time. A structure, born from elements, generating the sense of the elements retroactively, from the activity, the operation of the structure, from the next and higher level to the previous. Hence the linguistic and musical analogy. Likewise, in the *Theaetetus*, the atomistic dream of the compounds and elements is coupled with the unifying look, idea. Logos is posited as an account of difference, the difference between the whole and the all, the unifying look, an operation of unity.

It is Plato’s great achievement to have advanced a concept of being based on *dunamis*; that is, a dynamic model, one that includes knowledge of being, and how this knowledge is possible in the account of what being is. And this dynamic model, generating cosmological questions regarding forms, continued in the *Philebus* and in the *Timaeus*,

can be seen as a model of teleology; an effect which makes possible its own cause, an operation of the structure which makes the structure visible and knowable. Or, to use modern terms, an epistemology which generates its own ontology.

Platonic teleology is notorious throughout the history of philosophy. To say that an epistemology creates its own ontology, is to say, on the topic of being and logos, that the cause is knowable by its effects, that the end is present from the beginning. The *telos*-purpose is, according to Plato, infused in the order, design and origin of the universe; a universe in which both *nous* and necessity, *nous* and hazard, order and matter that is disorderly, sameness and otherness, co-exist. The plausible myth of the demiurge (the *Timaeus*), the myth of Cronos (the *Statesman* and the *Laws*) and the philosophical demonstration of the *Laws*, prepared by the myth and the preamble on atheism, exemplify this logic. Logos is the gift from the divine, born from the interconnection — in order to communicate with the divine and assimilate its like. The argument for the self-movement of the soul, followed by a cosmological argument and the teleological argument, weave the vision of dialectic as the unity of metaphysics, cosmology and politics/ethics.¹⁹

Thus Plato's position on the problem between being and logos, the One and the count as one, ontology and epistemology, is teleological. Ontology is of course a kind of logos, of being, generating the subsequent question of how this knowledge is possible, the epistemological question. But in truth, ontology is already epistemology. Plato attempts inclusion of how knowledge of what is is possible in what it

¹⁹ See Scolnicov, Brisson 2003: 122–127, Van Harten 2003: 134, also 'Les Preambles des *Lois*', 'Le discours comme univers, l'univers comme discours' in Brisson 2016. Also Cleary 2013: 174–180, 'The Mathematical Cosmology of Plato's *Timaeus*', for correlation between ontology and epistemology, the highest genera of the *Sophist* — being, same and different and the construction of the world soul by the demiurge. Also the position and structure of the soul, between intelligible and sensible, in the *Sophist* mediating through the *dunamis* of knowledge, and in the *Timaeus* composed of same and other, sets it in contact with both realms and hence makes the knowledge of both realms possible. See also Protopopova 2018, for the *megista gene* as a noetic prototype of the composition of the world soul, a 'noetic atom'. For the relation between cosmology and politics see O'Meara 2017.

is, its logos, and logos is a kind of being. Λόγου δύναμις, the capacity to act and suffer, knowledge is a kind of movement. *Dunamis* (according to Hippocrates and correct reason) reveals the *phusis* of each thing, its purpose, *telos*, design and order in the whole. The One or the Good, exceeding *ousia* in *dunamis*? Do not *ousia*, soul and logos form a proto-trinity, rendering rational and knowable the otherwise ineffable mystery of the One? In compliance with our modern terms, object, subject and their relation, knowledge, which constitutes them as subject and object, the whole is mediated and united through a third. That the solution to the two is the three has long been the intuition of dialectical thought. We are nudged towards a three-place causality for the non-spatiotemporal, the communication between different levels, as for example taking place in the *khora*. Reasoning, logos, a kind of being, affects and is affected by both the intelligible and the sensible, bastard reasoning bridging, mixing *nous* and necessity. Being itself is a mixture of reason and necessity (in the *Timaeus*); in the language of the *Philebus*, it is the third kind, mixture of the finite and the infinite. In this structure, the soul, like eros, is posited as daemon, in between, indicating the difference between gods and mortals, their separation as the greatest difficulty and at the same time their connection, eros – divine, philosophical mania – uniting, guarding the doors in between.

Delving further into the myth of eros and psyche, the soul, composed of same and other, in between the sensible and the intelligible, is strikingly similar to how Diotima describes eros, between gods and humans, in the *Symposium* (202e–203a), connecting and guarding the doors: a daemon – and a great sophist. Logos, born in the soul (as in *Phlb.* 30c: *nous* and wisdom without soul has never been born), is what is making knowledge possible.²⁰

Logos was born in the soul from the interconnection of ideas.²¹ For all this to be possible, the One is not, for Philosophy and logos are only possible in the context of the disjunction of the One from the whole,

²⁰ On the issue of the centrality of the soul and its relation to the forms, its necessity for logos and knowledge, in between the intelligible and the sensible, see Tegos 2018.

²¹ See above *Sph.* 259de.

or, in modern terms, of the death of god – of the absence of the One of divine providence and predestination. Being is either one or whole. If all is one then no freedom, no whole, no science of the whole, no science of free men, no Philosophy is possible. Either forms exist and are knowable, or there is no Philosophy, no logos, no knowledge, *nous* or wisdom. No civilization, world, cosmos with logos or *telos* is possible; either the One is – or forms and knowledge, knowledge of the forms, the means by which the soul cognizes *ousia*.

In the *Sophist* (248e–249a), the whole cannot stand holy and lifeless – if so, it is unknowable:

Ξένος. Τί δὲ πρὸς Διός; ὡς ἀληθῶς κίνησιν καὶ ζωὴν καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ φρόνησιν ἢ ῥαδίως πεισθησόμεθα τῷ παντελῶς [249a] ὄντι μὴ παρῆναι, μηδὲ ζῆν αὐτὸ μηδὲ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ σεμνὸν καὶ ἅγιον, νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον, ἀκίνητον ἐστὸς εἶναι;

STRANGER. But for heaven's sake, shall we let ourselves easily be persuaded that motion and life and soul and mind are really not present to absolute [249a] being, that it neither lives nor thinks, but awful and holy, devoid of mind, is fixed and immovable?

To deny such would be an unforgivable mistake; for it would deprive us of Philosophy, of the possibility and the reason of this very dialogue.

STRANGER. If there is no motion, there is no mind in anyone about anything anywhere (νοῦν μηδενὶ περὶ μηδενὸς εἶναι μηδαμοῦ) <...> And on the other hand, if we admit that all things are in flux and motion, we shall remove mind itself from the number of existing things by this theory also. (249b)

A little earlier, the Stranger asks:

Shall we say that it has mind, but not life, and hence no soul? <...> Then shall we say that it has mind and life and soul, but, although endowed with soul, is absolutely immovable? (249a)

To conclude this brief exposition on *dunamis*, is Plato in the *Sophist* introducing movement to the intelligible realm? Aristotle denies this, Plotinus follows the *Sophist* in making movement necessary

for thought, the Church Fathers follow suit, thought is kinetic. The definition of being as *dunamis* applies to both camps of the Gigantomachia, bypassing the objection raised by the friends of forms and the greatest difficulty, in the knowledge and logos born in the soul and life of the whole. Forms are participated in by the sensibles, they cause, affect and participate in each other thus being caused, affected. They remain the same, resting while in communicating with others, in movement and difference.²² This participation of forms in each other is not, however, a spatiotemporal change, locomotion or alteration. Forms participate in opposites, in movement and rest, identity and difference, being and non-being, generate contradiction for *dianoia*, for finite understanding. Only Philosophy, dialectic, the science of free men, can grasp the logos, the web of their interconnections and only *nous* can conceive of the whole and each of the parts at the same time.

As with the teleological argument for the construction of the eye in the *Timaeus* (47b), its construction is justified and explained by the end which it informs. Its end is built in so as to constitute and account not only for its being but also for the condition of its very intelligibility.²³ The whole, *qua* living being, *qua* teleologically conceived and construed, accounts retroactively for the proper placement of its parts by its very nature and comprehensibility. Is not a similar operation performed by the soul in the movement of knowledge? I.e. as the very condition of possibility and intelligibility, of *ousia* and of itself, of the whole; as the proper placing of the parts and their communication; as a result and as an account of the possibility and knowability of the result.

²² For further discussion see Wiitala 2018.

²³ Cleary 2013: 179. See also Wiitala 2018: 191–192: “*Nous* is the activity of correctly ordering forms in relation to one another in light of the norms that govern these relations. ⟨...⟩ the norms that structure the intelligibly ordered relations between forms are not external to the forms, but are those forms themselves *qua* norms. In this way, the communion of forms participating in one another is not moved by something else but is self-moving, and therefore living.” It seems, however, that παντελῶς ὄν must refer to the whole as a living being, the cosmos, comprising both movement and rest, same and other, intelligible and sensible, not only the forms as true being.

For this to be possible, but above all, to be knowable, as we have seen, the whole must be dissociated, disjunct from the One.

But how does the disjunction of the One and the whole allow Plato to advance beyond Parmenides? By grounding difference through opposition and negation, moving from being as *dunamis* to the whole being more than one, to the being of difference and the existence of non-being. This movement also occurs on the dramatic level, through the figure of the Eleatic Stranger and the parricide of the father, Parmenides. The *Parmenides* is the dialogue of the father, the *Sophist* is the dialogue of the son. What is staged, exemplarily, is a Parmenides who is the master of the master (Socrates), followed by the death of both the real and the symbolic father, Parmenides and Socrates, for Plato to emerge as master.²⁴ Previously, in the *Theaetetus*, we have seen Socratic midwifery reach its climax (151c, 210b) in the aporetic ending of the dialogue, as Socrates has left to attend his announcement of trial, and Theaetetus to be mourned for his heroic conduct, only to give his position to the Stranger who begins, in the *Sophist*, more constructively, going on to the *Statesman*, this time picking a young Socrates as his interlocutor. It is, of course, no coincidence that both Theaetetus and the young Socrates are students of Theodorus, a mathematician.²⁵

This brings us to the thorny issue of dialectics and mathematics, exposed in books VI–VII of the *Republic* as formulated between *dianoia* and *noein*, or in the discussion in *Theaetetus* (147d) on mathematical *dunamis* (power or root), its incommensurability to be explored against the concept of the whole. Impossible as it is to explore this issue in the confines of the present article, we can only say that, as in the *Phaedrus*, dialectical is he who can see the whole and each of its parts (266b). In the *Laws* (875cd), law sees the parts, but only *nous* sees the whole. *Dianoia* sees the One as separate, the parts; *nous*, dialectic, the only free science, sees the whole, in movement and interconnection. As we have

²⁴ See Badiou 2014: 126–147.

²⁵ See Notomi 1999: 63.

seen, the whole is more than one, there is only the name of the one; the one solely of the name.²⁶

In the *Parmenides*, the One and the multiple are ‘revolving doors’, in the *Sophist*, the One and being are no longer tenable together. In the *Republic*, the form of the good – as condition of intelligibility – is not a form like the others. We are entering the obscure realm of the unwritten doctrines, on Aristotle’s testimony, which, alongside the third man argument, taken as a valid critique, purports to show Plato’s ontological dualism: Plato has two principles: the One and the indefinite Dyad. The One, *μονάς*-sameness, resting, and *δυνάς*-*dunamis*, changing; the realm of acting and suffering, attraction and repulsion, associated by some Neoplatonists with matter and non-being.²⁷

The Dyad generated from the One? Operated by (the operation of the One?) and participating in the One? The One as causal and dynamic, i.e not one-one, but one-many, and one and many of the second and third hypotheses of the *Parmenides* combined; the One, the one-many and the one and many. This is the proto-trinity of the three hypostases, the One, the Intellect and the Soul. But there is difference within Neoplatonism, Plotinus and Proclus regarding the centrality of the *Parmenides* as a text containing principles of Platonic theology: the difference between the One-Good of the *Republic* and the One of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. Can the One be participated in and be causal? Or is the One beyond *ousia* and ineffable, indivisible, the subject solely of apophatic-negative theology? For Plotinus, the One is pure *energeia*, much like the activity of the unmoved mover of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Λ (*Enn.* v.1–14). But is the influence of Aristotle in Plotinian interpretation, which Hegel also explicitly noted, to be

²⁶ See Cleary 2013: 253. On the whole, the set and its relation to Platonism, see Cantor’s definition of the set in the *Grundlagen* as a mixture of one and many, according to sameness and difference drawn directly from the *Philebus*. Further on the *Parmenides*, the greatest difficulty, and Russell’s paradox and Plato’s ‘hierarchical solution’, see Findlay 1974, Haecker 2014.

²⁷ See Plot. *Enn.* II.5,27, III.6. On the unwritten doctrines, the One and indefinite Dyad, see the *Seventh Letter* and Aristotle; for Plato and the esotericist reading, see Brisson 2016, Cleary 2013. Cf. Findlay 1983.

viewed as its weakness? Plotinus incorporates the testimonia and the principles of Platonic ontology as dynamic, yet turning them against the first principle of the unmoved mover, to a dynamic theology which is connected to the other dialogues such as the *Philebus*, *Timaeus* and *Republic*, where there are positive accounts of the Good.²⁸

For Aristotle, the limit, finitude, is seen as positive, something is insofar as it is limited, is one. Being and unity are not genera, they are attributed to anything that is insofar as it is, insofar as it is given an ontological status, that is, in logos. Yet, there is an ambiguity on Aristotle's part with regards to his critique of Parmenides in *Physics* IV. Absurd as the Eleatic position appears to him, as an account of nature, that is to say, of movement, it seems difficult to dispense with. Nature is movement, yet it is also one on a different level, i.e. continuous, indivisible, in unity of definition; purposeful — ἐντελέχεια. The limit is intricately linked to being, something is one insofar as it is; barring infinity, multiplicity is a positive function of the limit. Being and unity are not genera then, but the differentiae of each genus? Nor are they the first principles, transcendentals: the One, the True, and the Good?²⁹

This ambiguity should perhaps be regarded as the ambiguity of the one itself, of Parmenides' revolution, marking the beginnings of Philosophy, which Plato recorded brilliantly in the *Parmenides*, the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, an ambiguity of being itself. If the One is not, nothing is; the One is and is not. There is a world to explain, something is, but is it unclear if we have the correct account of forms, logos and finally being; hence the ensuing discussion of false logoi, images and phantasmata. The One as solely the one of the name, in logos, which interweaves being and non-being, form and matter; νοῦς, struggling with ἀνάγκη.³⁰

²⁸ See Gerson 2019 on the differences between Plotinus and Proclus on the centrality of the *Parmenides* and the inability of Proclus to account for the dynamism of the principles resulting in proliferation of entities in the intellectual 'architecture'.

²⁹ Cf. Arist. *Metaph.* B, 998b20–35, and also books Z and H, on being and unity; on place as the limit of περιέχον; on *dunamis*, *energeia* and *entelecheia*. See also Kosman 2013 on Platonic heritage of *dunamis* and *energeia* as activity.

³⁰ Cf. the issue of cosmology, the cosmos, the universe as a whole living being,

Knowledge as *dunamis*, weaving the Same and the Other; ontology, epistemology and cosmology. The search for the Sophist, the Statesman and the Philosopher is announced in the beginning of the *Sophist*; and we are given a hint regarding the appearances of the Philosopher, as Sophist, as Statesman and at times as manic, altogether mad (παντά-
πασιν μανικῶς, 216cd). This madness, an embracing of contradiction, a divine frenzy; seeing the whole and each of its parts, at the same time; as is the dialectical method described in the *Phaedrus* (266b).³¹ The *Parmenides*: an artisan's or artist's atelier; the studio of tools for the divine craftsman, an organon for cosmology. In the *Timaeus*, which deals with many a cosmological question generated from the trilogy, this cosmic force, this *dunamis*, is teleology personified; the parable of the demiurge, bending the Other to the Same, weaving identity and difference, being and non-being, form and matter, *nous* and necessity. The statesman and the divine statesman, the demiurge and the 'sublunar demiurge'; the divine sophist, imitating the divine craftsman, creating worlds, in logos.

logos, discourse and reason to resemble the cosmos; *nous* as living thought, a moving, living whole, as opposed to *dianoia* which divides and immobilizes understanding. The dialogue may be seen as a living whole: in the *Theaetetus*, the atomistic dream, in the *Sophist*, the whole cannot stand holy and lifeless, solemn and sacred. From the *Sophist* to the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus*: the passage from movement and rest to sameness and difference; from opposites to a dialectical couple, which participate in each other and in which the opposites are 'sublated'. Interestingly, though they appear as an abstract pair of principles, it is from these materials that the body of the world and the world soul are to be constructed by the demiurge in the *Timaeus*. See Brisson 2016, 'Le discours comme univers, l'univers comme discours'. Also Cornford 1937, Cleary 2013, O'Meara 2017.

³¹Eros – mania and divine frenzy, the philosopher as παντάπασιν μανικῶς; the embracement of contradiction? (*eide* being one and multiple, in movement and rest, same and other, one and whole at the same time). Eros: δεινὸς γόης καὶ φαρμακεύς καὶ σοφιστῆς (*Smp.* 203d), a great wizard and seducer. It was probably Iamblichus who introduced the divine sophist, or 'sublunar demiurge', as the σκοπὸς of the *Sophist*, see Iamb. in *Sph.* fr. 1 Dillon = fr. 2 Cufalo.

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