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Abstract:

Philosophy in Verse: Competition and Early Greek Philosophical Thought

Nicolò Benzi

This thesis is a study of Archaic and Early Classical philosophical poetry within the competitive context which characterized the poetic production of that period. In particular, I evaluate the ideas and arguments of Xenophanes, Parmenides, Epicharmus and Empedocles in the context of the social and cultural aspects of Archaic poetic performance in order to evaluate their response to traditional agonism. As I argue, these figures entered the poetic contest not only to defeat their poetic adversaries, but also to transform and redefine the terms of the competition itself.

Chapter 1 is devoted to the analysis of three institutionalized forms of poetic agonism: sympotic games, rhapsodic contests, and dramatic performances. In chapter 2, I evaluate the socio-political import of Xenophanes' poetry and argue that his conception of the greatest god serves to substantiate his moral prescriptions aimed at eliminating civic conflict. In chapter 3, I examine Parmenides' original notion of *alētheia* as logical deduction, whereby he provides a solution to the problem of the truth-status of poetry stemming from the Muses' ability to inspire both genuine and false accounts, as narrated in Hesiod's *Theogony.* Chapter 4 provides an analysis of Empedocles' polemic allusions to his poetic and philosophical predecessors. I argue that Empedocles' confidence in his poetic authority is ultimately grounded on his self-declared divine status, which grants him a unique and comprehensive poetic knowledge. In chapter 5, I evaluate Epicharmus' philosophical fragments against the background of early rhetoric and argue that, through the use of philosophically inspired arguments, Epicharmus aimed to make manifest philosophy's agonistic potential and to show how it could be exploited to one's own advantage.

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Philosophy in Verse: Competition and Early Greek Philosophical Thought

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A thesis submitted to

The Department of Classics and Ancient History

Durham University

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I confirm that no part of the material offered has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or any other University.

This thesis is exclusively based on my own research.

Material from the work of others has been acknowledged and quotations and paraphrases suitably indicated.

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The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

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Introduction

This doctoral thesis is a study of Archaic and early Classical philosophical poetry within the competitive context that characterized the poetic production of that period. In particular, I focus on the works of Xenophanes, Parmenides, Empedocles and Epicharmus. I reconstruct these philosophical poets' arguments and ideas by situating them within the social and cultural institutions of Archaic poetic performance in order to evaluate their approach to traditional agonism, since, as I claim, they entered the poetic contest not only to defeat their adversaries, but also to transform and redefine the terms of poetic competition itself.

The importance of competition for our understanding of early Greek thought has been the object of increasing interest, especially thanks to pioneering works such as those of Lloyd, who, in his studies on ancient science and medicine, has pointed out how agonism informed the beginnings of scientific speculation. In particular, Lloyd argues that the origins of Greek science must be traced to the competitive socio-political dimension which marked the development of the life of the *polis* towards the end of the Archaic Age[1]. Within such a context, doctors, philosophers and, broadly speaking, wisdom practitioners engaged in a public "game" in order to prove their primacy and thereby win the favour of the audiences which they addressed. Indeed, some of the extant texts of the period show remnants of this fiercely agonistic debate: for example, in his fragments Heraclitus attacks Hesiod, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Hecataeus for their lack of understanding[2]; Xenophanes criticizes Homer and Hesiod for their representations of the gods[3]; Hecataeus remarks that the stories of the Greeks are ridiculous and corrects traditional versions of myth[4]; the author of the treatise *On*

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[1] Cf. Lloyd 1979, pp. 226-267. This idea was proposed also by Vernant, cf. Vernant 1982, esp. pp. 49ff.
[2] Cf. DK 22 B40.
[3] Cf. DK 21 B11, B12. See further *infra*, Chapter 2, pp. 65-66.
[4] Cf. BNJ 1 F a; F19.

Ancient Medicine attacks philosophers, among whom he enumerates Empedocles, and other physicians for their new methods of healing, and pointedly denounces their lack of medical expertise[5].

Competition was a prominent feature of Archaic poetry as well. As long recognized by scholars, a complete understanding of Archaic poetry is not possible without considering the competitive context in which poets composed and performed their works. Poetic production was characterized by an "agonistic mannerism"[6] observable in both the form and content of poetry: correction and contradiction of rivals, rhetorical figures such as priamel, *recusatio* and *praeteritio*, and confrontational forms of composition found in different poetic genres, from lyric to drama, all providing a vivid portrayal of the manifold ways in which poets competed to prove the superiority of their poetic skills[7]. Most significantly, poets, rhapsodes and playwrights also participated in institutionalized *agōnes* held during civic and Panhellenic festivals, which provided them with a unique opportunity to compete directly with adversaries and display their ability[8].

Despite the scholarly consensus on the competitive character of early Greek intellectual speculation and poetic production, when we turn to consider the phenomenon of philosophical poetry, it is quite striking to notice that poetic agonism usually is not taken into account as an interpretative and heuristic category to employ in order to better understand the works of philosopher-poets. Indeed, it is generally recognized that philosopher-poets competed with other wisdom practitioners and poets, but a comprehensive analysis of how these thinkers engaged with traditional poetry *within* the context of traditional poetic competition has not yet been conducted. The aim

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[5] Cf. *VM* 20.1. On competition in early medical writings, see further Lloyd 1987, 61-70. On the agonistic stance of early Greek thinkers, see also Gemelli Marciano 2002; Sassi 2009, 107-118.
[6] Griffith 1990, p. 191 and *passim*.
[7] For an overview of these examples of poetic agonism, see Griffith 1990, pp. 192-200. For a detailed analysis of the poetic game, see further Collins 2004.
[8] Cf. *infra*, Chapter 1, pp. 31-46.

of this thesis is precisely to evaluate how agonism informed philosophical speculation in the poetry of Xenophanes, Parmenides, Empedocles and Epicharmus. In particular, I will focus on the ways which philosopher-poets devised to challenge the authority of their poetic predecessors, especially Homer and Hesiod, and thereby demonstrate the superiority of their wisdom. As I will show, such an enterprise involved a critical appraisal and redefinition of the very terms and forms of competition, which eventually changed the rules of intellectual debate forever.

The thesis is structured in five chapters: chapter 1 is mainly historical, as it provides an account of three institutionalized forms of poetic competition – namely sympotic poetic games, and rhapsodic and dramatic contests. As regards the poetic games at the symposium, I will consider examples of verses composed for competition provided by the Theognidean corpus and the Attic *skolia*. In particular, I will examine the practice of *metapoiēsis*, the correction and alteration of other poets' verses, which testifies to the agonistic character of sympotic poetic performances. I will next consider how symposiasts used poetry to attack rivals both within and outside their *hetairia*, and thereby show the potential socio-political consequences which poetic games might have. Then, I will present the main features of rhapsodic competitions, especially as emerging from Plato's description in the *Ion*, with particular attention devoted to the rhapsodes' ability to understand and then communicate the *dianoia* of the poet, and their capacity to improvise and innovate on traditional poetic material. With regard to dramatic contests, I will provide an overview of the tragic and comic *agōnes* which took place during the Athenian festivals in honour of Dionysus, and illustrate how, through the institution of *chorēgia*, they could be exploited by private citizens to gain political influence to the detriment of their adversaries.

In chapter 2, I will consider Xenophanes' overt attacks on Homer and Hesiod, which offer a striking example of the intersection of poetic and philosophical competition. Xenophanes targeted Greece's two most influential poets because their stories about the gods nurtured peoples' (false) beliefs in anthropomorphic deities. Xenophanes was particularly concerned with the negative moral impact which could derive from depicting the gods as committing illicit acts. As further illustrated by the ban on poems about divine and civic strife from the symposium, the danger posed by this kind of story lay in their being potentially harmful for society as a whole. By contrast, Xenophanes proposed a series of precepts aimed at promoting civic *eunomia*, which, I will argue, he grounded on his original conception of the divine. For Xenophanes' greatest god, being morally perfect, all-powerful and omniscient, guarantees the dispensation of justice and thereby the punishment of those who threaten social peace. In addition to such moral implications, I will argue that Xenophanes' rejection of anthropomorphism served to eliminate the premises of traditional poetic agonism, since poets usually competed in providing, for example, different versions of myths concerning the gods' birth or deeds. Even more significantly, by criticizing traditional forms of divine disclosure, including poetic inspiration, Xenophanes undermined the validity of any claim to authority based on divine inspiration, to which he opposed a new criterion of poetic reliability based on the notion of appropriateness.

In chapter 3, I will begin my analysis of Parmenides' competitive stance against his poetic and philosophical rivals by considering the proem of *On Nature*. The beginning of the poem, I argue, features a complex system of allusions whereby Parmenides hints at his predecessors, whom he challenges by presenting the truth about Being which the goddess has revealed to him. Besides providing an exposition of the basic properties of reality, I will argue that the subsequent deduction of the attributes of

What-Is constitutes a redefinition of the notion of truth (*alētheia*) which, by solving the problem of the ambiguous status of poetry posed by the Muses' declaration in the proem of Hesiod's *Theogony*, substantiates the validity of Parmenides' poetic account. For, since the properties of What-Is which Parmenides apprehends from the goddess are deduced *a priori* from the assertion "it is and is not for not being"[9], the poet and the audience can actually test the correctness of divine revelation and thus be assured of its truth. Parmenides' doctrine of What-Is also provides the framework for the second part of the poem – the *Doxa* – in which he expounds a cosmology whereby he demonstrates, so I will contend, his superiority over competitors in two ways. For he not only presents the best possible cosmology, but he also declares it, and de facto any other similar attempt, deceitful, since it is grounded on assumptions such as the reality of generation and change which, in the light of his ontology, must be rejected as logically impossible.

In chapter 4, I will evaluate Empedocles' opposition to Parmenides' rejection of cosmology as an essentially sterile and misleading enterprise by examining the polemical allusion to his predecessor contained in the description of his account of the interactions of the four roots as a non-deceptive "expedition" (*stolos*). As I will show, the term *stolos* has strong agonistic connotations, as it relates to the field of nautical metaphors which Archaic and Classical poets traditionally employed to express their polemic stance against their competitors. In fact, Empedocles' use of the term *stolos* conveys a critical allusion not only to Parmenides, but also to Homeric and Hesiodic epic, which he sought to emulate and eventually overcome. Empedocles' competitive attitude towards his rivals is further emphasized by the epithet *polymnēstē* attributed to the Muse, whereby he not only stresses his privileged relationship with the goddess, but he also implies that she deceived his poetic predecessors. Such an assertion of confidence on the part of Empedocles, I will argue, is ultimately grounded on his self-

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[9] Tr. Coxon.

declared divine status, since, as a *theios anēr*, he possesses a knowledge superior to that of ordinary men which guarantees the reliability of his poetic account. Indeed, thanks to his all-inclusive vision of reality, Empedocles is able to provide a unique account of the cosmos which encompasses even the doctrines of his competitors. Thus, by showing the necessity of integrating his rivals' theories in his *logos* about the cosmos, Empedocles demonstrates their intrinsic limitations and, at the same time, his own poetic and philosophical supremacy.

In chapter 5, I will consider Epicharmus' philosophical fragments, in which he alludes to contemporary philosophical debate. In particular, I will focus on fragments B1, which features an Eleatic-style argument to prove that gods are eternal, and B2, on the so-called Growing Argument, in which Pythagorean speculation is employed to demonstrate the impermanence of personal identity. Next, I will examine fragments B4 and B5, in which Epicharmus makes use of the notion of nature to illustrate that animals too possess wisdom and are attracted by what is similar to them. I will argue that Epicharmus' fragments reveal an original approach to poetic and philosophical competition which reflects the increasing importance of rhetorical argumentation in 5th-century Syracuse. Indeed, as eloquently shown by the example of the Growing Argument, Epicharmus represented philosophy as an instrument which could be exploited to defeat adversaries in verbal disputes. Rather than competing with philosophers on doctrinal grounds, as some scholars have argued, Epicharmus aimed to make manifest philosophy's agonistic potential and to show how it could be exploited to one's own advantage. In fact, Epicharmus himself artfully made use of philosophically inspired dialogic for comic purposes, with the goal of gaining the favour of the public and eventually overcoming rival playwrights.

Chapter 1

Poetry and institutions of competition

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate the competitive nature of poetic performances in Archaic and early Classical Greece by examining three different institutionalized forms of competition. I will start from the private and enclosed setting of the symposium, where poetry served as a means of confrontation both among the friends gathered together at the feast and towards other political and social groups (1.1). Then, I will consider the rhapsodic competitions which took place during civic festivals, especially those at the Great Panathenaia in Athens. The analysis of the different forms of contest between rhapsodes will exemplify some of the most important features of the lively agonistic character of poetic compositions and displays (1.2). The final part will be devoted to the dramatic competitions in Athens, which were the central event of the festivals held in honour of Dionysus, namely the Great Dionysia, the Lenaia and the Rural Dionysia. Dramatic contests will provide a striking example of the close interrelation between competition and civic life, as their results could have important repercussions on the political influence of the citizens who sponsored the plays (1.3).

1.1 – Poetic competition at the symposium

In Archaic Greece the symposium represented an important moment for the political, social and cultural life of the *polis*. As implied by the term itself, it consisted in a drinking-party which usually took place after an evening banquet and was attended by men of aristocratic origin linked together by family bonds and/or by the same political ideas (*hetairoi* of the same *hetairia*)[1]. Owing to this group-selected character, the

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[1] Beside the *hetairia*, another important context for the symposium were the courts of tyrants, see Vetta

symposium functioned as a ritual which continuously created and reinforced the sense of belonging of the participants, as it provided them with the opportunity to differentiate themselves from other political or social groups, with which they were, more or less directly, in competition[2]. Moreover, through a close interrelation between *paideia* and pederasty, the symposium was crucial for the education of boys and their official, and thus socially recognized, coming-of-age[3]. The importance of the occasion was further reinforced by the religious framework in which it was inserted, as it was opened with a libation to the gods, often accompanied by a paean sung by all the participants together, and marked by a series of ritualized gestures which strengthened the link between the group by making it assume a sacral connotation[4].

In addition to its social and political value, the symposium was of central importance even from a cultural point of view, because of its inextricable connection to poetry[5]. According to a shared scholarly consensus, the symposium was actually the original performing context for most of Archaic monodic poetry and, at the same time, the place where, by means of successive performances, poems were preserved and diffused and eventually came to form a traditional poetic corpus[6]. Sympotic poetry covered a great variety of themes and functions, depending on the specific occasion. In what follows, I will focus on the competitive context in which the poems were performed, especially considering its role as a form of entertainment and as a key communicative medium for the values of the group. As to the first aspect, I will present

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1992, pp. 28-214. For a detailed study of the symposium in the Archaic Age, see Wecowski 2014, in particular pp. 19-80 on its organization, participants and its social and cultural function.

[2] Cf. Vetta 1992, pp. 178-179; Murray 1990, p. 7.

[3] On the link between education and pederasty, see Brenner 1990.

[4] Cf. von der Mühll 1983, pp. 10-12.

[5] The presence of poetry at the Greek symposium was the distinctive trait that differentiated it from similar gatherings in non-greek societies: cf. Anacreon 356 Page: "Come now, this time let's drink/ not in this Scythian style/ with din and uproar, but sip/ to the sound of beautiful songs". On this point, see Vetta 1983, pp. XXXIX-XL.

[6] For a general introduction on the sympotic destination of monodic poetry, see Vetta 1983, pp. XIII-XXXIV. On specific genres: elegy: Bowie 1986, 1990; iambic: Vetta 1992, 199-205; Rosen 2003; Rotstein 2010, pp. 276-278; others: Pellizer 1990, pp. 178-180 and Ford 2002, p. 25, with references.

the main features of poetic games, by using examples of verses produced for sympotic contests provided by the Theognidean corpus and the Attic *skolia*. This will lead me to describe the practice of *metapoiēsis*, the correction and alteration of other poets' verses, which is emblematic of the highly agonistic stances involved in the production of poems. Then, I will point out how sympotic competition could have consequences which went beyond the simple victory in poetic games, as the guests exploited contests to test other people's fidelity to the *hetairia* and to identify possible enemies. Regarding the use of poetry as a communicative medium of values, I will show how it was used to strengthen and continuously reaffirm the group's identity, both by teaching and preserving the ideals which tied together the *hetairoi*, and by attacking external groups which were considered as rivals. Elegiac and iambic poems will provide eloquent examples of this double function, as they were the privileged means of, respectively, ethico-political reflections and invective[7]. Theognis' *sphragis* will exemplify the pedagogic role of elegy and show how the corpus was used as a deposit of values to be preserved. As to iambic poetry, I will first discuss a iambic trimeter by Solon composed to attack his political adversaries. Then, I will present different forms of invective directed to individuals, ranging from mockery to insult, and conclude with Semonides' iambic poem directed against women.

The basic form of poetic entertainment at the symposium consisted in the guests' performing poems in turn, so as to show their intellectual and executive abilities. As displays of excellence, such poetic performances were characterized by a high level of competitiveness and could also assume the character of a real and proper game, where the most skilled performers improvised lines of poetry while taking up another guest's

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[7] The borders between elegy and iambos were not so neatly defined, especially in the Archaic and early Classical period, so that we can find iambic poems which deal with topics which later became exclusive to elegy. Thus, at this early stage, iambic poetry as a genre could not be totally identified with invective, even though it represented the privileged medium for blaming purposes. On this issue, see Carey 2009(a), pp. 21-22; 149-151; Kantzios 2005, pp. 100-131; Rotstein 2010, pp. 88-97 and *passim*. On iambos, see also Carey 2009(b). On elegy, see Aloni 2009 and Budelmann-Power 2013.

verses[8]. The Theognidean corpus and the Attic *skolia* preserve the traces of this improvisational game in the so-called "agonistic couplets", groups of two verses performed in sequence, with one being the response to another by means of antithesis, or correction and variation (*metapoiēsis*)[9]. For example, two *skolia* play with the opposition between homosexual and heterosexual love through a variation on the basic form "I wish I were": "I wish I were a lovely lyre of ivory/ and lovely boys would take me to their dithyrambic dance" (*carm. conv.* 900); "I wish I were a lovely pendant, big, fine gold,/ and a lovely lady would wear me with purity in her heart" (*carm. conv.* 901)[10].

The succession of different couplets might also produce real and proper chains of verses, examples of which are preserved in the Theognidean corpus[11]. Three distichs, for instance, are linked by the theme of reputation and the consequent praise or blame which it generates[12]. The initial couplet states that, among fellow citizens, some will speak well and some ill of a person, independently from his actual merits or faults ("Enjoy yourself. As for the wretched townsfolk,/ some will speak ill of you and some good", ll. 795-796). The reply is that praise and blame are addressed only to good men, with blame, we can infer, due to envy, whereas bad people are not spoken of at all ("Some carp at men of worth, others approve of them:/ bad people are not spoken of at all", ll. 797-798). As response, the last couplet expresses the idea that nobody is actually free from fault, but generally it is better not to be the object of other people's attention ("There is no one born on earth with whom no fault is found./ But it is best with fewest people paying heed", ll. 799-800). This sympotic chain is noteworthy because it

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[8] Cf. Ford 2002, p. 32; Griffith 2009, pp. 89-90. Theognis 993-996 describes the beginning of a poetical competition where the prize is a young boy: "Just set us, Academus, to compete in song,/ and let there be a boy in choicest bloom/ for prize, as you and I contest in artistry".

[9] Cf. Vetta 1992, pp. 196-198. For a detailed analysis of the game of *skolia*, see Collins 2004, pp. 84-134.

[10] On this couplet, see Vetta 1983, pp. XXXII-XXXIII and Collins 2004, pp. 122-124.

[11] For an overview of the chains identified in the corpus, see Colesanti 1998, p. 220, n. 52.

[12] Thgn. 795-800. Tr. West, modified.

contains an instance of reuse of another poet's verses, as the couplet 795-796 derives from an elegy by Mimnermus (Mimn. 7 W). The practice of reuse was a common stratagem used by guests as alternative to extemporary compositions, but it did not completely exclude personal intervention, since the original lines could be modified and adapted to the context[13].

The partial correction and transformation of renowned verses is another instance of *metapoiēsis*, which has been already mentioned as operating in the formation of agonistic couplets. This practice well represents the high degree of competitiveness which informed poetic performances and could also be used by poets to challenge other poets. This is the case, for example, in these lines by Mimnermus, also corrected by Solon:

> αἲ γὰρ ἄτερ νούσων τε καὶ ἀργαλέων μελεδωνέων
> ἑξηκονταέτη μοῖρα κίχοι θανάτου.
>
> I pray my fated death may catch me
> hale and hearty at threescore years.
>
> <div align="right">Mimn. 6 W</div>

This is Solon's reply:

> ἀλλ᾽ εἴ μοι καὶ νῦν ἔτι πείσεαι, ἔξελε τοῦτο
> μηδὲ μέγαιρ᾽, ὅτι σέο λῷον ἐπεφρασάμην
> καὶ μεταποίησον Λιγιαστάδη, ὧδε δ᾽ ἄειδε·
> "ὀγδωκονταέτη μοῖρα κίχοι θανάτου".
>
> If you'll still obey me, take that out,
> don't mind me having better thoughts than you,
> and change it, Ligyastades, and sing,
> "I pray my death may catch me at fourscore years".
>
> <div align="right">Sol. 20 W</div>

Solon criticizes Mimnermus for having expressed the desire of dying at the age of sixty and asks him to change (*metapoiēson*) the final line of his elegy replacing 'sixty' with 'eighty'. The poem was in all probability composed in response to another symposiast

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[13] This is the case, for example, of 153-154, a modified Solonian distich (fr. 6.3-4 W), or 1003-1006 which reprise Tyrtaeus' fragment 12.13-16 W. In some cases, variants might be attributed to involuntary mnemonic errors, cf. Colesanti 1998, pp. 210-211.

who quoted Mimnermus, presumably to sing a poem about the theme "the right age for dying"[14]. The tone conveys Solon's firm belief in his superiority, as he not only invites his adversary to obey him, but also not to bear grudge against him for his better thoughts. The agonistic stance is further enhanced by the fact that two levels of competition merge here, as the poem is composed with the desire of outperforming the other guest and, at the same time, Mimnermus himself. Solon is thus engaged in something more than a simple party game. Actually, he enters in direct confrontation with another poet and challenges his authority. However simple the correction which he makes might appear, just by substituting a word he demonstrates himself to be a poet as skilful as his rival, and, more importantly, to be capable of better thoughts.

Being a way to demonstrate one's own superiority, poetic games were a direct reflection of the aristocratic ideal which closely linked competition and excellence/virtue (*aretē*). Actually, the symposium itself was considered by the participants as an opportunity to show their *aretē*. The following anonymous elegy (dated to the 5th century BCE) eloquently illustrates this idea:

χαίρετε συμπόται ἄνδρες ὁμ[ήλικες ἐ]ξ ἀγαθοῦ γὰρ
ἀρξάμενος τελέω τὸν λόγον [ε]ἰς ἀγα[θό]ν.
χρὴ δ᾽, ὅταν εἰς τοιοῦτο συνέλθωμεν φίλοι ἄνδρες
πρᾶγμα, γελᾶν παίζειν χρησαμένους ἀρετῆι,
ἥδεσθαί τε συνόντας, ἐς ἀλλήλους τε φ[λ]υαρεῖν
καὶ σκώπτειν τοιαῦθ᾽ οἷα γέλωτα φέρειν.
ἡ δὲ σπουδὴ ἑπέσθω, ἀκούωμέν [τε λ]εγόντων
ἐν μέρει· ἥδ᾽ ἀρετὴ συμποσίου πέλεται.
τοῦ δὲ ποταρχοῦντος πειθώμεθα· ταῦτα γάρ ἐστιν
ἔργ᾽ ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν, εὐλογίαν τε φέρειν.

Hail my fellow drinkers [and age-mates]; as I begin with a good
I will bring my speech to a close with a good.
It behoves us, when we come together as friends on business
such as this, to laugh and sport with excellence,
being happy in each other's company and teasing each other
with such jokes as can be borne with a laugh.
Let serious pursuits follow, and let us listen to those who speak
in turns; this is the excellence of a symposium.

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[14] Cf. Noussia Fantuzzi 2010, p. 400. For a use of the poem independent from sympotic practice, see *idem*, pp. 401-402.

> And let us obey the toastmaster; for this
> is the work of good men, and to contribute fair speech[15].

Adesp. eleg. 27 W

Addressing his fellow symposiasts, the speaking *persona* delineates the characteristics of an ideal symposium, which should be marked by appropriateness (as the term *chrē* implies) and excellence in behaviour (*aretē*). *Aretē* is, at the same time, the governing principle of the gathering and its aim. If the participants behave with excellence, the symposium becomes a manifestation of *aretē* and thus a proof of their moral goodness, as emphasized by the repetition of *agathos* at the beginning and at the end of the poem[16]. The excellence of the symposium is achieved through orderliness: the comrades are invited to obey the toastmaster[17] and to respect measure both in entertainment, here connected to jesting (*phluarein*) and mocking (*skoptein*), and in serious reflection: mockery should be confined to what can be borne with a laugh and people must pay attention to each other when they are speaking. It is important to notice that competitive stances had a prominent role even in these moments. As to entertainment, the use of the verb *paizō* emphasizes the idea of a game which momentarily saw the friends as contestants[18]. But even serious reflection entailed a form of confrontation, since, by speaking in turn, the *hetairoi* expressed their own ideas and feelings which were subjected to the others' judgement and possible criticism[19]. This confrontational atmosphere was likely to get out of control, as implied by the repeated appeal to

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[15] Text and translation (slightly modified) as in Ford 2002, p. 33.

[16] Cf. the ideal symposium in Xenophanes discussed in Chapter 2, pp. 51-63.

[17] The toastmaster, or symposiarch, elected or chosen by lot among the guests, was responsible for all the aspects related to wine drinking. On his duties, see von der Mühll 1983, pp. 12-16. The importance of the symposiarch for the order of the symposium is an aspect discussed also by Plato: cf. *Lg*. 639d-641a.

[18] The verb *paizō* in sympotic contexts usually indicate real and proper poetic games, cf. Collins 2004, pp. 63-66. Even though it was a game, it could have serious consequences, see below. It is worth noticing that Gorgias will define his *Encomium of Helen* as a *paignion* (DK 82 B11.21), thus conveying the idea that the work was produced for a competitive context.

[19] Cf. Ford 2002, pp. 41-42.

virtuous conduct and self-restraint. In fact, quarrels caused by unrestrained mockery or aggressive speech frequently occurred[20]. Theognis, at 491-495, effectively describes the risks involved in overcompetitive confrontations and urges his fellow symposiasts to avoid strife, both when they address an individual or the group as a whole: the real winner of sympotic competition is the man who, although he has drunk too much, does not say anything reckless, but contributes to the peace of the party[21]. The danger originating from speaking too much was a common concern for the symposiasts, as it could also have consequences on their victory in a subtler type of game, taking place behind the façade of conviviality. For the symposium, besides functioning as an occasion to strengthen the bond among its members, was, at the same time, the perfect context to test other people's intentions and to detect possible enemies and traitors[22]. Poetic games could function as a useful means of evaluation, since the extemporary performances they required, combined with the relaxing effects of wine, might reveal participants' inner thoughts to others[23]. Therefore, considering that the *hetairiai* were socially and politically influential, sympotic agonism was far from being a plain and simple game, as it could have repercussions on the life of the *polis* itself[24].

An example of the importance attributed to mutual trust among friends is provided by Alcaeus' poems against Pittacus, a former member of the poet's *hetairia* who betrayed his comrades to share power with Myrsilus, the tyrant of 7th-6th century Mytilene whom Alcaeus' group wanted to overthrow, and who eventually became the

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[20] On sympotic quarrels, see Pellizer 1983.

[21] Thgn. 491-495: "You do not know how to win praise; that man will emerge unvanquished/ who, though he has drunk much, lets no reckless word fall;/ but speak well as you abide by the mixing bowl,/ keeping strife far away from each other/ as you speak in the middle to one and all alike" (tr. in Ford 2002, p. 39).

[22] The loyalty of friends is the theme of many Theognidean elegies; see Ford 2002, pp. 40, with references. For examples of the severe attacks reserved to traitors of friendship oaths, see below.

[23] On the serious consequences of sympotic games, see Collins 2004, pp. 70-71; 109-110; Ford 2002, pp. 39-41.

[24] According to a common motif, there existed a close relationship between sympotic and civic order. I will discuss this issue in Chaper 2, pp. 58-59.

tyrant of the city after Myrsilus' death[25]. In one of his poems, Alcaeus invokes Zeus,

Hera and Dionysus for vengeance on Pittacus who has betrayed the oath he had made:

> Let Hyrrhas' son be visited
> by our friends vengeance, for we swore
> stern oaths that none of us would e'er
> betray a member of our company,
> but either lie in cloaks of earth,
> killed by those men who then held power,
> or else put them to death, and save
> the people from its burden of distress.
> But this Potbelly gave no thought
> to that. He's trampled on his oaths
> without a qualm, and devours
> our city [...][26].

Alc. 129 Voigt

These lines effectively convey the importance of unity among *hetairoi*, and the sacral

significance of the oath binding them, since breaking it is considered a fault which must

be punished by the gods[27]. Moreover, the poem emphasizes the connection between the

hetairia and the city, as the violation of the oath which established the group is

considered as a betrayal of the *polis* itself: instead of saving the city with his former

comrades, Pittacus is actually ravaging it like an animal, as indicated by the use of the

verb 'to devour' (*daptein*) to describe his conduct[28].

Having presented the main characteristics of poetic performances at the

symposium as a form of entertainment, I will now turn to the role of poetry as a medium

for strengthening the bonds among the *hetairoi*, resulting from its being used to preserve

the group's values and to attack external adversaries. The Theognidean corpus of elegies

is probably the most famous example of how sympotic poetry could be used to establish

a set of rules of behaviour informed by the ideals of the *hetairia*. The pedagogical

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[25] Myrsilus too is the target of Alcaeus' attacks: in a fragment, he exhorts his companions to resist Myrsilus' conspiracy, inviting them to stay firm in their battle position and not to accept the rule of one single man (129.13-24 V). In another poem, he celebrates Myrsilus' death as a joyful event: "Now we must drink with might and main,/ get drunk, for Myrsilus is dead!" (332 V; tr. West).

[26] Tr. West.

[27] On the imagery of oath and punishment in this fragment, see Bachvarova 2007. For another curse against an oath breaker, cf. Hippon. 115 W, discussed below.

[28] On the use of animal imagery in blaming poetry, cf. below.

function of the corpus is stressed by the fact that many poems of ethical and political content are addressed to Cyrnus, the young lover of the speaking *persona*. As stated in one of the elegies, Cyrnus is the last recipient of a series of good counsels which the speaker himself learned in his childhood from worthy men ("It is with good intent to you, Cyrnus, that I will give you good advice/ that as a boy I learned from men of worth", ll. 27-28). Thus, the teachings of the group are continuously preserved and reaffirmed generation after generation, making the elegies the deposit of a series of values which become a possession common to all the people who share them[29].

As to the use of poetry to attack rival groups or individuals, iambic poems provide some of the most striking examples of the aggressiveness which could be conveyed by means of verse. An iambic trimeter by Solon (36 W), for example, is directed against his political adversaries and, simultaneously, serves as a defence for his conduct. In the poem, Solon responds to the critics of his policy, both the *dēmos* and the nobles/rich faction opposing his reforms, in a severe and confrontational language. The fragment opens with a question directly replying to those who assert that Solon has not achieved all that he has promised: "Those aims for which I called the public meeting/ which of them, when I stopped, was still to achieve?" (36. 1-2 W). The tone of the question implies that, contrary to what is asserted by his adversaries, Solon has carried out all his promises, a claim emphasized by the initial position of *egō de*[30]. Next, Solon lists his achievements, stressing his ability in mediating between the different parts of the city by writing laws for all (36.18-20 W). After defending his results, he starts to attack harshly the *dēmos* and the rival aristocratic party. He argues that if someone else had been in power in his place, this man would have not restrained the *dēmos*, with all

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[29] Note that the exclusive character of the teachings is recognized by the poet himself: "I cannot please all my fellow citizens" (l. 24), cf. Vetta 1992, p. 195. Another example of transmission of values through poetry is provided by the exhortatory elegies of Tyrtaeus and Callinus which exalt the *aretē* gained on the battlefield.

[30] The initial *egō de* may indicate that the poem was conceived as part of a sympotic chain, with Solon taking up the remarks of another symposiast, cf. Noussia Fantuzzi 2010, pp. 460-462.

the consequent risks for the social order: "But if another man had got the goad,/ someone impudent or acquisitive,/ he'd not have checked the mob" (36. 20-22 W). The use of the term 'goad' (*kentron*) immediately conveys a negative characterization of the *dēmos*, compared to an animal which needs both to be incited and restrained, because it is not able to guide itself[31]. For this reason, it was a good thing that Solon ruled the city and not someone else who, guided by imprudence and desire of gain, would have been ready to grant the people everything they wanted. Besides the *dēmos*, Solon did not comply with the requests of the members of opposing aristocratic factions, to whom he refers as adversaries (*enantioi*, 36. 23 W). Then, in the final lines, Solon's invective reaches its peak when he portrays himself as a wolf and his critics as dogs surrounding him on every side. "[...] I turned to guard my every side,/ a wolf at bay amid a pack of hounds" (36. 26-27 W[32]). This animal metaphor is rich in meaning, but here I would only like to highlight its invective function[33]: the use of animal imagery and epithets, already hinted at in the previous lines by 'goad', is a common feature of blame poetry, which can be found, for example, in the iambs of Archilochus, Semonides and Hipponax[34]. Moreover, according to a common poetic image already present in epic, 'dog' is used as an epithet to announce a person's shamelessness, especially in quarrels[35]. As to the figure of the wolf – besides being usually reputed better than dogs, in Archilochus' iambs it is the very symbol of blame poetry[36]. Thus, by identifying himself with a wolf, Solon further accentuates the invective character of his poem[37].

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[31] On this point, see Noussia Fantuzzi 2010, p. 479-481.

[32] Tr. West.

[33] For a detailed discussion of the metaphor and its possible interpretations, see Noussia Fantuzzi 2010, pp. 482-485.

[34] Cf. Kantzios 2005, pp. 35-38. On iambos and invective, see below.

[35] Cf. Nagy 1999, pp. 226-227.

[36] For a survey of the connotations of the terms 'dog' and 'wolf', see Noussia Fantuzzi 2010, pp. 482-485.

[37] Similar stances are present in another Solonian trimeter, 37 W, where the statesman points out the limited insight of the *dēmos* and the aristocracy, the two competing parts he must balance to avoid strife. However, differently from the other poem, where the critics receive a common treatment, here Solon addresses the aristocratic faction with more conciliatory tones, while the *dēmos* is made object of harsher reproaches. For a commentary, see Noussia Fantuzzi 2010, pp. 487-496.

Solon's use of trimeter to attack political enemies is an instance of the many possible uses of iambic poetry for the purposes of blaming[38]. Invective could also be more personal, i.e. directed to specific individuals, and spanned from mockery to violent blame and insult[39]. The tradition according to which Archilochus' attacks on Lycambes and his daughters led them to commit suicide well exemplifies the level of violence that could be reached[40]. Another example is provided by Hipponax's fragment 115 W[41], which contains a violent curse against a former friend who has betrayed an oath of loyal friendship. The tone resembles that of Alcaeus' poem against Pittacus (129 V), in which the traitor is described as trampling on the oath he made[42], but here the violence is more explicit, as the punishment for the traitor is crudely and minutely described: the poet wishes him to suffer shipwreck and to be driven by the waves to the land of Thracians, naked, covered in seaweed, with chattering teeth and lying prostrate with the face in the sand like a dog. Moreover, he desires to see him enslaved by the Thracians and suffering a multitude of woes[43].

Besides these more brutal examples, iambs were also employed for those moments of sympotic entertainment based on mockery towards friends[44], and for playful invective against people outside the group. Although entertaining, it is worth noticing that these examples are not entirely devoid of confrontational aspects: mockery of

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[38] On the relationship between blame and iambos, see Rotstein 2010, pp. 88-97.

[39] Blame poetry against individuals had a specific social function, complementary to that of praise (see Nagy 1999, pp. 222-242). Both types of poetry were performed at the symposium, but here I will focus on the overt aggressive character of blame. For an overview of the different types of praise, see Bowie 2002.

[40] This independently of the historical existence of Lycambes: on the tradition, see Carey 2009(b), p. 153; on Lycambes as stock character of Archilochus' poetry, see Nagy 1999, p. 248. A similar story is narrated about Hipponax and his privileged victim, Boupalos. In an interesting article, R. Gagné argues that the figure of Lycambes represents the breach of the oath between *sumpotai*. Because of his conduct, Lycambes deserves the expulsion from the symposium and, consequently, social isolation (cf. Gagné 2009, pp. 264-267).

[41] The poem is one of the Strasbourg Epodes which some have attributed to Archilochus. For an overview of the debate, see Kirkwood 1961, pp. 269-270. See also the critical edition of Hipponax by Degani (Degani 1991, p. 168).

[42] Hippon. 115. 14-16 W: "That's what I'd like to see done/ to my betrayer who has trampled on his oaths,/ who was my friend in the past" (tr. West).

[43] Cf. Hippon. 115. 4-13 W.

[44] Cf. above. On invective against friends, see Nagy 1999, pp. 243-245.

comrades was actually a controlled form of aggression, while invective addressed to external elements served to stress the differentiation of the group from the outside[45]. An example of friendly mockery is provided by a poem by Archilochus, where the poet chastises Pericles for his immoderate love for drinking, which made him completely forget the most basic sympotic manners: not only did he come uninvited, but he also drank a great quantity of unmixed wine, without contributing to the common expenses[46]. As to mockery aimed at external targets, it was often directed to people belonging to the class of craftsmen. Two of Hipponax's fragments, 4-4a and 28 W, provide an eloquent example: in the first one, the soothsayer Cicon is referred to as an "ill-starred priest" who prophesies only misfortunes[47], whereas the second contains a ferocious invective against the painter Mimnes[48]. The artist is attacked for his incompetence, as, in decorating a ship, he painted a serpent that was turned from the prow to the stern. Since this was considered a bad omen, the painter is harshly insulted for his social origin and his sexual behaviour: he is called "base-born" and *katomochanos*, a term which indicates someone so debauched that he is literally 'opened up to his shoulders'[49].

Another external target of invective were women, who could be attacked individually, or generically, as in these trenchant lines by Hipponax: "Two days in a woman's life give greatest pleasure:/ those of her wedding and her funeral" (68 W[50]). However, it is with Semonides that female sex is condemned without appeal. In fragment 7 W, he lists different types of woman on the basis of their resemblance to a

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[45] On the implications of mocking friends, see Pellizer 1983, Aloni 2006, pp. 88-89. On the significance of invective against external people, see Aloni *loc. cit.* p. 92.
[46] Archil. 124 W: "Like Mykonos people/ You drank a great quantity of unmixed wine/ and brought no contribution.../ and you didn't wait to be invited, like/ a friend; your belly led your wits astray/ to shamelessness". Cf. Kantzios 2005, pp. 23-24. For other examples, see Aloni 2006, p. 89.
[47] Hippon. 4-4a W: "Cicon […] the ill-starred priest/ prophesying nothing auspicious" (tr. Gerber).
[48] Hippon. 28 W: "Mimnes, you who gape open all the way to the shoulders don't paint again on a trireme's many-benched side a serpent that runs from the ram to the helmsman; for this is a dangerous omen for the helmsman, you slave born of a slave and […] if the serpent bites him on the shin" (tr. Gerber).
[49] Cf. Kantzios 2005, p. 47. For examples of Archilochus' attacks on craftsmen, see Aloni 2006, p. 89.
[50] Tr. West.

certain animal[51]. Each type is actually said to have been created from the specific animal from which it has inherited its characteristics. For example the woman originating from the sow is dirty, that from the fox is cunning, that from the monkey is ugly, and so on. The only woman who possess good qualities is the one originating from the bee, as she is affectionate and makes the life of her husband prosperous (7. 83-93 W). Despite this apparently virtuous example, however, the final part of the poem is categorical: women are the greatest evil that Zeus has created and even those who appear respectable are, in fact, responsible for the greatest outrage[52]. The succession of vignettes portraying the vices of the different kinds of women has an amusing effect which makes the poem apt to entertain the men gathered at the symposium[53]. However, the poem also betrays more serious contents, as it is the result of an androcratic perspective trying to cope with the idea that women, despite all the problems they cause to men, are nonetheless the object of desire and thus an essential part of men's life[54].

The various examples of poetry previously examined are the result of the intense competitive atmosphere pervading the symposium. Competition took place between the group and the outside, but also within the group itself. In both cases, poetry represented a privileged means of confrontation. As to the former, the poetic expression and preservation of the ideals of the group, combined with the concomitant invective against targets external to it (women, political factions or social classes), was decisive for the continuous reaffirmation of its identity in opposition to the outside. Regarding internal competition, poetical games and mockery were the battlefield on which symposiasts confronted each other, often with the aim of testing their real intentions and discovering

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[51] Two types of woman originate from natural elements: earth and sea, respectively described at ll. 21-26 and 27-42.

[52] Semon. 7. 96-99: "The worst plague Zeus ever made/ is women. Even if they look to be of some benefit to the one who has them,/ to him especially do they turn out to be a plague".

[53] On the place of the poem in the symposium, and the possible modes of performance, see Kantzios 2005, p. 25.

[54] Cf. Carey 2009(b), pp. 161-162. Burzacchini 2002, pp. 207-208.

possible traitors. Thus, in the fiercely agonistic arena of the symposium, poetry represented one of the most versatile and efficacious weapons for a competition which, on a minor scale, reflected the wider agonism which characterized the social and political life of the *polis*.

1.2 - Rhapsodic contests

Ancient evidence presents rhapsodes as essentially engaged in competitive activities[55]. One of the earliest references to rhapsodic competition is an edict of Cleisthenes, the tyrant of Sicyon, banning rhapsodic contests in the city after the war against the Argives (approximately at the beginning of the 6th century)[56] and it is reasonable to think that the *agōnes* which Heraclitus mentions in B42 DK are competitions among rhapsodes[57].

Apart from these brief hints, that competition was rhapsodes' primary activity is made evident at the very beginning of Plato's *Ion*, probably our most extensive and influential ancient source about the figure of the rhapsode[58]. Socrates meets Ion just as he has arrived at Athens from Epidauros, where he has competed and won the first prize at the rhapsodic competition held on the occasion of the festival of Asclepius. Ion hopes to do the same at the Panathenaia, the festival in honour of Athena held in Athens every four years, which culminated in the offering of the *peplos* to the goddess[59]. The

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[55] Davison points out the lack of evidence, except for the literary one, about rhapsodic competitions: "rhapsodic competitions are known only to the literary tradition" (Davison 1958, p. 37, n22). Nagy responds providing an inscription from Eretria in Euboea (ca. 341/40 BCE) relating to a festival of Artemis, in which rhapsodic contests are explicitly mentioned as a part of the music competitions which took place during the festival (see Nagy 2002, pp. 39-40).

[56] Cf. Hdt. V 67. 3-7.

[57] Heraclit. B42 DK: τόν τε Ὅμηρον ἄξιον ἐκ τῶν ἀγώνων ἐκβάλλεσθαι καὶ ῥαπίζεσθαι καὶ Ἀρχίλοχον ὁμοίως, "Homer is worth of being banished from the contests and of being beaten with a stick and Archilochus too". The reference to rhapsodes is given by the verb *rhapizō* ('beat with a stick', from *rhapis*, 'rod'), linked to the etymology that connects the term 'rhapsode' with *rhabdos* ('staff'). On this point, cf. Graziosi 2002, p. 29.

[58] Plato's account of rhapsodic activity is influenced by his hostility against the importance ascribed to poetry in Greek society, but, apart from some dramatizations, there are no compelling motives to consider it unreliable, at least for the information related to the mode of performance.

[59] This festival was also known as the Great Panathenaia (*megalē Panathēnaia*), in order to distinguish it

language is rich in terms conveying the sense of battle, rivalry and the conquest of opponents:

{ΣΩ.} Τὸν Ἴωνα χαίρειν. πόθεν τὰ νῦν ἡμῖν ἐπιδεδήμηκας; ἢ οἴκοθεν ἐξ Ἐφέσου; {ΙΩΝ.} Οὐδαμῶς, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀλλ᾿ ἐξ Ἐπιδαύρου ἐκ τῶν Ἀσκληπιείων. {ΣΩ.} Μῶν καὶ ῥαψῳδῶν ἀγῶνα τιθέασιν τῷ θεῷ οἱ Ἐπιδαύριοι; {ΙΩΝ.} Πάνυ γε, καὶ τῆς ἄλλης γε μουσικῆς. {ΣΩ.} Τί οὖν; ἠγωνίζου τι ἡμῖν; καὶ πῶς τι ἠγωνίσω; {ΙΩΝ.} Τὰ πρῶτα τῶν ἄθλων ἠνεγκάμεθα, ὦ Σώκρατες. {ΣΩ.} Εὖ λέγεις ἄγε δὴ ὅπως καὶ τὰ Παναθήναια νικήσομεν. {ΙΩΝ.} Ἀλλ᾿ ἔσται ταῦτα, ἐὰν θεὸς ἐθέλῃ.

{S.} Welcome, Ion. From where have you just come to us? From home, from Ephesus? {I.} Not at all, Socrates, but from Epidaurus, from the festival of Asclepius {S.} Surely the Epidaurioi do not dedicate also to the god contests of rhapsodes? {I.} Certainly, and even [contests] of other types of musical art. {S.} What then? Did you compete on our behalf? And how did it go? {I.} We have won the first of the prizes, Socrates. {S.} Well spoken. Come on, then, so that we will win the Panathenaia too. {I.} But this will be, if the god wants.

Pl. *Ion* 530a1-b3

It is important to notice the close connection between agonism and the institution of religious festivals emerging from the passage. Both occasions of Ion's performances are feasts in honour of a god, and it is expressly said that the contests were dedicated to the divinity. Thus, competition was a form of celebration of the god and, consequently, an essential part of the events in the programme[60]. This holds in the case of both local and Panhellenic festivals, which hosted different types of *agōnes,* including athletic and musical competitions. At the Panathenaia, for example, there were also sporting contests and, except for the Olympiad, all of the Panhellenic Games reserved a space for contests in music[61]. As a result of being part of a festival, the *agōnes* were placed under the strict

from the annual Panathenaia (*Panathēnaia ta kath'ekaston eniauton* or *mikra*). Usually, 'Panathenaia' alone refers to the Great Panathenaia (cf. Davison 1958, p. 23). On the origin of the festival and the relationship between the two Panathenaia, see Davison 1958, p. 26. On the structure of the festival, see Arist. *Ath.* 60. 1-3; Nagy 2002, pp. 40-41. Rhapsodic competitions are attested by literary sources starting from the 6th century, but contemporary archaeological evidence is lacking, as stressed by Davison (cf. Davison 1958, p. 39 and Collins 2004, pp.168-169).

[60] The relationship to the divine is stressed by Ion when he says that his victory depends on the god's will. Plato will turn this idea against poetry itself through the theory of *enthousiasmos*, expounded later in the dialogue (533c9-535a2). According to it, rhapsodes and poets are inspired by the divinity and, consequently, they are not in their mind during the performance. But this is equivalent to say that poetry is not a form of knowledge, with the result that rhapsodic activity, despite Ion's initial claim, cannot be considered an art.

[61] On the athletic contests at the Panathenaia, see Kyle 1992, pp. 77-102. Musical competitions were integral part of the Pythian and the Isthmian Games, as the presence of a theatre on the sites of the festivals suggests. According to Pausanias (Paus. X 7.2-8), the very foundation act of the Pythian games was the assignment of prizes for the singing of hymns to Apollo; the importance of musical competitions

control of the political and religious authorities responsible for the organization of the event. This means that competition was institutionalized, and that it assumed a precise configuration with definite rules and structures. The musical contests of the Panthenaia provide an example of this organization, since they were divided in different categories, each with specific prizes[62]. There were competitions not only between rhapsodes, but also between kithara and flute players, and *kitharodes* and *aulodes*. The prizes were in gold and silver and the most valuable were assigned to *kitharodes* who could win up to 1500 drachmas[63].

With regard to the structure of the contests, the rhapsodic *agōnes* of the Panathenaia offer an important testimony of the level of organization of the festival, as they were regulated by the so-called "Panathenaic Rule" about the recitation of the Homeric poems[64]:

> […] Ἱππάρχῳ, ὃς τῶν Πεισιστράτου παίδων ἦν πρεσβύτατος καὶ σοφώτατος, ὃς ἄλλα τε πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἔργα σοφίας ἀπεδείξατο, καὶ τὰ Ὁμήρου ἔπη πρῶτος ἐκόμισεν εἰς τὴν γῆν ταυτηνί, καὶ ἠνάγκασε τοὺς ῥαψῳδοὺς Παναθηναίοις ἐξ ὑπολήψεως ἐφεξῆς αὐτὰ διιέναι, ὥσπερ νῦν ἔτι οἵδε ποιοῦσιν.

> […] To Hipparchus, who was the oldest and the wisest of the sons of Peisistratus, who made a public demonstration of many and beautiful deeds of wisdom, and was the first to bring to this land the poems of Homer, and compelled the rhapsodes at the Panathenaia to go through these in sequence, by relay, just as they still do nowadays[65].

> [Pl.] *Hipparch*. 228b5-c1

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is also stressed by Pindar's *Pythian* 12, dedicated to the flute player Midas of Acragas. There were also contests in drama and in poetry and prose composition, but the date of their introduction is uncertain (they are attested in the first century AD; cf. Miller 2004, pp. 84-86). Nemean Games included musical contests only in the Hellenistic period, when the games were transferred to Argos (mid-third century BCE). As to the Olympian Games, the only non-athletic competitions were those for heralds and trumpeters, added for the first time in 396 BCE and held on the first day of the games (cf. Lee 2001, pp. 32-34). On other festivals including musical contests, see Rostein 2012 and the relative bibliography.

[62] Another striking example of organization is provided by the dithyrambic and dramatic contests of the Great Dionysia (see section 1.3).

[63] This was a great sum, taking into account that the average daily wage of an artisan was one drachma (cf. Kerferd 1981, p. 28). On the prizes in silver for the winners in musical competition, see Arist. *Ath.* 60 3.7-8; see also Davison 1958, pp. 37-38; Shapiro 1992, p. 58 and Rostein 2012, pp. 105-106.

[64] Cf. Davison 1955, p. 7. Rhapsodic contests at the Panathenaia are closely connected to the Homeric poems (see also Lycurg. *In Leocratem* 102), but rhapsodes' repertoire was not limited to Homer only: Plato mentions also Hesiod and Archilocus (Pl. *Ion* 531a2); the latter, as previously shown, is named by Heraclitus too. Herodotus' report on Cleisthenes, despite the explicit reference to Homer, suggests that the performances involved material from the Theban cycle (see Nagy 1990, p. 22n22).

[65] I follow here, with some modifications, Nagy's translation (cf. Nagy 2002, pp. 9-10).

Τά τε Ὁμήρου ἐξ ὑποβολῆς γέγραφε ῥαψῳδεῖσθαι, οἷον ὅπου ὁ πρῶτος ἔληξεν, ἐκεῖθεν ἄρχεσθαι τὸν ἐχόμενον.

He [Solon] has written a law that the works of Homer are to be performed rhapsodically, by cue, so that wherever the first left off, from that point the next should start[66].

<div align="right">D. L. 1.57.6-7</div>

Setting aside the question related to the authorship of the rule emerging from these testimonies[67], it is important to focus on what appears to be the basic structure of the contest, i.e. performance in sequence and by relay/cue[68]. Nagy points out the essential agonistic character of the relay mechanism, consisting in a "competitive exchange"[69] in which each rhapsode started his performance from the point where his opponent left off, with the final aim of beating him. The intrinsic bond between sequencing and competition is also stated in the myth about the origin of the word 'rhapsode', contained in a scholia to Pindar's *Nemea* 2.1. There the commentator says that the competitors, by contrast to the past when they competed singing whichever part of the Homeric poems they wanted, contended by reciting the parts in a determined sequence so as to reproduce the poems in their entirety. Their activity was described as a stitching of songs and, consequently, they were called rhapsodes (from *rhaptein*, 'to stitch' and *aoidē*, 'song')[70]. In order to succeed in this kind of competition, rhapsodes' primary

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[66] I follow here, with some modifications, Nagy's translation (cf. Nagy 2002, p. 14).

[67] Beside Solon and Hipparchus, another candidate for the institution of the rule is Pericles (cf. Plu. *Per.* 13.6); for a discussion of the evidence, see Davison 1955, pp. 7-15 and Davison 1958, pp. 38-39; on the role of Pericles in the organization of the musical contests, see also Shapiro 1992, p. 57. A different approach to the question is adopted by Nagy (see Nagy 2002, pp. 14-15). As to the nature of the innovation represented by the rule, Davison and Collins argue that it has to be understood as a reorganization of preceding contests and not as their first institution (cf. Davison 1958, p. 39 and Collins 2004, p. 168). On these issues, see also Nannini 2010, pp. 22-24.

[68] Nagy translates the expressions *ex hupolēpseōs* and *ex hupobolēs* as 'by relay'; *ex hupobolēs* usually is translated as 'by cue', but see Nagy's justification in Nagy 2002, pp. 20-22. I agree with Collins' traditional translation, accepted on the consideration that 'by cue' does not necessarily involve the presence of an external prompter, since "in competitive poetic contests oral cues can be given by one singer to another in performance" (cf. Collins 2004, p. 195).

[69] Collins 2004, p. 174.

[70] Cf. Schol. Pind. *N.* 2.1d: οἱ δὲ, ὅτι κατὰ μέρος πρότερον τῆς ποιήσεως διαδεδομένης τῶν ἀγωνιστῶν ἕκαστος ὅ τι βούλοιτο μέρος ᾖδε, τοῦ δὲ ἄθλου τοῖς νικῶσιν ἀρνὸς ἀποδεδειγμένου προσαγορευθῆναι τότε μὲν ἀρνῳδούς, αὖθις δὲ ἑκατέρας τῆς ποιήσεως εἰσενεχθείσης τοὺς ἀγωνιστὰς οἷον ἀκουμένους πρὸς ἄλληλα τὰ μέρη καὶ τὴν σύμπασαν ποίησιν ἐπιόντας, ῥαψῳδοὺς προσαγορευθῆναι. ταῦτά φησι Διονύσιος ὁ Ἀργεῖος, "others [say] that before, since the poem had been handed down in parts and each of the competitors sang the part he wanted, and a lamb was assigned as prize for the winners, at the time they

ability had to be relay mnemonics, that is the capacity of readily making mental connections so as to continue the narrative from the point where their opponent has stopped.

However, readiness of memory was not the only ingredient necessary for the success of a rhapsode, as Plato suggests when he makes Ion explain to Socrates the emotional effect of his performance on the audience:

> καθορῶ γὰρ ἑκάστοτε αὐτοὺς ἄνωθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ βήματος κλάοντάς τε καὶ δεινὸν ἐμβλέποντας καὶ συνθαμβοῦντας τοῖς λεγομένοις. δεῖ γάρ με καὶ σφόδρ᾽ αὐτοῖς τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν· ὡς ἐὰν μὲν κλάοντας αὐτοὺς καθίσω, αὐτὸς γελάσομαι ἀργύριον λαμβάνων, ἐὰν δὲ γελῶντας, αὐτὸς κλαύσομαι ἀργύριον ἀπολλύς.
>
> For, every time I look down to them from the stage above, I see them crying, looking terrible and astounded at what has been said. For it is necessary that I turn my attention to them: since if I make them cry, I myself will laugh all the way to the bank, but if I make them laugh, I will be the sad sack, since I will have squandered my cash.

Pl. *Ion* 535e1-e6

From this passage it is evident that what assured the final victory was to succeed in making the audience feel the emotions proper to the particular episode as narrated by the rhapsode; in this case, for example, Ion is describing himself dealing with a sorrowful scene and says that he will laugh (that is, he will win the prize) only if he will be able to make the public cry. What here is at stake is the vividness created during the performance: more vividness makes the recital more effective, as it grasps and involves the audience in a sort of spell which grants the triumph to the rhapsode[71].

Another important aspect of the rhapsodic activity portrayed by Plato's *Ion* is the fact that rhapsodes were expected to have a complete knowledge of the *dianoia* of the poet whose verses they recited (ἐκμανθάνειν τὴν διάνοιαν τοῦ ποιητοῦ)[72]. Poetic

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were called lamb-singers. Later, when each of the poems was introduced, the competitors, so to speak, mending the parts to each other and coming to the whole poem, were called rhapsodes". On the etymology presented in this testimony, see Nagy 1996, pp. 61-62 and Graziosi 2002, p. 23. Collins points out the matters about the exact definition of what the rhapsodes sewed together and raises doubts about the fact that during the Panathenaia the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were recited in their entirety (cf. Collins 2004, p. 180 and p. 193).

[71] As regards the impact on the public, one should also mention the rhapsode's way of dressing, which Plato describes at *Ion*. 530b5-c1. On the effects of poetry, cf. also Grg. B11 DK and Romilly 1975, pp. 5-22.

[72] Cf. Pl. *Ion* 530b10-c1.

dianoia appears to be the poet's thought or intention at the moment of the composition[73], and to know it is the necessary condition of being a good rhapsode, as explained by Socrates in the following passage:

> οὐ γὰρ ἂν γένοιτό ποτε ἀγαθὸς ῥαψῳδός, εἰ μὴ συνείη τὰ λεγόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ. τὸν γὰρ ῥαψῳδὸν ἑρμηνέα δεῖ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τῆς διανοίας γίγνεσθαι τοῖς ἀκούουσι· τοῦτο δὲ καλῶς ποιεῖν μὴ γιγνώσκοντα ὅτι λέγει ὁ ποιητὴς ἀδύνατον.

> For a rhapsode would never be good without understanding the things said by the poet. For the rhapsode ought to be a mediator of the poet's intention to the audience: but it is impossible to do this well for one who does not know what the poet is saying.

> Pl. *Ion* 530c1-c5

A rhapsode is good only if he is able to perform well his primary function, namely to be the intermediary (*hermēneus*) between the poet's intention and the audience and thereby to connect what is distant in space and time (Homer's thought, in the specific case) to the present of the public attending the performance[74]. But in order to do this the rhapsode first has to understand (*sunienai*) and know (*gignōskein*) what the poet says or, better, what he wanted to say when he composed his poetry, which is to fully grasp his intention[75]. Ion affirms that for him this has been the most demanding part of the rhapsodic art, but that he has finally become able to speak about Homer better than anyone else, even than the most renowned experts in the field like Metrodorus of Lampsacus and Stesimbrotus of Thasos (5th century BCE)[76]. Metrodorus was a follower of Anaxagoras who gave an allegorical interpretation of the Homeric poems according to which the heroes and the gods represented, respectively, physical elements and parts of the human body: for example Agamemnon is the aether, Achilles the sun and Helen

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[73] Cf. Pl. *Prot.* 347a3-5: ταῦτά μοι δοκεῖ [...] Σιμωνίδης διανοούμενος πεποιηκέναι τοῦτο τὸ ᾆσμα, "it seems to me [...] that Simonides has composed this song intending these things" (on this point, see Ford 2002, p. 85). Cf. also Arist. *Po.* 1450a6. For another interpretation of *dianoia*, see Nagy 2002, p. 29.

[74] The translation of *hermēneus* as 'mediator' and not as 'interpreter' is more compatible with the passive role of the rhapsode outlined by Plato's theory of (cf. Capuccino 2011, pp. 67-70 and Gonzales 2011, pp. 94-95).

[75] But this is what, according to Plato and contrary to the common point of view, is impossible. Rhapsodes do not understand and know Homer's thought, because, being inspired by the divinity, they are not in possession of their mental faculties.

[76] Pl. *Ion* 530c8-d3. Beside Metrodorus and Stesimbrotus, Ion mentions a certain Glaucon, whom it is not possible to identify with certainty (for some hypotheses, see Murray 1996, p. 103).

the moon, whereas Demeter is the liver, Dionysus is the spleen and Apollo the bile[77].

This method of interpreting Homer was part of a tradition which, according to ancient

sources, dated back to Theagenes of Rhegium (6th century BCE), the first to argue that

the scene of the gods' battle in the *Iliad* was an allegory for the strife of the natural

elements[78]. As to Stesimbrotus, there is no clear evidence of his activity as an allegorist,

but in Xenophon's *Symposium* it is implied that he was an expert in Homer's *huponoiai*

('under-thought' or 'hidden meaning')[79], a term which refers to any thought which lies

beneath the words of the poet and applied to a wide variety of critical approaches,

including allegories, etymologies, wordplays and the interpretations given by the

Sophists[80]. Stesimbrotus is numbered alongside Theagenes among the earliest to inquire

into Homer's poetry, birth and chronology[81], and different sources preserve his

contributions in explaining Homeric *cruces* and in offering uncommon versions of

myths, often accompanied by unusual and strange etymologies[82]. The fact that Ion

mentions these Homeric experts to exalt his abilities is an indication of their fame and it

is noteworthy that, even in this occasion, the rhapsode is presented as engaged in

intellectual competition: Ion's boast implies that he would be able to defeat any possible

expert of Homer, since he knows and can express the poet's many fine thoughts (*kalai*

dianoiai) like no one ever did. Thanks to this, he has also managed to embellish

(*kosmein*) Homer in a way that should grant him a crown from the Homerides[83]. In other

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[77] DK 61 A4. According to some testimonies, Anaxagoras was the first to argue that Homer's poetry was about justice and virtue (cf. D. L. 2.11). On Metrodorus, see Janko 1997, pp. 76-79 and Califf 2003.

[78] Cf. DK 8 A2. The scene referred to is in Hom. *Il*. 20 67ff. The traditional account sees in Theagenes' allegory a means of defending Homer from the rationalistic attacks of critics like Xenophanes. For a discussion on the evidence and the tradition, see Ford 1999, pp. 35-38.

[79] X. *Smp*. 3.6.

[80] Cf. Ford 2002, pp. 72-73; Sammons 2012, p. 58 and Califf 2003, p. 26.

[81] DK 8 A1. It has been argued that Stesimbrotus and Theagenes were rhapsodes, but the issue is controversial (cf. Ford 2002, pp. 70-72 and Janko 1997, pp. 72-73). Moreover their kind of activity does not fit with other testimonies about rhapsodic profession (see below, n. 84). On the distinction between rhapsodes and these Homeric experts, cf. Graziosi 2002, pp. 45-46.

[82] Stesimbrotus was also the teacher of the poet Antimachus of Colophon and wrote a political pamphlet *On Themistocles, Thucydides and Pericles*, where Thucydides is the politician, son of Melesias, not the historian (cf. Janko 1997, pp. 72-75).

[83] Pl. *Ion* 530d6-d8. On the embellishment of Homer, see Capuccino 2011 pp. 70-71 and Nannini 2010, p.

words, Ion is saying that he can offer and present to his audience the best possible Homer, capable of beating the rival versions of other performers and experts[84].

In addition to these elements of rhapsodic performance, Collins, who strongly argues for the rhapsodes' capacity for improvisation and innovation[85], draws the attention to two other types of skill included in their competitive repertoire. The first type was the composition of new verses or portions of verses to be inserted in the pre-existing Homeric material, so as to embellish it or to achieve unexpected effects on the audience[86]. The second type involved various aspects related to different modes of poetic competition, examples of which can be found in the description of the legendary contest between Homer and Hesiod contained in the *Certamen*[87]. The contest is set at the funeral games for king Amphidamas[88] and it sees the poets displaying their skills through a series of challenges which includes hexameter exchanges of philosophical questions, riddles and capping (the completion of verses aptly interrupted by one of the

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[23]; see also Murray 1996, p. 104. The Homerides were a guild of Homeric performers of Chios, who claimed a descent from the poet himself (on their relationship with rhapsodes, see Graziosi 2002, pp. 208-217).

[84] There are some issues related to what exactly the *dianoiai* the rhapsodes dealt with are: the fact that Ion mentions Metrodorus and Stesimbrotus, could hint that rhapsodes were engaged in allegorical interpretations of Homer as well, but this hypothesis is undermined by the passage of Xenophon's *Symposium* cited above, where it is evidently stated that rhapsodes are silly, because they can only repeat Homer's verses without knowing his *huponoiai* (like Stesimbrotus does, for example). Thus, we can infer that *dianoiai* and *huponoiai* refer to different kind of interpretations. Theories have been advanced according to which the term *huponoia* applies to a specialized knowledge not attainable by ordinary people and professional performers like rhapsodes (cf. Ford 2002, pp. 76-85 and Sammons 2012, p. 58). On the other hand, the *kalai dianoiai* Ion speaks of would be more superficial (that is, not hidden) observations on the wisdom detectable in the poems, for example regarding ethics (cf. Ford 2002, p.71 and p. 79). But the distinction is not always clear, as Ford notices about an interpretation of Simonides given in the *Republic* at 332b2-c3 (see Ford 2002, p. 85). For another reading of the rhapsodes' different approach to Homeric poetry, see Nagy 2002, pp. 29-30.

[85] 'Improvisation' is taken in the sense of "the spontaneous recomposition of traditional material [...] rearranged in a novel way" (Collins 2001, p. 130).

[86] Cf. Collins 2004, pp. 183-184 and pp. 203-218. Rhapsodes were eager to attribute their own creations to the poets whose poetry they performed; for example Cynaethus is said to have composed verses and the *Hymn to Apollo*, but to have attributed them to Homer (cf. Schol. Pind. *N*. 2.1c); the Hesiodic fragment 357 MW was very probably composed in rhapsodic circles, but it was attributed to Hesiod. On this issue, see Graziosi 2002, pp. 33-34.

[87] It is commonly acknowledged that the contest part of the *Certamen* is taken from the *Museion* of Alcidamas, the fourth century sophist pupil of Gorgias. For a discussion of the problems related to the text, its origin and dating, see Richardson 1981; see also Graziosi 2001, pp. 58-62. On the use of the *Certamen* as a source about rhapsodic performances, see Collins 2004, pp. 185-187.

[88] The place of the contest is derived from a passage of the *Works and Days* where Hesiod describes his victory at the games of Amphidamas and his dedication of the prize tripod to the Muses (cf. Hes. *Op*. 654-659).

competitors, so that it was left to the other competitor's dexterity and virtuosity to complete them in a meaningful way)[89]. At last, the two poets are requested to recite the most beautiful passage from their poems and king Panedes assigns the victory to Hesiod because in his verses he has praised agriculture and peace, whereas Homer has narrated a scene of war and slaughter[90].

Since it provides an illustration of different characteristics of that "agonistic mannerism"[91] which is an integral part of Archaic Greek poetry, the *Certamen* can be seen as an archetype of poetic competition. Beside this, it emphatically points to the strong bond existent between poetry and agonism, because even the two most important and honoured poets of Greece could not but be depicted as contenders. In a society where agonism was so deeply rooted, even the ability, skills and wisdom of its two most influential poets had to be judged. A winner had to be established, as well as a loser, without exceptions[92]. Rhapsodic performances were structured exactly around the same

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[89] For instance, Hesiod starts the contest asking what is the best thing for mortals and Homer replies that it is never to be born or, once born, to die as soon as possible (*Certamen* 75-79). At 97-101, Hesiod poses a riddle asking Homer to sing him nothing of the past, the present or the future, but to sing something all the same. Homer answers with two verses about the the tomb of Zeus (something impossible to exist). An example of capping is at 107-108, where Homer complete the verse "Then they took as meal flesh of cattle and necks of horses" with "they unyoked [the necks] covered in sweat, because they were sated with war", to avoid an improper meaning (cf. Griffith 1990, p. 192; Graziosi 2001, pp. 62-70 and Graziosi 2010, pp. 126-127). For an analysis of the challenge and its relationship with rhapsodic performances, see Collins 2004, pp. 184-191. Collins argues that capping dates back to the 6th century BCE (at least), but evidence is lacking. There are also no proofs of the actual display of capping at the Panathenaia, but Collins argues that it could well fit within the restrictions imposed by the Panathenaic Rule (cf. Collins 2004, p. 185 and pp. 193-194).

[90] Cf. *Certamen* 207-210. Hesiod recites lines 383-392 of the *Works and Days*, while Homer chooses two passages from *Iliad* XIII, lines 126-133 and 339-344. It has to be noticed that Hesiod tells us that, after his victory, he dedicated the tripod to the Muses who initiated him into "sweet song", using the traditional adjective *liguros*, *-a*, *-on*. This suggests that aesthetic factors, not moral ones, as shown in the *Certamen*, have been decisive to his victory (cf. Nannini 2010, p. 45). On the verdict and its meaning, see also Graziosi 2002, pp. 172-180.

[91] Griffith 1990, p.191. Griffith's article offers a good survey of the different manifestations of this mannerism (*idem*, pp. 192-200).

[92] Graziosi argues that the contest depicted in the *Certamen* is not presented as a zero-sum game (cf. Graziosi 2001, pp. 68-72). I think that the question is all about perspective: if we look at the whole contest, it is true that we are reluctant to see Homer as the loser, since he proves on many occasions the extent of his ability, obliging Hesiod to change his offensive strategies, moreover he gains the public's approval. But if we consider who takes the prize in the end, we have here a clear example of a zero-sum game. Of the two contenders, one wins only if the other one loses. Had king Panedes chosen Homer, probably we would have felt less at odds with the final result and we would have been more ready to say that there was a unique winner. More generally, Griffith correctly points out that the question of the final verdict in contests like this relates to the parameters and to the judge selected for the decision; once these have been decided, the competition cannot but have a winner and a loser, independently from the apparent

principle, since rhapsodes employed and displayed their skills chiefly with the aim of beating every possible opponent. They were engaged in intellectual and technical struggles, where victory and prizes were at stake. In the end, rhapsodic contests were nothing but one of the numerous manifestations of the widespread competition present at every level of Greek society and culture.

1.3 - Dramatic festivals

The competitive element characteristic of rhapsodic performances was a central feature of dramatic festivals as well. As in the case of rhapsodes, it is Athens which provides the most known and best documented examples of drama contests, which were an integral part of the festivals dedicated to Dionysus: the City Dionysia (also known as the Great Dionysia), the Lenaia and the Rural Dionysia[93].

The City Dionysia was held in honour of Dionysus Eleutheros and celebrated the transfer of the god's image from Eleutherai, a village on the borders between Attica and Boeotia, to his temple in Athens[94]. The festival took place in the month of Elaphebolion (corresponding roughly to March) and saw a high participation of Athenians as well as of a great number of people from all over Greece, who could travel more safely thanks to the favourable weather conditions of the period[95]. The celebrations began with a great procession to the god's precinct where a sacrifice of a bull and other victims took place.

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rightness or not of the verdict (a similar case occurs in the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs*; cf. Griffith 1990, pp. 188-192).

[93] In Athens there was another Dionysiac festival called the Anthesteria, from the name of the month in which it took place (Anthesterion, corresponding approximately to the end of February), but it did not feature dramatic performances, except for a contest of comic actors dating back to the third quarter of the third century BCE (cf. Pickard-Cambridge 1988, pp. 10-25).

[94] The transfer was attributed to Pegasos, probably an emissary of the cult of Dionysus. Actually, the circumstances of the event have legendary traits inserted in the wider account of the diffusion of the god's cult in Greece. However, it is quite sure that the festival gained more importance in the sixth century BCE, under Peisistratus' tyranny, but it was after the Cleisthenic reform that it became a central event in the social and civic life of the *polis*. On the origins of the City Dionysia, see Pickard-Cambridge 1988, pp. 57-59 and Cartledge 1997, pp. 22-23.

[95] Cf. Rehm 2007, p. 188. On the audience of the City Dionysia, see Goldhill 1997, pp. 57-66.

The following days were reserved for choral competitions, both dithyrambic and dramatic, the latter including tragedy and comedy[96]. Dithyrambic contests were between ten choruses of men and ten of boys, each counting fifty members and representing one of the ten *phylai* of the city. As to dramatic contests, the competitors were three tragic playwrights, each presenting three tragedies and a satyr play, and five comic poets, each contending with only one play[97]. Competition of dithyrambic and tragic choruses date back at the end of the 6th century, whereas comic contests started in 486 BCE. From c. 449 BCE, there was also a contest for the best tragic actor, while its comic equivalent was introduced only between 329 and 312 BCE[98]. The centrality of theatrical contests in the festival structure was further stressed by the ceremony of the *proagōn*, a prelude to the forthcoming competitions held before the official beginning of the celebrations, during which the poets, with the actors and the members of the chorus (*choreutai*), mounted a temporary platform in the Odeion and announced to the public the content of the plays they were to present[99]. At the end of the festival, the winners in each category were appointed by a complex method of judgment, strictly directed and controlled by the *polis* in order to avoid possible frauds. After the performances, ten judges, one for each *phylē*, wrote their order of merit on tablets which were placed in an urn. Then, the final verdict was decided on five tablets drawn by lot and winners were proclaimed by an herald and crowned in front of the whole public[100].

[96] Contests in comedy were introduced in 486 BCE, see Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p 82.

[97] There were exceptions to the rule: for example, during the Peloponnesian War, the number of contending comic poets was reduced to three. In 340 BCE tragic poets presented only two tragedies and in many years of the second century comic contests were omitted (cf. Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p. 73 and p. 83).

[98] For the dating and the extant evidence, see Pickard-Cambridge 1988, pp. 71-73.

[99] Ancient sources link the *proagōn* with tragedy only and it is very probable that it was solely associated with the advertising of tragic theatre, given its centrality in the festival programme. The Odeion was built in c. 444 BCE, but it is unknown whether and where the *proagōn* was held before this date. There is also uncertainty about the content of the poets' presentations and the audience attending the event. A famous *proagōn* was that of 406 BCE, when, according to an anecdote, Sophocles appeared in mourning after having heard the news of Euripides' death. On the *proagōn* and the related questions, see Pickard-Cambridge 1988, pp.67-68; Goldhill 1997, p. 55 and Wilson 2000, pp. 96-97 with notes.

[100] The entire procedure is not clear and many points remain obscure, even regarding the initial appointment of judges. For a general survey, see Pickard-Cambridge 1988, pp. 95-99 and Wilson 2000,

The City Dionysia represented a moment of great importance also from the point of view of civic identity and relationships with other cities, especially in the fifth century, when the Athenian empire reached its highest splendour. This fact is well represented by four ceremonies hosted in the theatre before competitions: the first was a libation poured by the ten generals, the leading military and political figures of the *polis* – a rare act which stressed the power and the capacity of organization of the state. The second was the announcement on the part of an herald of the names of the citizens who had been awarded for having rendered services to the state. Thirdly, there was a display of tribute from the cities under the Athenian empire and, at last, a parade of the ephebes whose fathers had been killed in war. These young people were maintained by the state and, once they reached manhood, paraded in the theatre in full military panoply and swore they would fight and die for the *polis* as their fathers had done.[101] Since these ceremonies regarded the city as a whole and were performed in the presence of foreigners, they obtained the double effect of increasing the citizens' sense of participation in the life of the *polis* and of showing to other cities the great power of Athens.

The Lenaia festival was dedicated to Dionysus Lenaios, an epithet whose origin could be linked to the name of the winepress (*lēnos*) or to an appellative of the maenads (*lēnai*), the female worshippers of the god[102]. Compared to the City Dionysia it had a more local aspect, chiefly due to its being held in the month of Gamelion (January-February), a fact which prevented foreigners from coming and attending it, because of the storms so frequent in that period[103]. Little is known about the nature of the ceremonies which took place during the festival, but there is evidence of a procession

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pp. 98-102. The best actors received also a money prize (see Cartledge 1997, p. 26).
[101] Cf. Goldhill 1997, p. 56.
[102] On the origin of the name, see Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p. 29 and Cartledge 1997, p. 8.
[103] A fact mentioned by Aristophanes in the *Acharnians* (Ar. *Ach*. 504-505).

conducted by the Archon Basileus and the *epimelētai*[104]. Dramatic competitions at the Lenaia date back to the middle of the fifth century: the first one introduced was the contest of comic poets (c. 442-440 BCE), followed by that of tragic playwrights (c. 440-430 BCE). Prizes were assigned also to the best actor in each genre. Five comic poets competed at the Lenaia, each with one play, while the number of tragic poets was limited to two, with two tragedies (but no satyr play) apiece[105].

The Rural Dionysia consisted of a set of festivities celebrated and organized by each deme of Athens in the month of Poseidon (approximately December). Their central event was a procession escorting a *phallos*, a ceremony aimed at promoting and favouring the fertility of the soil in the wintery period. The date of introduction of dramatic contests is not known and their organisation is not clearly reconstructable but, according to the evidence, they were on a smaller scale compared to those of the other two festivals and often were limited to tragedy or comedy only; dithyrambic contests were not regularly held either[106]. The most important celebration was that of the Peiraeus, already mentioned in the fifth century and put at the same level of the City Dionysia and the Lenaia according to a fourth century law[107]. Evidence for the other demes is from the fourth century onwards and very scarce, since it regards approximately fourteen of the 139 attic demes, but thanks to a passage of Plato's *Republic*, it is arguable that the festivals took place on different days, so as to permit people to attend them at ease[108].

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[104] On the procession and other ceremonies, see Pickard-Cambridge 1988, pp. 34-35.

[105] The higher number of comic poets stresses the fact that comedy had a special relevance at the Lenaia, differently from the Great Dionysia where the greatest importance was reserved to tragedy. During the Peloponnesian War the number of competing comic poets was reduced to three (see Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p. 41).

[106] Cf. Rehm 2007, p. 188. For a survey of the events in the demes, see Pickard-Cambridge 1988, pp. 42-54.

[107] The law of Euegoros prohibited the exaction of debts and taking of security in the period of the three festivals (cf. Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p. 46).

[108] The passage is in Pl. *R.* V 475d5-8.

As argued above, the celebrations of Dionysiac cult represented a moment of great importance for the life of the *polis.* So great was the significance of choral contests that they were placed under the direct control of the city through the institution of the *chorēgia.* The *chorēgia* fell within the category of the *leitourgiai*[109] and consisted in the maintenance and training of a chorus on the part of a wealthy citizen, who took the title of *chorēgos.* The appointment of this functionary was the responsibility of the Eponymous Archon (the Basileus in the case of the Lenaia)[110], who chose among the richest citizens of Athens, often voluntarily offering themselves to undertake this task, which, even though expensive and demanding, represented an occasion for personal promotion[111]. The number of *chorēgoi* depended on the amount of choruses necessary for the different performances of the festival: as to the Great Dionysia, for example, it was necessary to enlist twenty *chorēgoi* (two for each *phylē*) for the dithyrambic choruses, three for tragedy and five for comedy[112].

After the appointment, the Archon assigned the *chorēgoi* to the poets he had previously selected for the composition of the plays[113]. In order to avoid any kind of favouritism, or the least suspect of it, this assignment was made by lot, but it is unclear

[109] *Leitourgiai* were public services performed and financed by private citizens, as in the case of *triērarchia.* On other *leitourgiai*, see Wilson 2000, pp. 32-49.

[110] The appointment of *chorēgoi* for tragedy always remained in the hands of the Archon, whereas that for comedy passed to the *phylai* in the last part of the fourth century (cf. Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p. 86 and Wilson 2000, p. 51). The *chorēgoi* for dithyrambic choruses were selected by the *phylai* and it seems that the choice was free from personal interventions on the part of the Archon, who limited himself to a formal designation (cf. Wilson 2000, p. 52 and notes). In the case of Rural Dionysia the *chorēgoi* were appointed by the demarch (see Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p. 46).

[111] There could be even cases of *chorēgoi* of limited resources who borrowed money from richer men. The requirement of citizenship was valid for the Great Dionysia only, since at the Lenaia also metics could serve as *chorēgoi* (on these points, see Wilson 2000, p. 53 and p. 29, respectively). It has also to be remembered that the person chosen by the Archon could not accept the service on the grounds of one of the different recognized causes of exemption (a process called *skepsis*). Otherwise, he could claim that another man had better conditions for performing it than he and start a procedure (*antidosis*) to solve the question. In both cases, it was the Archon who had to make the final decision (cf. *idem*, p. 57).

[112] The total number of *chorēgoi* could change in particular occasions, especially of economic nature, when it was necessary to distribute the burden of the task among two or more men (which, consequently, were called *synchorēgoi*). This practice was common in the Rural Dionysia, but it took place also at the City festival in 406/5 BCE, nearly at the end of the Peloponnesian War (cf. Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p. 87 and Wilson 2000, p. 265).

[113] The selecting procedure of poets remains obscure, but the scarce evidence points out that it consisted in a real competition. On this point, see Wilson 2000, pp. 61-65. Poets, as well as actors, were paid by the *polis* (cf. Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p. 90 and Rehm 2007, p. 189).

if this procedure allocated the *chorēgos* directly to a poet or an order of choice on the part of the *chorēgoi*[114]. At any rate, once the procedure was completed, it was the *chorēgos'* duty to provide everything necessary for the best possible result of his task: he had to prepare a place where his team could train *(choregēion),* to recruit the members of the chorus[115] as well as an expert (*hupodidaskalos*) in music, diet and physical exercise to support the poet during the preparation of the performance. He also supplied the costumes for the members of the chorus, and in the case of drama, the masks and the remaining material required by the staging of the play.

The great effort required of the *chorēgoi* was amply repaid by the high social visibility they obtained, which obviously reached the maximum in the case of victory. For example, they occupied a privileged position in the procession that began the City Dionysia, an opportunity which was certainly well exploited, as shown by the reports on Alcibiades and Demosthenes on such an occasion[116]. Moreover, if victorious, the *chorēgos* had the great satisfaction of being crowned not only in front of the audience, but also before the other *chorēgoi*, who had to suffer the heavy burden of defeat. Victories were also followed by great celebrations (the *epinikia*), which can be considered, even though informally, the culmination of the agonistic programme of the festivals[117]. However, the full solemnization of the success was achieved through the choregic monument, dedicated to Dionysus as a thanksgiving for the victory and

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[114] See Wilson 2000, p. 68. Actors were chosen by the state and assigned by lot to the poets as well, at least from the middle of the fifth century. Previously either the poet recited in his own play or hired professional actors (cf. Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p. 81).

[115] Foreigners were not admitted in the city choruses. At the Lenaia there were foreigners, but they were, in effect, metics; this was certainly due to the possibility that, as seen, metics could serve as *chorēgoi* (cf. Wilson 2000, pp. 80-81).

[116] It seems that Alcibiades wore a purple robe and captured the attention of the public, who gazed at him in adoration. Demosthenes was said to have paid a goldsmith to make a golden garland and robe for him to wear during the procession (cf. Wilson 2000, p. 98). During public occasions, appearance was an important element exploited even by Sophists and other intellectuals, see Tell 2007.

[117] References to *epinikia* can be found in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, where he talks of a Lenaian victory (Ar. *Ach*. 1154-1155) and in Plato's *Symposion*, set during the celebration of Agathon's victory in a tragic contest. It is debated whether Agathon won the Lenaia or the City Dionysia: Pickard-Cambridge thinks the Lenaia (Pickard-Cambridge 1988, p. 41), whereas Goldhill and Cartledge the Dionysia (Goldhill 1997, p. 57 and Cartledge 1997, p. 5). For a discussion, see Wilson 2000, p. 103 and p. 345, n. 206.

representing an everlasting sign of the fame gained in the contests[118]. Thus, *chorēgia* was configured as a deeply competitive institution, nourished by those intense desires of honour (*philotimia*) and victory (*philonikia*), upon which the entire system of Athenian *leitourgiai* was based. Since the honour gained was one of the most precious steps in the construction of one's own civic identity and people used it to promote themselves before the eyes of the *polis*, the risk of an increasing personal power was so concrete that in many cases it was hard to distinguish whether the task was undertaken only for the common interest or whether it was a sign of more obscure and anti-democratic tendencies[119]. With all these issues at stake, it is not surprising that in ancient sources the term *stasis*, the same used for 'civil war', is often employed to describe the context of choral performances and contests[120].

All these features related to theatrical production then portray a multilayered agonism which concerned and affected not only poets, but also choruses and *chorēgoi*, the *phylai* and the *polis* in its entirety. Many aspects of society and civic life were represented on the stage of dramatic festivals, but competition was the only, irreplaceable protagonist of the play.

Conclusion

The examination of poetic performances in different institutionalized settings has shown the high degree of agonism which characterized the production and delivery of poetry.

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[118] The richest and most common monuments were those for dithyrambic victories: this was an effect of the custom of awarding a prize bronze tripod, a traditional symbol of wealth and prestige, only to dithyrambic winners and not to those of drama. The monuments for dramatic victories were limited to the Lenaia and the Rural Dionysia. On choregic monuments, see Wilson 2000, pp. 198-252; for an explanation of the different treatment of theatrical success at the City Dionysia and the consequent absence of choregic monuments, see *idem*, pp. 251-252.

[119] Cf. Goldhill 1997, p. 57 and Wilson 2000, pp. 172-184.

[120] Cf. Wilson 2000, p. 169 and p. 315 n. 42. Choregic competition came to an end only during the regime of Demetrios of Phaleron (317/316-308/307 BCE), when *chorēgia* was suppressed and replaced by *agonōthesia*, a single office which administered all the tasks previously distributed among different *chorēgoi* (cf. *idem*, pp. 270-276).

Poetic competitions were of great importance from a social, cultural and political point of view: in the more private, but not less socially relevant context of the symposium, poetry represented a means of reaffirmation and preservation of the values of the *hetairia* and, at the same time, an instrument to attack adversaries both within and outside the group. In the case of rhapsodic and dramatic contests, competition explicitly assumed a public character and relevance, as it was organized, and thus controlled, by civic authorities. Moreover, the direct involvement of private citizens in the organization of the events, as in the sponsorship of plays during the Dionysia, could have significant consequences on the political life of the city, since it was a means of gaining visibility and influence. Besides their being performed in competitive settings, poetic compositions were often characterized by overt agonistic traits, as exemplified by the practice of *metapoiēsis* in the sympotic games, which consisted in the correction of renowned verses of other poets, and by the different forms of contest of the rhapsodes' repertoire, which reflected the traditional modes of poetic competitions.

With a grasp of this competitive context, I will now move on to evaluate how Xenophanes, Parmenides, Epicharmus and Empedocles entered the poetic game and what innovations they introduced with their poetical productions.

Chapter 2

Xenophanes' poetry and the eradication of *stasis*

Xenophanes' thought and poetic production are deeply influenced by the competitive context which, as shown in the previous chapter, characterized Archaic Greek poetry. Ancient *testimonia* portray him as engaged in a harsh criticism of traditional religious beliefs, exemplified by his attacks at the representations of the gods found in the Homeric and Hesiodic poems. His polemic stance is well represented by the production of *Silloi* ('satires', 'lampoons'), brief poems in hexameters with insertions of iambic trimeters, in which he ridicules anthropomorphic conceptions of the divinity and censures Homer and Hesiod for having portrayed the gods as committing immoral deeds[1]. But his criticism and mockery go beyond such traditional poetic representation of gods, as shown by two elegies in which he, respectively, appears to poke fun at Pythagoras and attacks the honours reserved to the winners of athletic competitions[2].

Besides the overt polemic tone of some of his fragments, a report by Diogenes Laertius seeks to place Xenophanes directly in the middle of actual contests, as it states that he recited his own poems rhapsodically (ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐρραψῴδει τὰ ἑαυτοῦ, "But he also used to recite as rhapsode his own poems")[3]. This testimony is debated and much depends on how we translate the verb *rhapsōdeō*, which, as argued by Ford, can simply indicate a public performance of poetry (usually without musical accompaniment) without specific reference to rhapsodic profession[4]. On the contrary, Gentili maintains that Xenophanes was indeed a rhapsode whose activity was similar to

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[1] See below. In antiquity, Xenophanes was considered the actual inventor of the genre (cf. Nannini 2011, p. 81).
[2] On Pythagoras: "And they say that once as he was passing by a puppy being beaten,/ he felt compassion and said this:/ 'Stop, don't beat it, since in truth it is the soul of a friend/ which I recognized upon hearing it cry out'" (DK 21 B7, tr. Lesher). For a commentary of the fragment, see Lesher 1992, pp. 78-81 and Schäfer 2009. On athletes, see below.
[3] D. L. 9.18.10ff.
[4] Cf. Ford 1988, p. 303; 2002, p. 50. On this point, see also Granger 2007, p. 424, n. 43.

that of Theagenes of Rhegium, with the difference that, instead of allegoric commentaries, he accompanied his recitation of Homeric poems with critical remarks[5]. Some considerations seem to exclude the idea that Xenophanes was a rhapsode: besides the fact that Diogenes Laertius' use of *rhapsōdeō* is not decisive evidence, ancient views on rhapsodic activity, as we discussed in the previous chapter, are at odds with the critical, autonomous and original traits of Xenophanes' poetry and thought[6]. It is perhaps more accurate to classify Xenophanes as an itinerant sage-poet, who recited his poems at symposia in order to disseminate his new and critical ideas[7]. Elegy DK 21 B1, discussed later in the chapter, well exemplifies the use of such occasions as opportunities for presenting his thought and marking his distance from the tradition of the Homeric and Hesiodic poems[8]. For the following discussion, however, it is not necessary to solve the issue related to Xenophanes' activity, or to adopt a specific reading, since the analysis will focus on the competitive stances present in his poetry, and thus leads to conclusions which hold independently of his being a professional rhapsode or not.

I will start by examining Xenophanes' elegy B1, where he describes the characteristics the ideal symposium should have, with particular regard to the guests' behaviour and the prescriptions about the right poetic contents to recite, which exclude narrations of human and divine strife. As I will argue, such an exclusion is based upon moral considerations about social and civic life, which I will further evaluate through the analysis of elegy DK 21 B2, where, by attacking the excessive honours reserved to

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[5] Cf. Gentili 2006, p. 241. On Theagenes of Rhegium, see Chapter 1, p. 37.

[6] See Chapter 1, p. 38 n. 84.

[7] Cf. Ford 2002, p. 67; Granger 2007, p. 427. On the role of the symposium in the dissemination of poetry, see Chapter 1, pp. 18-19. Xenophanes talks of his wandering activity in DK 21 B8: "Already there are seven and sixty years,/ tossing about my counsel throughout the land of Greece,/ and from my birth up till then there were twenty and five to add to these,/ if I know how to speak truly concerning these things" (tr. Lesher). For a commentary, see Lesher 1992, pp. 69-71. The use of the symposium as the main means of diffusion of his poetry does not exclude the possibility that he publicly recited some of his poems. His *Foundation of Colophon*, for example, has been taken to be as destined to public performances, see Bowie 1986, pp. 31-32.

[8] See below.

athletes, Xenophanes stresses the importance of his poetry for the welfare of the *polis*, since his teachings, by contrast with athletic victories, effectively contribute to the city's *eunomiē* (2.1). Furthermore, the ban on poems about battle among divine beings, defined as "fictions of men of old"[9], is motivated by Xenophanes' original notion of the divinity, which is highly critical against the traditional beliefs about gods, and offers important consequences on Xenophanes' ethic-religious conceptions (2.2). Then, I will point out the implications of Xenophanes' thought on competition and how it represents a novel way of approaching the problem of conflict both in the intellectual and social sphere (2.3).

2.1 – Xenophanes' symposium

Xenophanes' elegy B1 is devoted to the description of an ideal symposium which, although containing various elements traditionally belonging to sympotic imagery, presents original traits related to his moral and theological conceptions. In what follows, I will analyse the poem by drawing the attention to the ethical-religious framework in which the prescriptions for the appropriate realization of the feast are embedded. In particular, I will focus on the recommendation about the proper poetic contents the guests should perform. As I will show, the exclusion of violent topics from the symposium, like the stories about struggles of Titans, Giants and Centaurs which Xenophanes condemns, was a practice shared by other poets as well, but in Xenophanes this choice is motivated by moral considerations, which ultimately rest upon his original theological views.

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[9] DK 21 B1.22.

The poem can be divided in two main parts: the first (ll. 1-12) contains a description of the sympotic setting, while the second (ll. 12-24) delineates the ideal features the symposium should have. The text runs as follows:

νῦν γὰρ δὴ ζάπεδον καθαρὸν καὶ χεῖρες ἁπάντων
 καὶ κύλικες· πλεκτοὺς δ᾽ ἀμφιτιθεῖ στεφάνους,
ἄλλος δ᾽ εὐῶδες μύρον ἐν φιάληι παρατείνει·
 κρητὴρ δ᾽ ἕστηκεν μεστὸς εὐφροσύνης·
ἄλλος δ᾽ οἶνος ἑτοῖμος, ὃς οὔποτέ φησι προδώσειν,   5
 μείλιχος ἐν κεράμοις, ἄνθεος ὀζόμενος·
ἐν δὲ μέσοις ἁγνὴν ὀδμὴν λιβανωτὸς ἵησιν,
 ψυχρὸν δ᾽ ἐστὶν ὕδωρ καὶ γλυκὺ καὶ καθαρόν·
παρκέαται δ᾽ ἄρτοι ξανθοὶ γεραρή τε τράπεζα
 τυροῦ καὶ μέλιτος πίονος ἀχθομένη·   10
βωμὸς δ᾽ ἄνθεσιν ἂν τὸ μέσον πάντηι πεπύκασται,
 μολπὴ δ᾽ ἀμφὶς ἔχει δώματα καὶ θαλίη.
χρὴ δὲ πρῶτον μὲν θεὸν ὑμνεῖν εὔφρονας ἄνδρας
 εὐφήμοις μύθοις καὶ καθαροῖσι λόγοις,
σπείσαντάς τε καὶ εὐξαμένους τὰ δίκαια δύνασθαι   15
 πρήσσειν· ταῦτα γὰρ ὦν ἐστι προχειρότερον,
οὐχ ὕβρεις· πίνειν δ᾽ ὁπόσον κεν ἔχων ἀφίκοιο
 οἴκαδ᾽ ἄνευ προπόλου μὴ πάνυ γηραλέος.
ἀνδρῶν δ᾽ αἰνεῖν τοῦτον ὃς ἐσθλὰ πιὼν ἀναφαίνει,
 ὡς ἦι μνημοσύνη καὶ τόνος ἀμφ᾽ ἀρετῆς,   20
οὔ τι μάχας διέπειν Τιτήνων οὐδὲ Γιγάντων
 οὐδὲ < > Κενταύρων, πλάσμα<τα> τῶν προτέρων,
ἢ στάσιας σφεδανάς· τοῖς οὐδὲν χρηστὸν ἔνεστιν·
 θεῶν <δὲ> προμηθείην αἰὲν ἔχειν ἀγαθήν[10].

For now the floor is pure, as are the hands of all,
and the cups; one [servant] places plaited garlands on us,
while another proffers fragrant myrrh in a dish;
the mixing bowl is in place, brimming with festivity,
and other wine stands ready, promising never to run out on us,
mild in its jars, giving out its bouquet.
In our midst, frankincense wafts its holy scent;
and there is water, cool, sweet, and pure;
at hand are golden loaves and a lordly table,
groaning with cheese and thick honey;
the altar in the middle has been decked on all sides with flowers,
and song and celebration fill the hall.
Now it behooves men at the feast first to hymn the god
with reverent words and pure speeches
after they have made libations and prayed to be able to do
what is right; for this is at hand –
not acts of *hubris*. And each must drink only so much as to get back
home without a servant guiding the way, except if he be very old.
As for the guests, applaud him who gives a show of noble deeds when
drinking as memory and striving for excellence enable him,
one who does not summon up battles of Titans, Giants,
or Centaurs—fabrications of men of old—

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[10] The text is that of West's *IEG*.

or violent civil strife; in such things there is no good[11].
But always keep a good attentiveness for the gods[12].

<div align="center">DK 21 B1</div>

The descriptive section focuses on the typical elements of the sympotic scene, from the concrete objects used in the party (like the cups, the mixing bowl, the table) to the atmosphere of merriment (*euphrosunē*) and celebration (*thaliē*) which united the guests[13]. But these traditional topics are dealt with in a particular perspective, as Xenophanes emphasizes their close relationship to religious practice through a precise vocabulary choice[14]. For example, the repetition of the term *katharos*, used to characterize the floor, the guests' hands, the cups, the water and, in the second part, the speeches appropriate to the occasion, conveys a notion of purity which is not merely material, but also spiritual[15]. Moreover, the incense is said to emanate a "holy scent" from an altar placed in the middle of the room, a position which further strengthens the image of a situation that is first and foremost considered as an offering to the divinity[16]. This specific depiction of the sympotic surroundings and the stress laid on the purity of the setting in all its details function as a prelude to the call to piety and correct behaviour developed in the second part: exactly like the concrete elements of the sympotic surroundings, the participants must be pure and keep a conduct proper to the honouring of the gods[17].

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[11] On *chrēston*, see below.
[12] I follow, with modifications, Ford's translation (cf. Ford 2002, pp. 53-55).
[13] On *euphrosunē* as a key concept in the description of sympotic atmosphere, see Vetta 1983, pp. XXXV-XXXVI.
[14] For an analysis of the religious connotation of the terms employed by Xenophanes, see Defradas 1962, pp. 351-355. He argues that Xenophanes is actually describing a religious symposium of Eleatic philosophers (see Defradas 1962); for a criticism of this position, see Marcovich 1978, pp. 15-16. Vetta agrees with Defradas on the accentuation of the religious aspects, but thinks that the symposium takes place at the presence of a tyrant or of regal patron, probably after a solemn sacrificial meal (cf. Vetta 1983, p. XLIX and Vetta 1996, p. 207).
[15] Cf. Defradas 1962, pp. 351-352.
[16] On the function of the altar, see Vetta 1996, p. 207.
[17] Cf. Lesher 1992, p. 51.

The set of precepts in the second half of the elegy is introduced by *chrē*, which immediately conveys the idea of appropriateness[18]. Furthermore, the central importance of piety is reinforced by the fact that the first and the last line of the section contain a reference to the divinity, thus producing a ring structure which functions as a frame for all the rules of conduct[19]. As a consequence, each of them is directly linked to the basic principle which invites us to respect the gods stated in the first and final line[20]. The other prescriptions are, in order, to hymn the god with pure words after having made libations and prayed for the ability to act justly (ll. 13-17); to drink moderately (ll. 17-18); to praise the guest who, speaking properly and pursuing excellence (*aretē*), displays virtue (ll. 19-23). As usual, *aretē* is referred to as the aim to which the participants must tend, but here, being inserted in a framework of piety, the call for excellence acquires special significance, since the striving for *aretē* also includes the desire to act justly for which the guests pray to god. The prayer marks a novelty as it does not ask merely for success or divine protection, but for the power to act according to what is right, or, more precisely, for the ability to choose to do the right action and avoid acts of *hubris*[21]. Acting rightly regards also the guests' conduct at the symposium, which, I would like to stress, is considered as a manifestation of piety[22]. Morality is thus doubly linked to the divine sphere, as god is invoked to assure the achievement of what is right and, at the same time, is honoured by appropriate behaviour at the feast.

The prescriptions for the correct sympotic conduct pertain also to the poetic performances appropriate to the solemnity of the context[23]. For, as shown in the

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[18] Cf. *Adesp. eleg.* 27 West discussed at pp. 22-24.

[19] Cf. Marcovich 1978, p. 4.

[20] For an alternative reading of the final line, see Fränkel 1975, p. 327.

[21] Cf. Fränkel 1975, p. 327; Marcovich 1978, p. 8; Lesher 1992, p. 52. For an alternative reading of line 17, deriving from accepting the variant *hubris* instead of *hubreis*, see Lesher 1992, p. 49.

[22] Lesher sees an ambiguity in the scope of the prayer, as it is not specified whether it concerns only the symposium or one's daily conduct outside of it (cf. Lesher 1992, p. 52). As I will show in the following, this distinction does not hold, as acting justly at the symposium is a necessary condition for being a good citizen. See below.

[23] For a commentary on the other points, see Marcovich 1978, pp. 7-10 and Lesher 1992, p. 52.

previous chapter, the recitation of poetry represented an opportunity for the guests to display themselves[24]. According to Xenophanes, the choice of the poetry to be sung during the feast ought to be determined both by memory and the moral teaching it could transmit (ὡς ἦι μνημοσύνη καὶ τόνος ἀμφ᾽ ἀρετῆς, "as memory and striving for excellence enable him")[25]. Indeed, the mention of memory (*mnemosunē*), the mother of the Muses, conveys the importance attributed to poetic recitations and, at the same time, is a direct reference to one of the performing modalities used by the guests, namely, the reuse of pre-existing compositions instead of improvised songs[26]. But not all content are admitted, as Xenophanes explicitly rejects poems dealing with the battles of Titans, Giants and Centaurs, and civic strife[27]. Different factors motivate this choice, and in order to better understand the import of Xenophanes' position, it is first useful to consider it in the context of other similar rejections. The exclusion of violent topics from the symposium is found, for example, in an elegy by Anacreon, where the poet says that he does not love the man who, while drinking, speaks of war and strife, but rather the man who sings of love, thus contributing to the general merriment[28]. The ban on these themes has been interpreted as a formal rejection of the genre of epic which the poets made to promote their own poetry: moral and parainetic for Xenophanes, and erotic for Anacreon[29]. Another refusal of epic has been identified in the *Encomium for Polycrates* by Ibycus, where, by means of a long *praeteritio* of the Trojan war and of its

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[24] See Chapter 1, pp. 22-23.

[25] B1.20. For a discussion of the textual problems and the possible interpretations of this verse, see Marcovich 1978, p. 14.

[26] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 20-21. Memory is, for example, mentioned also by Solon (Sol. 13.1 West). Marcovich suggests that, alongside his own, Xenophanes could here refer to the recitations of Solonian elegies (cf. Marcovich 1978, p. 11).

[27] Others have interpreted *stasias* as referring to mythical strife, whether among gods or humans. For a discussion of this point, see Ford 2002, p. 56, n. 50.

[28] Anacr. 56 Gent.: "I do not like the man who while drinking his wine beside the full mixing-bowl/ talks of strife and tearful war:/ I like him who by mingling the splendid gifts of the Muses and Aphrodite/ remembers the loveliness of the feast" (tr. Campbell). Similarly, Stesichorus (210 Page): "Join me, Muse, in rejecting stories of battle,/ and celebrate weddings of gods and banquets of men/ and feasts of the blessed" (tr. West).

[29] Cf. Vetta 1983, pp. L-LI.

heroes, the poet alludes to, and thus praises, the beauty and the naval power of the future tyrant of Samos[30]. However, despite the appearance, these cases do not represent an exclusion of epic *tout court*. In Anacreon, for instance, the ban on war topics appears to be based upon considerations about the occasion of performance: since the symposium is essentially a moment of cheerfulness, the content of poetry should not deal with subjects which could spoil the atmosphere of the party. Bacchylides explicitly states this principle in one of his epinicians, where he says that in each human activity what counts most is the right moment (*kairos*): as a consequence, war subjects are not appropriate to festivities, nor cheerful songs to battles[31]. As to Ibycus' *Encomium*, much more than signifying a total rejection of epic, the initial *praeteritio* is rather a skilful rhetorical move used to exalt the characteristic of the praised person: refusing to speak, for example, of the beauty of an epic character in order to concentrate on that of Polycrates, is equivalent to stating that the youth is as beautiful as a hero, if not more[32].

Even in the case of Xenophanes' elegy the idea that he is rejecting epic *qua* epic is to be excluded. For the choice of Titans, Giants and Centaurs as symbol of the type of song which must be avoided hints at a specific type of conduct which ought to be condemned, rather than at epic as a genre. On the one hand, Centaurs are traditionally characterized by violence and, more importantly, by the incapacity of respecting the rules of social life, including the right behaviour at banquets: in the *Odyssey* is narrated the episode of the centaur Eurytion who, as a guest of Peirithous, drank too much and committed evil acts which eventually led to the feud between humans and centaurs[33],

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[30] Cf. Vetta 1983, p. LI-LII; Gentili 2006, pp. 201-205.

[31] B. *Ep.* 14. 12-18: "In battles with their load of sorrow the note of the lyre and/ clear-voiced choirs are not fitting, nor in festivities the clang of/ clashing bronze: for each men's activities the appropriate/ moment is best" (tr. Campbell).

[32] Cf. Nannini 2011, pp. 83-85. A similar stratagem is used by Sappho: "Some think a fleet, a troop of horse/ or soldiery the finest sight/ in all the world; but I say, what one loves" (Sapph. 16.1-4 Voigt, tr. West). On Ibycus' *Encomium*, see further Chapter 4, pp. 129-130.

[33] Hom. *Od*. 21.295-304. On the Centaurs as symbol of incivility, see Babut 1974, p. 102. Ford notes the irony in making Antinous, the criminal suitor, narrate the story of Eurytion at a banquet (Cf. Ford 2002, pp. 56-57).

while Theognis chooses Centaurs as a symbol of the *hubris* which might lead to the destruction of cities[34]. On the other hand, the battles of Giants and Titans are emblematic cases of strife internal to a community, as these divine creatures rebelled against the cosmic order established by Zeus[35]. The preoccupation with strife is further stressed by the fact that, alongside these mythical subjects, Xenophanes explicitly rejects those poems about civic discords and political rivalry which were frequently sung at the symposium[36]. The poetic topics excluded by Xenophanes thus represent the exact opposite of the moral and right behaviour invoked in the previous lines. They are not appropriate to the occasion, not merely on the grounds of an opposition between cheerful moments and tearful stories, as in other poets, but, more importantly, because they are not consistent with the moral conduct the guest should adopt.

The above considerations show that Xenophanes' concern about poetic performances goes much further than the simple choice of songs appropriate to a festive occasion. For Xenophanes is interested in the practical consequences which poetry might have on individual behaviour and, consequently, on society as a whole. This aspect is stressed by describing the poems about divine and civic struggles as not possessing anything *chrēston*. Since the term *chrēston* generally indicates what is good, including what is considered as morally good, Xenophanes' characterization poses these poems directly in opposition to those dealing with noble and virtuous deeds previously mentioned as the appropriate performances for the symposium[37]. In other words, to sing about antisocial behaviour and *staseis* contradicts the moral injunctions contained in the previous lines, which prescribe purity both in action and speech[38]. It is important to

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[34] See Thgn. 541-542.
[35] Cf. Ford 2002, p. 56.
[36] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 24-28. This passage has also been interpreted as an allusion to Alcaeus' poetry, but since songs on political strife were quite common, it is not necessary to see here a direct reference to the poet of Mytilene (on this point, see Ford *loc. cit.*).
[37] See B1.19. On *chrēstos*, see Dover 1974, pp. 51-53; 63.
[38] This explains why Xenophanes does not take into account the possibility of admitting descriptions of *staseis* which could serve as a condemnation of civic strife or a warning against it, as it later happened in

notice that the notion of moral good indicated by *chrēston* possesses a civic dimension as well. For, since the adjective *chrestos* can also signify 'useful/beneficial' and the rejected stories are about about social discord, Xenophanes' use of the term anticipates its later employment to designate the good citizen who is useful to the city, by caring for the common interest and social harmony[39]. Poems like those about Centaurs and civic strife are not *chrēston* exactly because they provide examples of a behaviour which contrasts with civic cohesion and has a negative effect on the community. Thus, such poems ought to be rejected as immoral and potentially harmful to the life of the *polis*.

By condemning specific poetic contents as not possessing anything *chrēston*, Xenophanes further emphasizes the close interrelation between private and public conduct, since a lack of morality and piety in the symposium is precursory to the city's ruin. In other words, there exists a correspondence between sympotic and civic order. This is an idea present in other poetical texts and made explicit by Solon in one of his elegies:

> δήμου θ᾽ ἡγεμόνων ἄδικος νόος, οἶσιν ἑτοῖμον
> ὕβριος ἐκ μεγάλης ἄλγεα πολλὰ παθεῖν·
> οὐ γὰρ ἐπίστανται κατέχειν κόρον οὐδὲ παρούσας
> εὐφροσύνας κοσμεῖν δαιτὸς ἐν ἡσυχίηι.
>
> And unjust is the mind of the people's rulers, and for their great *hubris*
> much suffering is in store.
> For they do not understand how to keep down excess, nor how to arrange
> the delights that are present before them in a peaceable feast[40].

Sol. 4.7-10 West

The passage expresses a preoccupation about moral conduct similar to that of Xenophanes: injustice is identified with acts of *hubris*, which consists in the incapacity to restrain one's own insatiable desire of having more than enough (*koros*)[41]. This lack

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5th-century Athenian tragedy.

[39] Cf. Bowra 1953, pp. 10-11; Dover 1974, pp. 296-299. On this point cf. also Babut 1974; Marcovich 1978, pp. 11-12; Lesher 1992, p. 54.

[40] Tr. in Ford 2002, p. 36.

[41] On the concept of *koros* in Solon, see Noussia Fantuzzi 2010, pp. 230-232.

of measure is also manifest in the absence of order (*kosmos*) in banquet, a fact that is considered as the precursor of the future suffering of the city[42]. That good conduct is an essential prerequisite for civic welfare is further stressed later on in the elegy, where the beneficial effects of *eunomia* ('good conduct/customs', 'good order', 'good government') are praised (4.33-40 West). The term *eunomia* indicates the condition of a city where the laws are good and citizens are ready to obey them[43], and it is antithetical to *dusnomia*, which Solon blames as responsible for the evils of the state (4.32 West). The social import of *eunomia* and *dusnomia* is already implicit in their divine genealogy, as in Hesiod's *Theogony* the former is sister of Justice (*Dikē*) and Peace (*Eirenē*), while the latter is one of the daughters of Strife (*Eris*)[44]. *Eunomia* is also opposed to *hubris*: in the *Odyssey*, the gods are said to visit men in disguise in order to observe whether they behave with *hubris* or *eunomia* towards their guests, and thus whether they respect the basic rules granting a peaceful social life[45]. Without *eunomia*, the city is destined to be ruined, since there would be no means of curbing the violence and the excesses which are the primary causes of civic strife (*stasis*) and all its negative consequences[46].

The *eunomia* of the city is also a concern of Xenophanes, as shown by elegy B2[47], where he criticizes the honours reserved to athletes. Xenophanes opens the poem with a list of Olympic winners in various disciplines who, according to him, do not deserve the preferential treatment they receive at public expense, as none of them is as

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[42] I follow, with modification, Ford's translation (Ford 2002, p. 36). On this point, see Ford 2002, pp. 35-39, with references to other poetic passages. A correspondence between banquet and city is implicit in the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus speaks of the merry atmosphere which reigns among people when the banqueters sit in proper order in the halls and listen to a minstrel's song (*Od*. 9.5-11).

[43] Cf. Lesher 1992, p. 56. Noussia Fantuzzi argues that the second aspect, i. e. the citizens' obedience, prevails here (cf. Noussia Fantuzzi 2010, p. 258). According to Aristotle (*Pol*. 1307a1) and Strabo (8.4.10), *eunomia* was also the name used to indicate Tyrtaeus' elegy on the Spartan form of government.

[44] Cf. respectively, *Th*. 902; 230. It is beyond the scope of the chapter to discuss the implications of Hesiod's identification of two types of *Eris* in the *Works and Days* (*Op*. 11-26). For an analysis of the socio-political import of this notion, see Thalmann 2004.

[45] *Od.* 17.487.

[46] On *stasis* as a consequence of *hubris*, see line 19 of the elegy.

[47] DK 21 B2.

worthy of it as the poet himself. The reasons behind his claim are explained in the following lines:

ῥώμης γὰρ ἀμείνων
ἀνδρῶν ἠδ᾽ ἵππων ἡμετέρη σοφίη.
ἀλλ᾽ εἰκῆι μάλα τοῦτο νομίζεται, οὐδὲ δίκαιον
προκρίνειν ῥώμην τῆς ἀγαθῆς σοφίης·
οὔτε γὰρ εἰ πύκτης ἀγαθὸς λαοῖσι μετείη   15
οὔτ᾽ εἰ πενταθλεῖν οὔτε παλαισμοσύνην,
οὐδὲ μὲν εἰ ταχυτῆτι ποδῶν, τόπερ ἐστὶ πρότιμον,
ῥώμης ὅσσ᾽ ἀνδρῶν ἔργ᾽ ἐν ἀγῶνι πέλει,
τούνεκεν ἂν δὴ μᾶλλον ἐν εὐνομίηι πόλις εἴη·
σμικρὸν δ᾽ ἄν τι πόλει χάρμα γένοιτ᾽ ἐπὶ τῶι,   20
εἴ τις ἀεθλεύων νικῶι Πίσαο παρ᾽ ὄχθας·
οὐ γὰρ πιαίνει ταῦτα μυχοὺς πόλεως.

For our art [or wisdom] is better than the strength of men and horses.
Nay, this is an utterly gratuitous custom, and it is not right
to prefer strength to the good art [or wisdom].
For suppose there is a man among the people good at boxing,
or at wrestling, or at the five-contest,
or even in swiftness of his feet (which is most honored
of all men's deeds of strength in the contest):
not for that reason would the city enjoy a better government (*eunomiē*).
Small, indeed, is the source of joy for a city
coming from a victorious athlete in the contest at the banks of the river of
Pisa: for this is not what fattens the chambers of the city[48].

DK 21 B2.11-22

Xenophanes' criticism revolves around the opposition between physical strength (*rhomē*) and his own *sophia* ('art/wisdom'). The term *sophia* can indicate both 'art', in the sense of 'poetic skill', and 'wisdom'. Scholars have long debated about which of the two meanings prevails here, but I agree with Marcovich in taking the term as indicating Xenophanes' wisdom, i.e. his teachings, which was conveyed by means of his poetry[49].

Xenophanes claims that his *sophia* is better than physical strength, and, even though a customary practice, it is not right (*dikaion*) to prefer strength to good (*agathos*) wisdom. For a good (*agathos*) athlete, even if of the best type, that is a good racer, would not improve the *eunomia* of the city, like Xenophanes claims to be able to do with his own *sophia*. The comparison between good art/wisdom and good athletic

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[48] Tr. in Marcovich 1978, pp. 17-18.
[49] Cf. Marcovich 1978, p. 21-22. On this point, see also Lesher 1992, pp. 55-56; Bowra, 1953, p. 18.

prowess is significant, as it involves the notion of the superiority of public over private interest[50]. A good athlete is capable of achieving great merits, but the practical consequences of his ability, besides a small and ephemeral joy for the citizens, are actually limited to the personal gains described in the first part of the elegy. By contrast, Xenophanes' *sophia* can effectively contribute to the good order of the *polis* and thus to its prosperity[51]. Even though the elegy does not contain an explicit explanation of how Xenophanes' *sophia* leads to *eunomia*, it is reasonable to think that he is referring to his moral teachings like those provided in elegy B1, which exhort people to virtue and promote civic cohesion. An indication in this sense is provided by the passage from Euripides' *Autolycus* which Athenaeus says was inspired by Xenophanes' elegy. There, after a harsh attack on athleticism, it is said that, along wise and good men, and the just rulers of the city, one ought to honour those who, by means of words, remove battles and civic strife, and thus prevent evil acts[52]. On the contrary, the celebration of athletes, by exalting individual deeds which bring material advantage only to the winner, might lead to envy and resentment among citizens and thus create disharmony in the civic body[53]. To honour strength more than good wisdom is thus not right because it is equivalent to affirming that private interest comes before public welfare. What is good or capable (*agathos*), then, should be measured on the basis of the benefits it bestows on the community from the point of view of *eunomia*. The innovative character of this notion can be appreciated by the comparison with other attacks against athleticism, for example that of Tyrtaeus (12 West), who says that athletes are not useful to the city

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[50] Cf. Lesher 1992, pp. 59-60.

[51] Similarly, in the *Works and Days* Hesiod describes the beneficial effects of justice on civic prosperity (see *Op*. 225-237).

[52] Cf. E. 282.23-28 *TGF*: "Wreathing with leaves should be for men who are wise and brave,/ and for the man who leads a city best through being prudent and/ just, and whose words deliver it from evil acts by removing feuds/ and factions: such are the things good for every city and all Greeks" (tr. Collard and Cropp). On the relationship between the passages, see Giannini 1982; Lesher 1992, p. 61.

[53] Cf. Lesher 1992, p. 60. Similar consequences were the result, for example, of dramatic competition, see Chapter 1, pp. 45-46.

because they are not good warriors[54]. According to this view, *aretē* coincides with military prowess and represents a common good (*xunon esthlon*) for the city and the *dēmos*[55]. Differently, for Xenophanes the *aretē* which leads to civic peace, and thus to a real and lasting common good, consists in a conduct which conforms to the principles of justice, moderation and piety. It is by promoting them that Xenophanes' *sophia* is superior to any possible athletic success.

The discussion so far has shown that Xenophanes' rejection of certain topics from the poetic performances at the symposium is motivated by the negative social consequences they might have. But there is another point in Xenophanes' criticism that deserves attention, namely the fact that he defines the stories about Centaurs, Titans and Giants as "fabrications of men of old" (*plasmata tōn proterōn*, B1.22). Xenophanes is thus attacking other poets for having said false things about the gods. In Archaic Greek poetry, this was a common competitive stance, examples of which can be found in Hesiod's *Theogony*, where the Muses say they can inspire "false things similar to genuine ones"[56], Solon ("Poets say much that is false")[57], at the beginning of the *Hymn to Dionysus* ("Some say you were born in Dracanum, some in windy Icarus, and some in Naxos […] they are all lying")[58], and in Stesichorus' *Palinode* ("This tale they tell is not true: you did not sail in those benched ships or come to the towers of Troy")[59]. However, even in this case, Xenophanes' position presents novel characteristics. For, while his predecessors competed by simply replacing the poetic contents they judged to

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[54] Solon is reported to have limited the amount of the prizes for athletic victories, because they could not be honoured more than the dead on the battlefield (see D.L. 1.55). In the *Autolycus*, athletes are attacked for the same reason (see E. 282.1-22 *TGF*). On the relationship between Tyrtaeus' and Xenophanes' elegies, see Marcovich 1978, pp. 24-25. I have no space to discuss the role of *aretē* in Pindar: for reference, see Nagy 1990a; Hornblower and Morgan 2007.

[55] "This is excellence, the finest human prize/ and fairest for a bold young man to win./ It is a benefit for the whole city and community,/ when with a firm stance in the foremost rank/ a man bides steadfast, with no thought of shameful flight,/ laying his life and stout heart on the line,/ and standing by the next man speaks encouragement." (Tyrt. 12.13-19 West, tr. West, with modifications).

[56] Hes. *Th*. 27 (tr. Most). For a detailed discussion of this passage, see Chapter 3, pp. 89-98.

[57] Sol. 29 W (tr. West).

[58] *Hom*. *Hymn* 1. 1-6.

[59] Stesich. 192 *PMGF* (tr. West).

be false with other alternative versions of myths, as in the case of the birthplace of Dionysus or Helen' departure to Troy[60], Xenophanes' criticism is supported by his original theological views, which substantiate his moral injunctions and ultimately eliminate the premises of traditional competition. In order to better illustrate this point, I will now turn to examine Xenophanes' conception of the divine.

2.2 - Xenophanes' greatest god and the dispensation of justice

In presenting his conception of the divine, Xenophanes criticizes a series of traditional religious beliefs, especially regarding the representation of the gods found in the Homeric and Hesiodic poems. To these beliefs, he opposes his own original theology, centred on the notion of one greatest god, as expressed in these verses:

> εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος,
> οὔ τι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίιος οὐδὲ νόημα.
>
> One god is greatest among gods and men,
> not at all like mortals in body or in thought.
>
> DK 21 B23

For our purposes here, it is not necessary to discuss the much debated issue of Xenophanes' monotheism arising from these verses, since the following considerations hold regardless of the specific reading adopted[61]. What I want to focus on are the characteristics which Xenophanes attributes to the 'greatest god', especially from the point of view of its dissimilarity from mortals, expressed in the second verse. God is said to be completely different from humans as to bodily frame (*demas*) and thought

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[60]Another example is provided by Pindar, when he presents an alternative version of the myth of Pelops, see Pi. *O*. 1.28-51. On the correction of rivals and the competition about alternative versions of myths, see Griffith 1990, pp. 195-200.

[61] In what follows I will then use 'god' or 'gods', depending on the specific fragment examined. For a commentary on the fragment and a good survey of the possible interpretations, see Lesher 1992, pp. 96-100. Barnes provides the reconstruction of an argument for monotheism, see Barnes 2005, pp. 84-94. For a polytheistic reading, see Lesher *loc. cit.* and Granger 2013, pp. 237-238.

(*noēma*)[62]. The emphasis put on the difference between god and mortals is directly opposed to one of the aspects of traditional religion Xenophanes criticizes, namely the anthropomorphic representation of gods[63]. For, in depicting the divinity, men portray it with traits identical to their own, a custom vividly illustrated and attacked in two fragments from the *Silloi*. In the first fragment (B16), it is pointed out that gods' representations vary depending on ethnic group: according to Ethiopians gods are snub-nosed and black, while for Thracians they are blue-eyed and red-haired[64]. In the other fragment (B15), the idea that each group depicts gods after its own physical features is brought to its extreme consequences, as Xenophanes states that animals, if they could, would portray gods resembling themselves[65]. It has been noticed that, according to the fragments as they are, we cannot be sure of their polemic character and that, at any rate, they do not constitute a proper argument against this kind of representations[66]. Some considerations might help us to clarify the function of these verses: first, the hypothetical scenario in which animals are imagined to depict gods implies a polemical attitude in the form of mockery, since animal figures were frequently used in Archaic poetry as a means of blaming and criticizing adversaries[67]. Recited along with verses about the many and various images of gods that humans fabricate, like B16, the hexameters on animals make these beliefs appear ridiculous. It is true that this is not an

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[62] On divine *noēma*, see below. As to the god's body, Clement, who quotes the fragment, attributes to Xenophanes the notion of divine incorporeality, but his reading is unlikely (cf. Lesher 1992, p. 100). Still, it remains unclear what kind of body the god has; for an overview of possible interpretations, see Lesher 1992, pp. 100-102. On this point, see also Granger 2013, pp. 242-245.

[63] Lesher notes that Xenophanes does not reject anthropomorphism *tout court*, but only those accounts which represent gods as too similar to humans. In other words, between gods and men there is complete dissimilarity, not complete incomparability. That is why Xenophanes can speak both of men and gods as having body, thought and moral qualities (cf. Lesher 1992, p. 94). On this point, see also Granger 2013, p. 242.

[64] DK 21 B16: "Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black;/ Thracians that theirs are blue-eyed and red-haired " (tr. Lesher).

[65] DK 21 B15: "But if horses or oxen or lions had hands/ or could draw with their hands and accomplish such works as men,/ horses would draw the figures of the gods as similar to horses, and the oxen similar to oxen,/ and they would /make the bodies/ of the sort which each of them had" (tr. Lesher).

[66] Cf. Lesher 1992, pp. 93-94.

[67] See above.

argument proper, but, if we read the fragment in the broader context of poetic competition, we probably should simply accept the idea that Xenophanes' intent here is not to dispute, but to attack[68]. Or, better, we should say that he is arguing, but in the traditional competitive way, where mockery and, broadly speaking, any type of attack were considered effective means of undermining the adversaries' position and authority.

Humans' tendency to attribute to the gods their own characteristics is the target of another fragment, where Xenophanes, along with beliefs regarding the gods' physical appearance, mentions the conviction in divine births: "But mortals suppose that gods are born, have their own clothes, voice and body"[69]. Regarding the belief that gods are born, Aristotle reports that Xenophanes used to say that speaking of divine births is as impious as affirming that they are mortal, since both entail that at a certain moment they did not exist[70]. As argued by Granger, Xenophanes' criticism may be interpreted as a refinement of the traditional beliefs on the gods, which despite their being referred to as "always existing" (*aiei eontes*), where nonetheless thought to be born, as in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Thus, by attacking divine generation, Xenophanes is both pointing out and correcting the contradictions he sees in traditional religious ideas[71].

The most critical consequence deriving from anthropomorphic representations of the divine, however, is the attribution of illicit behaviour to gods, which Xenophanes attacks in the following fragments:

> πάντα θεοῖσ᾽ ἀνέθηκαν Ὅμηρός θ᾽ Ἡσίοδός τε,
> ὅσσα παρ᾽ ἀνθρώποισιν ὀνείδεα καὶ ψόγος ἐστίν,
> κλέπτειν μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν.
>
> Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods
> all sorts of things that are matters of reproach and censure among men:
> theft, adultery, and mutual deceit.

<div style="text-align:center">DK 21 B11</div>

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[68] Scholars have noted the absence of argumentation proper in the fragments: cf. Lesher 1992, p. 116. For an overview of the issue, see Granger 2013, p. 235, n. 3.
[69] DK 21 B14. Tr. in Granger 2013, p. 242.
[70] Cf. DK 21 A12.
[71] Cf. Granger 2013, pp. 245-246.

ὡς πλεῖστ᾽ ἐφθέγξαντο θεῶν ἀθεμίστια ἔργα,
κλέπτειν μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν.

…as they sang of numerous illicit divine deeds:
theft, adultery, and mutual deceit.

DK 21 B12

Xenophanes attacks Homer and Hesiod because they have depicted the gods as responsible for immoral deeds which are blamed and reproached among men. Significantly, as noted by Lesher, Xenophanes singles out as examples of illicit divine conduct crimes against organized society, as they constitute a breach of the mutual trust which ties people together[72]. Their essentially antisocial nature is further stressed by the recourse to the terms *oneidos* ('reproach') and *psogos* ('blame'), which traditionally indicated public disapproval[73]. The criticism contained in these fragments is thus based on the same considerations that made Xenophanes exclude the recitation of poems about Centaurs, Titans and Giants from the symposium[74]. As in the present case, even those stories were fictions of poets which represented divine beings involved in actions dangerous for society. What remains to determine is the reason why Xenophanes firmly states that these sorts of representation are false. Even though not directly stated in the extant fragments, his judgement appears to be grounded in the belief in divine perfection, which entails the god's inherent moral goodness[75]. An indication in this sense is provided by the set of sympotic prescriptions presented in B1, since their call for prayers to do what is right and the invitation to always respect the gods, including talking of them with pure speeches[76], presupposes both the gods' concern for just behaviour and their moral excellence[77]. But if gods are intrinsically good, it is impious

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[72] Cf. Lesher 1992, pp. 84-85.
[73] Cf. Babut 1974, p. 91.
[74] See DK B1.21-23.
[75] On divine perfection, see Lesher 1992, pp. 83-84.
[76] Cf. *supra*, p. 54.
[77] On this point, see also Barnes 2005, pp. 93-94; Granger 2013, p. 241. For a criticism of this view, see Mogyoródi 2002, pp. 273-274.

and false to depict them as committing evil deeds[78]. A further argument in support of Xenophanes' belief in the god's morality might come from considering his critical and competitive stance against the previous poetical tradition. As I will argue, Xenophanes' conception of the divine actually serves to substantiate his moral teachings aimed at promoting just behaviour among men. In particular, he addresses the problems stemming from the ambiguous representations of divine dispensation of justice provided by other poets. In this respect, god's justice is one of the conditions necessary to guarantee the certain punishment and reward of, respectively, unjust and right conduct.

Already in Homer and Hesiod there is the idea that Zeus and, generally, the gods are concerned with human conduct: in the *Odyssey*, gods are said to honour justice and the right deeds of humans, while in the *Work and Days* Zeus guarantees justice among humans by punishing unjust acts and rewarding right behaviour[79]. The same belief is shared by later poets as well: for example, Archilochus says that Zeus oversees the wicked and lawful deeds of men and he is concerned with the right and wrong even among animals (177 West); according to Solon, Zeus is always aware of the sins of men and, in due time, will punish those who deserve it (13.25-32 West); and Theognis speaks of divine punishment for unjust profit (197-208). In addition to this belief, however, there exists another common poetic motif according to which divine dispensation of justice and interest in human morality are mutable and unreliable. Like all the gods' gifts, they are subject to divine capriciousness[80]: for instance, in the *Works and Days* passage which comes right after the description of Zeus' detection and consequent treatment of injustice, Hesiod says that the god does not let these things pass unnoticed,

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[78] Plato will make explicit the logical contradiction of such accounts; see, as examples, *Euthphr*. 6b-c and *R*. II 379a-380c.

[79] See, respectively, *Od*. 14. 83-84 and *Op*. 225-266. Divine concern with justice in the *Iliad* is a debated issue: Dodds excludes any interest in justice on the part of Zeus (Dodds 1951, p. 32), but see Lloyd-Jones 1971, pp. 1-27; see further Mogyoródi 2002, p. 268, n. 72. On this point, see also Granger 2013, pp. 239-240.

[80] On divine capriciousness, see also Tor 2011, pp. 32-35.

if he wishes to do so ("The eye of Zeus, seeing all and perceiving all, beholds these things too, if so he wishes, and fails not to mark what sort of justice is this that the city keeps within it")[81]. Theognis expresses his wonder in seeing that there are cases in which Zeus appears not to distinguish between wicked and righteous conduct, as he allows unjust people to prosper, while right men face difficulties, so that humans are left without knowing what is the way to follow in order to please the gods[82]. Solon himself, in the same poem where he describes Zeus' punishment of injustice, depicts the outcome of human actions as unpredictable, with the result that even men who act well may incur calamities[83]. Divine unpredictability is effectively described by Hesiod when he says that Zeus' *noos*, i.e his mind or plan, is different at different times and difficult for humans to understand[84]. The term *noos* and its cognates relate both to the understanding of a situation and the volitional reaction to it[85]. When used to describe moral retribution on the part of the gods, they indicate divine realization of human behaviour and, at the same time, the gods' plans in response to it: in the passages quoted above, for example, Hesiod employs the verb *noein* to describe Zeus' perception of human conduct (*Op*. 267), while Theognis' wonder stems from not understanding how Zeus' *noos* can treat just and unjust acts alike (377-378)[86]. The uncertainty in the moral sphere deriving from the mutability of the gods' mind/plan is an issue that Xenophanes' conception of the divine eliminates, as one of the central features of the greatest god is unchangeability. In B26, the god is described as always remaining in the same state and not moving to different places at different times[87]. There are good reasons to infer that the attribute of

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[81] Hes. *Op*. 267-269.
[82] Cf. Thgn. 373-382; 731-752.
[83] Cf. Sol. 13.65-70 West. For a commentary of the elegy and a discussion of the interpretative difficulties raised by this contrast, see Noussia 2010, pp. 127-202.
[84] *Op*. 483-484.
[85] On the meaning of *noos* and cognates, see von Fritz 1942.
[86] In Thgn. 197-203, it is said that the mind/plan (*noos*) of the gods prevails over the man who has gained wealth unjustly.
[87] DK 21 B26. For the reading of the fragment as expressing divine unchangeability, see Lesher 1992, p. 114.

unchangeability pertains to the god's *noos* as well, since a modification of his mind/plan would entail an alteration of state. Moreover, as we have seen, god is said to be completely different from mortals as to *noēma*, and in poetry the human mind is typically represented as constantly changing: as effectively described in the *Odyssey*, mortal *noos* depends on, and thus changes according to, what Zeus brings upon men every single day[88]. From this point of view, immutability would then be an additional mark of distinction between divine and mortal *noos.* In addition, since Xenophanes proposes his conception of the divine in stark contrast with the traditional view found in other poets, especially Homer and Hesiod, the idea that his god does not change his mind/plan out of capriciousness as in previous representations represents a further criticism of such accounts.

The dissimilarity of god's mind is further illustrated in the following fragment:

οὖλος ὁρᾶι, οὖλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὖλος δέ τ᾽ ἀκούει.

whole he sees, whole he thinks, and whole he hears.

DK 21 B24

The description of god as exercising sight, thought and hearing with the whole of his body reflects the idea, expressed in B23, that his bodily frame is different from that of mortals, since, unlike them, he does not possess specific sensory organs. In addition, this characterization attributes to the greatest god an exceptional awareness which, although not explicitly stated in the extant fragments, can be reasonably interpreted as indicating god's omniscience. If we again consider the competitive context in which Xenophanes operated, it is hard to believe that he would not have credited his god with omniscience, since traditionally gods and, especially, Zeus were said to know everything[89]. In order actually to be the greatest among gods and men, Xenophanes' god could not have been limited in knowledge. In fact, Xenophanes' description of god's

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[88] Cf. Hom. *Od*. 18.136-137. The image became a common motif in later poets: see, for example, Archil. 130 West; Semon. 1.1-5 West; Stesich. 222a.207-208 *PMGF*; Pi. *N*. 6.4-7.
[89] For example in Hom. *Od*. 20.75; Hes. *Op*. 267 (Zeus); *Il*. 2.485; *Od*. 12.188-191 (other divinities).

awareness addresses and corrects a latent inconsistency in previous poetic accounts, where Zeus' omniscience is at odds with the fact that he exercises his perceptual and intellectual faculties with human-like organs, which are intrinsically limited in scope[90]. Xenophanes is thus saying that omniscience truly pertains to his god and not to those sung by other poets. The unlimited extent of god's cognitive power is further emphasized by the repetition of 'whole' (*oulos*), which denotes superior quality awareness in the form of a quantitative summary[91]. God's exceptional perceptual and intellectual abilities are combined with his active role in the events of the world, as stated in this verse:

ἀλλ᾽ ἀπάνευθε πόνοιο νόου φρενὶ πάντα κραδαίνει.

But completely without toil he shakes all things by
the thought of his mind.

DK 21 B25

Setting aside the controversial issue about the relationship between the *noos* and the *phrēn* of god[92], I focus on the idea of intelligent and purposeful intervention implied by the fragment and emerging from the comparison with previous accounts of the divine. I have already mentioned the use of the term *noos* to indicate Zeus' will/plan. In a similar way, *phrēn* can signify Zeus' volition and, more generally, the location or instrument of deliberation and planning[93]. Moreover, in a parallel passage in the first book of the *Iliad*, when Zeus assents to Thetis' request to honour Achilles, his nod, expressing the adoption of a determined plan which will inevitably be realized, makes Olympus shake[94]. Thus, Xenophanes' image of the greatest god shaking all things reflects the

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[90] Cf. Lesher 1992, p. 105; Granger 2013, pp. 247-248.
[91] Cf. Lesher 1992, p. 106.
[92] On this point, see Darcus 1978, p. 26.
[93] Cf. Tor 2011, p. 70.
[94] Hom. *Il*. 1.523-527. On this passage and its relationship with Xenophanes' fragment, see Mogyoródi 2002, p. 283, n. 140. On the the idea that *kradainein* includes the notion of 'purposeful intervention', see Tor 2011, p. 69; Palmer 2009, p. 329; Lesher 1992, pp. 107-109. For a criticism, see Granger 2013, p. 256-257; Cornford 1952, p. 147.

notion that the god purposefully intervenes in the world, and the further specification that he does this completely without effort (*apaneuthe ponoio*) conveys the idea that his plans are realized without hindrance or detour[95].

The above considerations indicate that Xenophanes' conception of the divine serves both to criticize and to solve the issues deriving from the traditional accounts about divine dispensation of justice. For the god's moral goodness, and the consequent interest in justice, combined with the unchangeability of his *noos*, eliminates the uncertainty deriving from divine capriciousness. Moreover, god's omniscience guarantees that no evil or good actions will pass unnoticed, while the effortless realization of his plans assures the reliability of his judgement[96]. Indeed, all the criticism which Xenophanes addresses to previous conceptions of the divine shows his moral concerns. For the attack on anthropomorphic representations of deities, along with the notion of the gods' moral goodness which excludes their committing illicit deeds, rules out the possibility that men use the example of too much humanized gods as an excuse for their own immoral behaviour[97]. All these elements together form a stable ethico-religious framework in which men's actions are judged and rewarded depending on their morality. The ultimate realization of justice is guaranteed by the immutable, omniscient and powerful god which takes the place of the traditional divinities. As I aim to show in the next section, besides its moral implications, Xenophanes' original conception of the greatest god serves to undermine the premises of traditional agonism and, at the same time, to redefine its very rules.

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[95] Cf. Mogyoródi 2002, p. 283, n. 141.

[96] As to the certainty of god's judgment I agree with Mogyoródi, who arrives at this conclusion using arguments different from mine (cf. Mogyorodi 2002, pp. 279-283). However, we disagree on Xenophanes' attribution of moral goodness to the god, which she denies (cf. Mogyoródi 2002, pp. 273-274).

[97] The idea will be later appropriated by Euripides in the *Ion*, 440-451, where Ion laments Apollo's rape of Creusa and observes that men should not be blamed for their illicit deeds, since, in committing them, they simply imitate gods' behaviour.

2.3 - Xenophanes and poetic competition

In the foregoing discussion of Xenophanes' conception of the greatest god, I have pointed out how the notion of the greatest god should be interpreted in the context of competing accounts of the divine, especially considering Xenophanes' polemical stance against Homeric and Hesiodic depiction of the gods. Indeed, Xenophanes' theological views stand in opposition to the "fabrications" (B1.22) of his predecessors, who wrongly attributed to the gods marked anthropomorphic characteristics. As anticipated, however, traditional as Xenophanes' attitude might appear at first glance, it actually entails an innovative take on poetic competition itself. For the characteristics which Xenophanes attributes to the divine eliminate the very assumptions which had nurtured the proliferation of alternative accounts. Consider the case of different descriptions about the birthplace of a god, as in the *Hymn to Dionysus* mentioned above[98]: even though the poet rejects other versions as false, his own is only another possible account among others, which can always be changed or dismissed by rivals at any moment. But if gods are unborn, as Xenophanes affirms, the very possibility of such modifications is eradicated. The same point holds for stories which imply gods' immorality, or derive from their possessing anthropomorphic traits. Broadly speaking, any mythical account about divine deeds should be discarded, since it would be based upon the idea that gods move from place to place, a belief rejected in B26 as such a characteristic would be inappropriate to divine status.

Significantly, the impact of Xenophanes' innovative theology on traditional poetic agonism is not limited to a critical revision of the attributes of the gods. Actually, Xenophanes' conception of the greatest god also entails a redefinition of the relationship between mortal and divine which undermines another key premise of poetic

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[98] See *supra*, p. 62.

competition, namely divine inspiration. In fragment B18, Xenophanes rejects the traditional view on divine disclosure to mortals in the following terms:

οὔ τοι ἀπ᾿ ἀρχῆς πάντα θεοὶ θνητοῖσ᾿ ὑπέδειξαν,
ἀλλὰ χρόνωι ζητοῦντες ἐφευρίσκουσιν ἄμεινον.

Indeed not from the beginning the gods intimated all things to mortals,
but as they search in time they discover better[99].

DK 21 B18

The fragment is famously ambiguous due to the different readings of *panta* and *ap'archēs* which might be adopted. On the one hand, the fact that the gods did not reveal all things (*panta*) could mean either that they did not reveal anything at all or that they revealed just some things; on the other hand, the specification "at the beginning", could be read as implying that, in fact, the gods have disclosed some things to mortal in the course of time. Numerous arguments have been advanced in support of either reading, which I cannot analyse extensively here. In what follows, I will build upon the recent interpretation proposed by Tor, who convincingly argues that in fragment B18 Xenophanes attacks the traditional and authoritative paradigms of divine disclosure, mainly represented by mantic divination and poetic inspiration, to replace them with his own[100]. According to Xenophanes' model of divine disclosure, which Tor calls "universal disclosure", instead of communicating to few privileged individuals, the divine purposively facilitates mortal opinion-formation by enabling human beings to perceive and consider everything that they encounter in their experience[101]. Indeed, mortals should avail themselves of the everyday experience which the god makes accessible to them in order to improve their sets of beliefs over time by means of

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[99] Tr. Lesher.
[100] Cf. Tor 2013, p. 250 and *passim*.
[101] Cf. Tor 2013, p. 267. Tor presents also a restricted version of his interpretation, according to which the divine brings particular things to the consideration of mortals and only in some circumstances, but deems the universal alternative more probable (cf. *idem*, pp. 270-271).

enquiry[102]. In this scenario, appeals to divine inspiration cannot provide the guarantee of poetic authority any more. Xenophanes thus eliminates one of the means by which poets claimed the authenticity of their narrations, and, even more significantly, authorized the continual formation of competing versions of myth[103].

It is worth noticing that, although Xenophanes' theology excises the possibility of competing accounts, it cannot be considered as a definitive account on the divine. For Xenophanes' epistemological views excludes, de facto, that human beings can ever acquire knowledge about the gods or the cosmos. In fragment B34, Xenophanes states that no man will ever know what is clear and certain (*saphes*) about the gods and natural phenomena[104]. Actually, even in the case in which someone happened to speak in conformity to what has been brought to completion (*tetelesmenon*), still he would not have knowledge of that, since human beings are unavoidably confined to opinion (*dokos*)[105]. A detailed analysis of the various interpretations of the fragment is beyond the scope of the present work[106]. In the following discussion, I will adopt what I consider the most plausible reading of the fragment, the so-called "naturalistic approach"[107]. According to this interpretation, Xenophanes' position must be understood in the context of the natural restrictions on human knowledge determined by the limited range of human experience. Since men cannot have access to the complete set of

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[102] It must be noticed that Xenophanes' conception of the greatest god assures stability in the formation of beliefs about the world. For if god's mind does not change, as a consequence one might expect regularity and fixity in the order of things as well, because, as said in B25, it is by means of his *noos* that god intervenes in the world. Therefore, if the order of things determined by god is stable, men can actually improve their beliefs in the course of time. Consider the case of the honey of fragment B 38: "If god had not made yellow honey, they would think/ that figs were much sweeter" (tr. Lesher). Even though men cannot say that honey is the sweetest thing of all, they are however assured tin their belief that honey is sweeter than figs (or, at least, than certain types of figs).

[103] A detailed discussion of Xenophanes' rejection of traditional divine disclosure is provided by Tor, see Tor 2013, especially p. 260 for poetic inspiration. For a commentary on the fragment, see Lesher 1992, pp. 149-155.

[104] Cf. DK 21 B34.1-2: "And of course the clear and certain truth no man has seen/ nor will there be anyone who knows about the gods and what I say about all things" (tr. Lesher). On the interpretation of "all things" as referring to natural phenomena, see Lesher 1992, pp. 167-168.

[105] Cf. DK 21 B34.3-4: "For even if, in the best case, one happened to speak just of what has been brought to pass,/ still he would not know. But opinion is wrought over all" (tr. Lesher, with modifications).

[106] For an overview of the possible readings, see Lesher 1992, pp. 159-67.

[107] Cf. Lesher 1992, p. 166.

experiences relating to the natural world due to the short span of their life and the objective impossibility of experiencing any possible aspect of nature, they cannot have knowledge on the subject. Similarly, since, as I have discussed above, Xenophanes denies any sort of direct interaction between humans and gods, as implied by his criticism on the anthropomorphic belief that gods move around and communicate with mortals, knowledge concerning divine matters is excluded[108].

However, although debarred from knowledge, men can improve their beliefs concerning the world in which they live by means of enquiry, as stated in B18. In this context, Xenophanes' views on the divine, although potentially subject to correction as any other opinion held by mortals, should be considered, I argue, as a set of opinions which represents an improvement in ethico-religious belief. Indeed, Xenophanes' competitive stance against rivals and bold claim to *sophia* in B2 indicate that he was keen on presenting his doctrines as better than those of his rivals[109]. But better in which respect? The answer might be found in the notion of divine appropriateness and perfection which we have seen that Xenophanes uses, for example, when he rejects divine change and immorality. In this perspective, Xenophanes' account of the divine is better than those offered by other poets, because more fitting to the basic assumption that gods are morally perfect. As regards this point, one might wonder what the origin of

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[108] Cf. fragments B18, discussed above, and B26. Noticeably, the limitedness of human life will be mentioned by Protagoras as one of the reasons of his ignorance about divine nature (cf. DK 80 B4).

[109] Cf. Xenophanes' invitation to consider his doctrines as plausible/verisimilar in DK 21 B35: ταῦτα δεδοξάσθω μὲν ἐοικότα τοῖς ἐτύμοισι, "Let these things be accepted, certainly, as resembling realities" (tr. Lesher, with modifications). Due to the lack of information about the context, the interpretation of the fragment remains inevitably speculative (for a detailed discussion of the issues concerning the fragment, see Bryan 2012, pp. 6-57; Lesher 1992, pp. 169-176). However, given the presence of the imperative *dedoxasthō*, it is highly probable that the things referred to in the fragment include Xenophanes' views about the gods and natural phenomena, that is, the topics qualified as inevitably subject to opinion (*dokos*) in B34 (cf. Lesher 1992, p. 175, Tor 2011, p. 76). Bryan argues that the use of *eoikōs* indicates the possible speciousness of Xenophanes' doctrines, and thereby their being liable to correction like any other opinion held by humans. The lines are reminiscent of Hesiod's *Theogony* 27, where the Muses say that they are able to tell false things similar to realities (ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα). Tor notices that, differently from Hesiod, Xenophanes thinks that speciousness is determined by men's limited experience, and not by divine will (on the Muses' statement, see further my discussion in Chapter 3, pp. 89-98). Sassi reads B35 as an example of Xenophanes reliance on the principle of verisimilitude, cf. Sassi 2013, p. 295.

Xenophanes' belief in divine perfection is. The evidence in our possession does not allow us to provide a definitive answer to the question. Xenophanes' conception might have been determined by his personal sense of piety, which prevented him from deeming the gods capable of committing immoral deeds. Alternatively, we could also think that his theological views had been informed by his concern with ethics and politics. From this point of view, Xenophanes' theology is better than the traditional one because, by encouraging people to behave justly, it is more beneficial to the welfare of the *polis* than traditional ones.

Regardless of the reasons behind Xenophanes' theological views, it is worth noticing that Xenophanes' challenge to traditional religious beliefs is based upon the adoption of a criterion whereby to distinguish between better and worse accounts of the divine. For without divine inspiration as a basis for authority, poetic accounts should be accepted or discarded according to their conformity to the principle of divine perfection. Similar considerations hold for statements about the natural world, as they must be based and, if necessary, corrected according to the results of enquiry on the objects of experience which the god makes available to mortals. Thus, in entering the poetic *agōn*, Xenophanes redefines its terms by both stopping the *traditional* way of competing and introducing a rule to determine the outcome of successive contests[110].

Conclusion

The examination of Xenophanes' elegies B1 and B2 and of the fragments about his theological views and the criticism against traditional beliefs has shown how deeply

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[110] The modification of the terms of competition is the reason why Xenophanes' criticism cannot be seen as a manifestation of the pan-Hellenistic impulse as argued by Nagy (cf. Nagy 2008, p. 34-36). For pan-Hellenism continues to foster traditional agonism, as it relies on the idea that absolute truth is imparted by the divinity, which *pace* Nagy is rejected by Xenophanes. For a discussion and criticism of Nagy's position, see also Granger 2007, pp. 418-419. On Xenophanes' differentiation from the tradition, see also Griffith 1990, p. 196.

embedded he was in the competitive context which characterized Archaic Greek culture. The surviving verses give us the portrait of a sage-poet who competed with those he saw as rivals in order to mark his originality and superiority. The attacks on Homer and Hesiod are an eloquent example of Xenophanes' agonistic spirit which led him to confront directly the two most important poets of Greece. But his criticism hit also at other wisdom practitioners, like Pythagoras, and entire professional categories, as in the case of the athletes, which he targeted in his poems[111]. His teachings, as emerged from the analysis of B1 and B2, regarded the moral conduct of individuals and its repercussions on the *polis* as a whole[112]. The exclusion of poems about divine and civic struggle from the symposium exemplifies this preoccupation, as such stories represent the negative effects of individual unjust behaviour on society. In particular, Centaurs are the symbol of the socially harmful results of unrestrained conduct at banquets. In this light, the repeated calls for morality at the symposium in B1 are, at the same time, an invitation to civic *eunomia*, since not respecting the rules of communal life at the feast is a prelude to the ruin of the city.

Xenophanes' ethical advice is closely related to his concern with religious piety, as shown by the fact that the guests are invited to pray to god in order to act according to justice, and that the whole set of sympotic prescriptions of B1 is presented as a means of honouring the divinity. This connection between ethics and religion is further strengthened by Xenophanes' theology, since his original conception of the divine presupposes the gods' interest in the right behaviour of humans and their inherent moral goodness, which exclude their committing unjust acts like those narrated in the Homeric

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[111] A similar criticism of poets and other wisdom practitioners can be found in Heraclitus, who attacks Hesiod, Pythagoras, and Xenophanes himself for their *polumathiē* and lack of *noos* (DK 22 40). In other fragments he attacks Homer and Archilochus (DK 22 42), and Hesiod (DK 22 57). But Heraclitus' critical stance, differently from that of Xenophanes, does not involve his direct participation in the poetic game and its internal redefinition.

[112] It is beyond the scope of this work to discuss Xenophanes' fragments on nature. For an introduction to the topic, I refer the reader to the commentary on the fragments by Lesher, (Lesher 1992, pp. 120-148) and to Mourelatos' reconstruction of Xenophanes' astrophysics (Mourelatos 2008b).

and Hesiodic poems. Furthermore, Xenophanes' notion of the greatest god, omniscient and unchangeable, ensures god's intervention in the world to punish injustice, thus avoiding the status of uncertainty about divine dispensation of justice deriving from the traditional accounts of gods' capriciousness. It is such a conception that substantiates Xenophanes' teachings aimed at the welfare of the *polis*. For, if the divinity is constantly aware of human behaviour and will not let injustice pass unnoticed, men are effectively urged to not commit immoral acts which eventually lead to civic strife and thus damage the city.

In addition to its implications in ethics, the importance of Xenophanes' original theology lies in the fact that it represents a novel means of competing with rivals: while on the one hand it makes him directly compete with other poets, especially Homer and Hesiod, and challenge their authority by stating that what they say is false as usual in Archaic poetry, on the other hand, it actually eliminates the assumptions which had nurtured the constant generation of alternative accounts, based on misguided opinion on the gods, like the belief in their generation. Even more significantly, Xenophanes redefines the terms of poetic competition by introducing the criterion of appropriateness and conformity to experience whereby to judge the value of statements about the gods or natural phenomena. Indeed, due to their epistemic limitations, humans are destined to remain in the process of enquiry, which involves the continuous correction of accepted opinions and thereby competition between new and old views. But instead of an uncontrolled proliferation of equally valid competing accounts determined by the lack of a discriminating principle, Xenophanes provides a rule through which agonism might be fruitfully used to improve men's set of beliefs about the world in which they live.

The above considerations show how the agonistic stances which characterized Archaic Greek poetry informed also Xenophanes' poetical and intellectual activity, as he

competed with possible rivals by making them the object of criticism and irony in order to affirm his superiority. But, at the same time, the doctrines whereby he challenged his adversaries contained the roots for the overthrow of traditional competition itself. A similar inclination towards eliminating competition can be found in Parmenides. In the next chapter, I will analyse his poem in order to evaluate the way he devised to beat his adversaries and stop the conflict by making accessible to mortals that truth which Xenophanes deemed unattainable.

Chapter 3

Parmenides and the redefinition of *alētheia*

In this chapter I will analyse Parmenides' poem in the context of poetic agonism. In particular, I will argue that Parmenides' doctrine of Being posits a redefinition of the notion of *alētheia* which responds to Hesiod's conception of truth, and eventually solves the traditional problem concerning the ambiguity of poetry. However, Hesiod is not Parmenides' only competitor, as he also challenges Homer's authority and the pretence to wisdom of rival philosophers.

Differently from Xenophanes and, as will be discussed in chapter 4, Empedocles, who, like Parmenides, adopt an overtly agonistic stance against other wisdom practitioners, we do not have indications about the performance of Parmenides' poem, in particular as regards public recitations of his work. A scanty piece of information is provided by Plato in the *Sophist*, in which the guest from Elea, a follower of Parmenides and Zeno, says that Parmenides repeatedly warned him and his other young pupils never to admit that What-Is-Not *is*, both in prose and in verse[1]. In the light of Plato's testimony, Cerri has advanced the hypothesis that Parmenides made use of verse to help students memorize the basic tenets of his doctrine, after having explained it extensively in everyday language[2]. Additionally, so Cerri argues, the poem was most probably circulated among groups of intellectuals in other cities in order to raise interest in Parmenides' philosophy and thereby attract new followers[3]. Despite the lack of decisive evidence, Cerri's reconstruction is, I think, plausible. Indeed, it is undeniable that Parmenides' poem had vast influence on later philosophers, who must have been

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[1] Cf. Pl. *Sph*. 237a: "But the great Parmenides, my boy, from the time when we were children to the end of his life, always protested against this and constantly repeated both in prose and in verse: 'never let this thought prevail, saith he, that not-being is'" (tr. Fowler).

[2] Cf. Cerri 1999, p. 94.

[3] Cf. Cerri 1999, p. 95. As implied by what Plato says in the *Parmenides* (Pl. *Parm*. 128a-b), copies of Parmenides' poem must have circulated in Athens during Parmenides' life.

well acquainted not only with his arguments, but also with his verses, as testified by their appropriation of his "technical" terminology[4]. However, I also tend not to exclude the possibility that the poem was performed publicly and thus pitched to a wider audience than that of his intellectual circles[5]. An indication of this fact comes from Epicharmus' use of Parmenidean terminology in his comedies[6], which, given its parodic function, can be explained only if the public was aware, in some degree, of the content of Parmenides' work. Moreover, the proem's marked narrative character, along with the rich system of allusions to Homer and Hesiod therein, suggests that the poem was meant also for the wider public, which, initially attracted by the traditional framework of the work, would then have been introduced to a revolutionary conception of reality.

My analysis of Parmenides' competitive take on his rivals will start with the examination of the proem of his work, where he alludes to his polemic targets (3.1). Then, I will discuss Hesiod's characterization of *alēthea* ("true things") as universal truths, by means of which he both differentiates his poetry from that of Homer and affirms his poetic superiority over other poets (3.2). In the next section (3.3), I will examine Parmenides' redefinition of *alētheia* and show how it eliminates the issues raised by Hesiod's poetry. Finally, I will evaluate the role of *Doxa* in the poem in the light of Parmenides' original conception of truth and his competitive stance against his rivals (3.4).

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[4] Cf., for example, the echoes of Parmenides in Empedocles and Epicharmus discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Traces of Parmenides' linguistic influence can be found also in Aeschylus (e.g. *Ag.* 788-789).

[5] Significantly, at *Parm.* 127a-c, Plato says that Parmenides and Zeno came to Athens to attend the Great Panathenaia, where it is plausible to think that they performed their works. On the possible audience of the the poem, see also Tulli 1993, pp. 160-162.

[6] Cf. Horky 2013, p. 136 n. 41. On Epicharmus' relation to Parmenides, see further Chapter 5, pp. 161 and 169-170.

3.1 – The proem

Analysing Parmenides' proem in search of the literary and cultural influences which he drew upon has led to many interesting results in the course of decades of scholarly debate[7]. These discoveries, although helpful in shedding some light on what lies in the background of such an influential work, have had the effect of further fragmenting the approach to and the consequent interpretation of Parmenides' thought. For each intertext and context has been used as a sort of Rosetta stone to decipher the content of the whole poem. One of the most eloquent examples is provided by Kingsley's interpretation of Parmenides as a healer who put in verse the description of his mystical experiences[8]. But even in cases where the recognition of literary/cultural models employed by Parmenides has not led to such striking consequences, there remain the limitations stemming from the preconceived belief that the proem was composed by drawing upon a primary and predominant source, which should be identified in order to understand Parmenides' work. This idea is well exemplified by Havelock's point of view on the various and contrasting results of scholarly analysis of the proem: since they could not be reconciled and they are not satisfactory when singularly considered, the right answer should be sought elsewhere[9].

In what follows, my approach will address exactly these tenets, since I will start from the assumption that Parmenides' usage of models for his poetry does not mean that he wholly adopts them or that he should be identified with them. In Mourelatos' terminology, the presence of certain motifs does not allow us to draw straightforward

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[7] The interpretative work on the proem started in antiquity, as testified by Sextus Empiricus' reading of the passage as an epistemological allegory (S.E. *M*.7.111; 114). For allegorical interpretations in modern times, see Bowra 1937, p. 98; Coxon 2009, pp. 14-18. For a discussion and criticism of allegorical interpretations, see Palmer 2009, pp. 52-53.

[8] See Kingsley 1999, pp. 101-105 and *passim*. Similarly, Gemelli Marciano (2008). In stark contrast with the reading of Parmenides' proem as the description of a mystic experience, Granger sees in the goddess a symbol of *a priori* reason (cf. Granger 2008, p. 16).

[9] Cf. Havelock 1958, p. 135.

conclusions about the theme(s) of the poem[10]. But, rather than accepting Mourelatos' explanation of the compresence of so many different and dissonant motifs as the results of "archaic mentality"[11], I intend to show that a more promising approach consists in considering Parmenides as competing with the very poetic models he employs. In this light, the problem arising from the impossibility of reconciling all the different influences traceable in his poem disappears: the motifs are there as allusions to his predecessors and adversaries, who are challenged all together at the same time. In order to analyse the parallels between Parmenides' poem and other literary/cultural models and to show how he combines them in a multi-layered system of references, I will start by discussing the motif of the journey, and then I will proceed to illustrate the different ramifications and allusions contained in his narration.

As long recognized, the *Odyssey* is one of the models Parmenides draws upon to describe his journey to the goddess' dwellings[12]. In terms of terminology and imagery, the characteristic elements of the journey motif employed to narrate Odysseus' *nostos* are reprised to represent the quest for Being in the poem. The terms *hodos* and *keleuthos*, which in Homer both indicate an itinerary or route towards a specific goal or place (specifically, Odysseus' return to Ithaka), in Parmenides are used to indicate, first, the path he follows to meet the goddess (B1.1-2: "The mares that carry me […] were taking me (*pempon*), when they brought and placed me upon the much-speaking route (*hodon*) of the goddess"[13]) and, then, the route of enquiry which the mind/thought should undertake (B2.2: "[I shall tell you] what routes of enquiry (*hodoi dizēsios*) alone

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[10] I follow Mourelatos' distinction between 'motif' and 'theme': the former indicates the conventional forms governing the description of certain objects, persons, places and processes, while the latter consists in the concept conveyed by that specific description (cf. Mourelatos 2008a, pp. 11-12).
[11] Mourelatos 2008a, p. 29.
[12] For an overview of Homeric influences on Parmenides, especially as to vocabulary, see Mourelatos 2008a, pp. 1-14; Coxon 2009, pp. 9-12. Cf. Havelock 1958 and Mourelatos 2008a, pp. 16-25. In the following presentation of the motif of the journey, I have drawn on both Havelock's and Mourelatos' analyses, of which I have selected the most relevant points for my discussion.
[13] DK 28 B1.1-2.

there are for thinking"; B2.4: "[The first route] is the path (*keleuthos*) of persuasion").

The vocabulary of these last passages shows that the similarities go further, as Odysseus

is also described as seeking his return (*nostos dizēmenos*[14]) and eventually accomplishes

it with the help of escorting agents, a contribution usually expressed by the verb *pempō*

('to send', 'to escort') and derivatives. Opposed to the idea of progression on the route

of return is the notion of wandering (*planē*), which can eventually coincide with a non-

return, especially if determined by human foolishness. Odysseus' comrades are deprived

of the *nostos* exactly because of their irresponsible behaviour, marked by recklessness

(*atasthaliē*)[15]. In similar tones, Parmenides describes the wandering mind of mortals

which fails to recognize the right path to follow in their quest, "for helplessness

(*amēchaniē*) in their breasts directs their mind astray"[16]. In order to avoid losing the way

of return because of endless wandering, it is necessary to resort to the help of

superhuman guides. In the *Odyssey*, Tiresias and Circe play such a role, as they both

provide him with advice about the route to follow and give him signs (*sēmata*) which

can guide him[17]. In Parmenides' poem as well, the goddess indicates to the *kouros* the

signs he can encounter on the way of Being (B8.2-3: "On this way there are very many

signs (*sēmata*))"[18].

Parmenides' journey is made on a chariot driven by sagacious (*poluphrastoi*)

mares, an indirect reference to Achilles' horses in the *Iliad*[19], and escorted by the

daughters of the Sun (B1.9), who guide him on the way of divinity. The choice of the

chariot recalls a complex set of references: Telemachus' journey in the *Odyssey*[20]; the

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[14] *Od*. 23.253; see also, *Od*. 11.100.
[15] E.g. *Od*. 1.7.
[16] DK 28 B6.5-6 (tr. Coxon with modifications).
[17] For example, at *Od*. 12.25-26; *Od*. 11.126.
[18] In addition, Havelock argues that the goddess's description of the alternatives routes of enquiry in B2 is modelled on Circe's advice about Scylla and Carybdis at *Od*. 12.217-221 (cf. Havelock 1958, p. 138).
[19] *Il*. 19.400-420. On this point, see Havelock 1958, p. 136; Coxon 2009, p. 273.
[20] *Od*. 3. 475-4.75.

myth of Phaethon, especially considering the presence of the daughters of the Sun[21]; Herakles' apotheosis[22]; Hades' kidnapping of Persephone and his consequent descent to the Underworld[23]. But primarily, the chariot driven by horses or other animals stands as a metaphor for inspired poetry, as shown by coeval or slightly later poetical texts[24]. The image of the chariot is part of a larger field of metaphors which represent poetic discourse as a path, examples of which are attested in Homer and, more broadly, in the Indo-European tradition[25]. Significantly, the chariot and the horses frequently are used to evoke the idea of poetic competition[26].

Parmenides' chariot is driven to the gates of the paths of Day and Night (B1.11), a topographical detail which hints at Hesiod's description of Tartarus in the *Theogony*. Tartarus is the place where the dwellings of Night are located[27], and Night and Day are said to greet one another as they alternatively (*ameibomenai*) pass a great bronze threshold[28]. The idea of alternation is echoed by Parmenides' description of the keys of the Gate as "alternating" (*klēidas amoibous*) (B1.14). Furthermore, Hesiod speaks of Tartarus as a great chasm (*chasma*, *Th.*740) beyond the Underworld gates. Similarly, the gate opened by Dike to let the *kouros* pass reveals a yawning chasm (*chasm' achanes*,

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[21] Cf. Bowra 1937, pp. 103-104; Burkert 1969, pp. 6-7.

[22] As testified by vase paintings datable form the middle of the 6th century BCE, see Mingazzini 1925, pp. 418-442. Significantly, Herakles, like the *kouros*, journeys to the Underworld while still living (cf. Kingsley 1999, p. 61). On Parmenides' proem as a description of a *katabasis*, see below.

[23] Cf. *h.Cer.*(2).18-20. On the relationship between the hymn and Parmenides' proem, see Cerri 1999, p. 101, n. 140.

[24] The image is frequent in Pindar (e.g. *O.* 9.81; 8.61; *P.* 10.65); we find it in Bacchylides (5.176) and in Empedocles (DK 31 B3.5; see further, Chapter 4, pp. 136-140). On the image, see Durante 1976, pp. 129-134 and Cerri 1999, pp. 97-98. Scholars have also noted a close resemblance between Parmenides' proem and Pindar's *Olympic* 6.22-27, where he describes his arrival to the gate of hymns by chariot. For a discussion of the possible influences of Parmenides on Pindar (or vice versa), see Durante 1976, pp. 131-132; D'Alessio 1995 and Di Benedetto, 2003.

[25] The Parmenidean image of the path leading to truth is found in Vedic texts, which also assign to the Sun's daughter, Sūryā, a determinant role in poetic inspiration and composition. Cf. Durante 1976, pp. 132-133; on poetry as a path, see *idem*, pp. 123-129. Also notice that the road is qualified as "richly endowed in song" (*poluphēmos*), for a parallel, see the *poluphēmos* singer at *Od.*22.376. On this point, see Lesher 1994, pp. 11-12.

[26] See Durante 1976, pp. 129-130.

[27] Cf. *Th.* 743. At B1.9, Parmenides speaks of the house of Night (*dōmata Nuktos*)

[28] Cf. *Th.* 748-750. Instead of bronze, Parmenides' threshold is made of stone. This variation of the tradition (the bronze threshold of Hades is also in Homer, at *Il.* 8.15) has been differently interpreted: see Cerri 1999, pp. 176-177; Coxon 2009, p. 276-277.

B1.18). This reprise of Hesiod's topography of Tartarus contributes to characterize Parmenides' journey as a travel to the Underworld[29]. A further indication in this sense is provided by the goddess' reassurance that the *kouros* has not been brought to her house by a *moira kakē*, which in epic language is equivalent to 'death'[30]. In other words, he has reached while living the destination at which humans usually arrive only after their death.

That Parmenides models his narration on that of an afterlife journey is also suggested by his designating the route the *kouros* travels on as the road which carries the man who knows (*eidota phōta*). As shown by Burkert, the phrase *eidota phōta*, when used without an object, indicates one who has been initiated to mysteries, and the term *kouros* as well belongs to the terminology of initiations[31]. But the travelling "man who knows" recalls again Homer's *Odyssey*: during his journey Odysseus encounters and knows the minds and the cities of many men (notice that Parmenides' road carries the man "through all cities"[32]), including the land of the Lestrygonians who are said to inhabit a region near the paths of Night and Day[33], and eventually reaches Hades, where he speaks to Tiresias and the ghosts of other people he knew during his life (the so-called *Nekuia*, narrated in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*). Significantly, it is Circe, a daughter

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[29] The actual direction of the journey, that is, from darkness to light, or from light to darkness is debated: for an overview of the possible interpretations, see Tarán 1965, pp. 23-31; Pellikaan-Engel 1974, pp. 63-76; Tor 2011, p. 134, n. 69.

[30] Cf. Burkert 1969, p. 14; Mourelatos 2008a, p. 15; Pellikaan-Engel 1974, pp. 59-60; Kingsley 1999, p. 61; Cerri 1999, p. 163.

[31] Cf. Burkert 1969, p. 5. Cf. also, Kingsley 1999, p. 62; Coxon 2009, pp. 273-274; Palmer 2009, p. 58. The idea of an Underworld journey is also corroborated by the similarities between Parmenides' poem and the instructions for the initiate's journey in the afterlife described in the Golden Tablets (extant specimens dating from the late 5th century BCE to the 2nd/3rd century CE). On this point, see Tor 2011, pp. 146-148; Battezzato 2005. For the text and commentary on the Tablets, see Pugliese Carratelli 2011. On the motif of the afterlife journey of the soul, see also Betegh 2006, pp. 29-30.

[32] DK 28 B1.3. The text is uncertain here. Coxon has shown that *astē* is just the result of a misreading of Sextus' text, which has *pant'atē* (Coxon 1968, p. 69). This has led to different emendations of the reading *kata pant'astē*: see, for example, Coxon 2009, p. 271; Cerri 1999, pp. 169-170; Gallop 2000, p. 49. For a detailed discussion of the problem, see Lesher 1994. I think that Lesher's analysis of poetic tradition convincingly supports the reading *pant'astē* (see esp. *idem*, pp. 8-16).

[33] *Od.* 10.86.

of the Sun[34], that instructs Odysseus on how to get to Hades in order to speak to Tiresias.

The details characterizing the *Nekuia* serve to introduce a further element of parallelism between the *Odyssey* and Parmenides' poem, namely the role played by mind (*noos*) during the journey. As argued by Frame, *noos* and *nostos* derive from the same Indo-European root **nes*-, meaning "to return to light and life", and Odysseus accomplishes his return (which is also a return from Hades) exactly in virtue of his mind, in respect of which he is superior to mortals[35]. In Parmenides as well, the *noos* plays a central role in the quest for being: as previously mentioned, the routes of enquiry are paths of thinking (*eisi noēsai* B2.2), and an incorrect use of *noos* results in being led into error (B6.6). Furthermore, mind/thought possesses a privileged connection with Being, as implied, for example, by fragments B3 and B8.34-38[36].

The analysis so far has shown that in his poem Parmenides appropriates different elements drawn from various poetic sources, by which he constructs the narration of an afterlife journey culminating in the apprehension of a truth ignored by other mortals[37]. Prior to Parmenides, stories about Underworldly experiences or, more generally, psychic journeys outside the body, which granted superior knowledge to the traveller thanks to the contact with gods or spirits, already circulated in relation to semi-legendary figures like Aristeas, Abaris, Hermotimus, and Epimenides of Crete[38]. Even Pythagoras was credited with such extraordinary abilities, and he was also thought to have returned from

[34] *Od*.10.138. On this point, see Frame 1978, p. 147; Tor 2011, p. 141.
[35] Cf. Frame 1978, pp. 6-80 and *passim*.
[36] These lines are notoriously difficult to interpret, and especially in the case of B3, the problems start with their syntax. Different solutions have been proposed. However, there seems to be a consensus about their conveying the idea that Being is, at the same time, an object of thinking/understanding and a condition for understanding. On this point, see von Fritz 1945, pp. 236-242; Zeller 1963, p. 687, n. 1; Tarán 1965, pp. 41-44; Crystal 2002; Coxon 2003 and 2009, pp. 296-297; Mourelatos 2008a, pp. 164-193; Palmer 2009, pp. 118-122; Tor 2011, pp. 164-166.
[37] As implied by the goddess' description of the road travelled by Parmenides as a path "far from the beaten track of men" (DK 28 B1.27, tr. Gallop).
[38] On these wonder-workers, see Dodds 1951, pp. 135-178; Burkert 1972, pp. 165-164.

a *katabasis*[39]. Since such traditions thrived in the cultural milieu of South Italy, it should not be a surprise that Parmenides came in contact with them[40]. Furthermore, Sotion reports that Parmenides' teacher was the Pythagorean Ameinias, thus implying that Parmenides should have been well acquainted with Pythagorean doctrines[41]. If we consider Parmenides as involved in competition with other sages and wisdom practitioners, including Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans[42], his depiction of the *kouros*' journey as a *katabasis*, in addition to its Homeric and Hesiodic parallels, could be seen as a way of challenging the wisdom of those who claimed to have had such other-worldy experiences. In adopting the same narrative framework, he apparently enters the same game of his adversaries, but, as I will argue, only to put a stop to it from the inside. The move he makes to achieve such a result consists in the articulation of a new notion of truth which aims to eradicate competition once and for all. But the introduction of a truth conveyed by poetry entails a direct confrontation with Hesiod, as demonstrated by the goddess' distinction between *alētheia* and *doxa*, which closely resembles that of the Muses between *alēthea* and *pseudea* in the *Theogony*. To fully evaluate Parmenides' challenge to Hesiod, I will now examine the implications deriving from the Muses' address to Hesiod.

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[39] See Burkert 1969, pp. 22-29 and 1972, pp. 158-159.

[40] On this point, see Burkert 1969, p. 5 and 25; Kingsley 1999, pp. 61-71 and *passim*. Even Xenophanes appears to be acquainted with the wonders of Pythagoras (see Chapter 2, p. 49) and Epimenides (cf. DK 21 B20).

[41] DK 28 A1=D.L.9.21.

[42] Parmenides' engagement with Pythagoreans doctrines has been strongly argued for by Raven, who saw in the poem a criticism of Pythagorean theories, in particular that about void (cf. Raven 1948, pp. 21-42 and *passim*; for a convincing refutation of Raven's interpretation, see Vlastos 1953). Although it is objectively difficult to determine with certainty the details of Parmenides' criticism of Pythagoreans, the idea that the two schools critically interacted cannot be easily dismissed: see, for example, Horky's reading of the so-called mathematical Pythagoreans as responding to Parmenides' philosophy (cf. Horky 2013, pp. 136-149). In what follows, I will propose an interpretation according to which Parmenides' criticism is directed toward the Pythagorean idea of wisdom (see *infra*, pp. 112-116).

3.2 – Truth in the Hesiodic poems

The interpretation of the notion of truth in the Hesiodic poems is one of the main issues in the understanding of these works, especially regarding the truth status of their content. In this respect, the *Theogony* is emblematic, as represented by the words which the Muses address to Hesiod during his poetic investiture:

> ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
> ἴδμεν δ᾽ εὖτ᾽ ἐθέλωμεν ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι
>
> We know how to say false things similar to concrete/genuine ones,
> and we know, when we wish, how to proclaim true things[43].

Th. 27-28

Before evaluating the import of such a statement, it will be useful to present schematically the Homeric usage of the terms *etumos* and *alēthēs*. The term *etumos* (and its reduplicate variant *etētumos*) usually refers to what actually exists as true, that is the actual state-of-affairs[44]. In addition, it also indicates a communication whose content is, or will prove to be, conform to the facts[45], in opposition to a statement which can be disproved by events, and thus turns out to be false (*pseudos*)[46]. *Alēthēs* is used to qualify the informational content of communication as devoid of any kind of forgetfulness or inattentiveness (*lēthē*) which may prevent the complete and precise transmission of information[47]. The term is opposed to *pseudos* when the latter indicates deliberate lies, as in the passage of the *Odyssey*, where Eumaeus says that the beggars who arrive at Ithaca do not want to tell Penelope the truth, and thus say false things to gain advantages[48].

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[43] Tr. Most, with modifications.
[44] Cf. Pucci 1977, p. 9.
[45] Cf. Cole 1983, p. 13.
[46] Cf. Krischer 1965, p. 166.
[47] On this point, see Cole 1983, p. 12; Palmer 2009, p. 89, n. 107.
[48] *Od.* 14.125. On the opposition between *pseudos* and *alēthēs* as distinguished from that between *pseudos* and *etumos*, see Germani 1988, pp. 183-184.

In what follows, I intend to show that the Muses' claim of being able to tell false things resembling (*homoia*)[49] concrete/genuine ones and, according to their wish, true things, hints at a distinction between two different types of poetic narration. To do that, I will start by considering the reference to *Odyssey* 19.203 contained in line 27[50]. At *Od.* 19.203, the phrase *iske pseudea polla etumoisin homoia* is used to describe the lies Odysseus tells Penelope, while still disguised as the Cretan guest. This episode about the encounter between Odysseus and his wife is only one among the many which characterize, throughout the poem, the hero's ability to enchant and persuade with his words. The most indicative instances of his eloquence are in the part in which he narrates his peregrinations to the Pheacians, who, enchanted by his tale, remain completely speechless[51]. In this respect, he is similar to a singer, as declared by Alcinous during a pause in his narration[52]:

> ὦ Ὀδυσεῦ, τὸ μὲν οὔ τί σ᾽ ἐΐσκομεν εἰσορόωντες
> ἠπεροπῆά τ᾽ ἔμεν καὶ ἐπίκλοπον, οἷά τε πολλοὺς
> βόσκει γαῖα μέλαινα πολυσπερέας ἀνθρώπους
> ψεύδεά τ᾽ ἀρτύνοντας, ὅθεν κέ τις οὐδὲ ἴδοιτο·
> σοὶ δ᾽ ἔπι μὲν μορφὴ ἐπέων, ἔνι δὲ φρένες ἐσθλαί,
> μῦθον δ᾽ ὡς ὅτ᾽ ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας,
> πάντων Ἀργείων σέο τ᾽ αὐτοῦ κήδεα λυγρά.
>
> Odysseus, in the first place we do not at all suppose, as we look at you,
> that you are the kind of dissembler and cheat which the dark earth
> breeds in such numbers among far-flung humankind,
> men that fashion lies out of what no man could ever see.

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[49] On the meaning of *homoios*, see Bryan 2012, pp. 28-36 and Tor 2011, pp. 25-26.

[50] The reference to Homer is subject to debate. Broadly speaking, the identification of a polemic target in line 27 relates to the problem concerning the truth-status of Hesiod's poetry. The possible interpretations can be divided in three main groups (I follow, with modifications, Pucci's classification, cf. Pucci 2007, pp. 60-63): 1) Line 27 contains a criticism of Homeric poetry as false, in contrast to the truth of Hesiod's poems expressed in the following verse: e.g. Verdenius 1972, pp. 234-235; Buongiovanni 2011; Arrighetti 2006, p. 4 and *passim*. 2) Lines 27-28 qualify all the poetic production before Hesiod as a mixture of truth and falsehood, without specifically targeting Homer: e.g. Lanata 1963, p. 25; West 1966, p. 162.). 3) In these lines Hesiod recognizes that all poetry, including his own, is essentially a mixture of truth and falsity: e.g. Pucci 1977; Thalmann 1984, pp. 143-149; Clay 2003, p. 57-63; Ledbetter 2003, pp. 40-61.

[51] *Od.* 11.333-334; 13.1-2.

[52] This is the first explicit assimilation of Odysseus to a poet, a similarity which is constantly stressed throughout the poem, due to the hero's ability in speech. Another example is provided by the words Eumaeus uses to describe to Penelope the enchanting ability of the stranger: "Just as when a man gazes upon a minstrel who sings to mortals songs of longing that the gods have taught him, and their desire to hear him has no end, whenever he sings, even so he charmed me when he sat in my hall"(*Od.* 17.518-521; tr. Murray-Dimock). For an analysis of the representation of Odysseus as poet, see Thalmann 1984, pp. 166-184.

> But upon you is comeliness of words, and within you is a noble spirit,
> and your tale you have told with skill, as a minstrel does,
> the grievous woes of all the Argives and of your own self[53].

<div align="right">Od. 11.367-369</div>

Alcinous' trust in Odysseus' tale is determined by the fact that it is characterized by beauty, as his words possess comeliness (*morphē epeōn*), and exhaustiveness of details, indicated by the verb *katalegein*[54]. Similar considerations are adduced by Odyssesus in his praise of Demodocus' song about the events of the Trojan war: the old singer certainly has been taught by the divinity, since he is capable of narrating in the right order (*kata kosmon*) the fate of the Acheans, like one who has been present at the events[55]. Moreover, Odysseus invites him to tell with accuracy (*katalegein*) the construction of the wooden horse, stating that, if the account corresponds to (*kata moiran*) what happened, he will readily declare without reserve that the singer has received the gift of song by the gods[56]. As argued by Arrighetti, both passages are based upon the idea that there exists a correlation between telling with accuracy an abundance of details, the beauty of song and the truth of narration[57]. More precisely, the capacity of narrating detailed events in their proper order is the necessary condition for a song to be beautiful and true[58]. Focusing on the latter aspect, I would like to draw the attention to the possibility of actually testing the veracity of the speaker's account. In the case of Demodocus, for example, Odysseus is capable of judging about the exactness and

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[53] Tr. Murray-Dimock, with modifications.

[54] On *katalegein*, see Krischer 1965, pp. 168-171; Perceau 2002.

[55] Cf. *Od*. 8.487-491: "Demodocus, truly above all mortal men do I praise you, whether it was the Muse, daughter of Zeus, that taught you, or Apollo; for well and truly do you sing of the fate of the Achaeans, all that they did and suffered, and all the toils they endured, as perhaps one who had yourself been present, or had heard the tale from another" (tr. Murray-Dimock). Noticeably, given that the scene at Alcinous' court is set at a time in which it was possible for people to hear of the Trojan war from those who fought in it, Odysseus speaks also of the hypothetical possibility that Demodocus has been told the story by someone who was present at the events.

[56] Cf. *Od*. 8. 492-498.

[57] Cf. Arrighetti 2006, pp. 9-10. On this characteristic of Homeric poetry, see also Accame 1963, p. 264. Generally speaking, the richness of details relates to the vividness of Homer's narration: see Bakker 2005, pp. 157-160; Elmer 2010, p. 290, with references.

[58] The expressions *kata kosmon* and *kata moiran* generally indicate an accordance with the order of things. In certain specialized metrical forms, *kata moiran* implies the idea of a "steady progression through an orderly sequence of details" (Elmer 2010, p. 293).

reliability of the bard's song since he took part of the events. What is narrated in such accounts is thus *etumos*, since it is liable to be proven by the facts. However, as demonstrated by Odysseus' speech to Penelope, things are not as simple as they might appear, because there remains the possibility that stories presenting a series of well-arranged details, similar to actual facts, could be false. In this case, the same factor necessary to judge about the truthfulness of narration, namely the actual presence at the events reported in speech, is the key for the production of persuasive lies. For when Odysseus tells Penelope false things about himself, she starts questioning him about particulars which, besides Odysseus, only someone who had really met him, could have known[59]. The presence or not of details, therefore, is not a decisive element for distinguishing between false and true accounts, since it is always possible to create lies having the appearance of truth provided that the audience has not the relevant experience necessary to discriminate between truth and falsity.

Still, false accounts resembling genuine events have nonetheless the property of beauty, as demonstrated by their enchanting effect on the audience[60]. But since a beautiful song cannot but be inspired by the Muses[61], the goddesses have to be responsible also for false accounts of events[62]. As I have anticipated, the content of such revelations hints at a type of narration different from that consisting of truths. Actually, as I intend to show, Hesiod employs this distinction in order to stress the diversity of his poetry from that of Homer, as they are based on a different conception of the truth poetry should convey. For, instead of focusing on the narration of factual events,

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[59] Cf. *Od*. 19.215-219: "Now above all, stranger, I feel I must test you as to whether or not you did in very truth (ὀίω πειρήσεσθαι, εἰ ἐτεὸν) entertain my husband with his godlike comrades there in your halls, even as you say. Tell me what sort of clothing he wore about his body, and what sort of man he was himself; and tell me of the comrades who followed him" (tr. Murray-Dimock).
[60] On the enchanting effect of poetry and its ambivalence between truth and deceit, see Thalmann 1984, pp. 172-173. This aspect is also related to the persuasive power of poetry, see *infra*, pp. 15-16.
[61] Indeed, skilfulness in speaking and beauty of song are the most notable gift of the goddesses: in the proem, Hesiod repeatedly qualifies the song and the voice of the Muses as "beautiful" (e.g. *Th*.10; 22; 68), "sweet" (e.g. *Th*. 40; 83; 97), "delicate" (e.g. *Th*. 41).
[62] Cf. Arrighetti 2006, pp. 9-10.

Hesiod's poetry aims at the transmission of universal truths, ultimately related to the stable order of the world established by Zeus[63]. While the *Theogony* narrates the origins of the world and the events which eventually led to Zeus' reign over the cosmos, the *Works and Days*, despite its focus on human activities, shows an interest in the universal dimension in which these very activities are inserted. An example might help to clarify this aspect. In the part of the poem devoted to navigation, the so-called *Nautilia*, Hesiod states that he will show to Perses the rules (*metra*) of seafaring, despite his not being expert in ships, since his experience of navigation is limited to the short voyage he did in order to take part in the funeral games in honour of Amphidamas[64]. Notwithstanding this lack of skill, he declares that he will tell the mind/plan (*noos*) of Zeus, thanks to the Muses who taught him to sing a marvellous song. The passage implies that Zeus' mind/plan encompasses the notions that constitute the rules (*metra*) of seafaring, which consist in the injunctions about the proper seasons for navigation expounded by Hesiod in the following lines. But, rather than amounting to a mere list of technical details, these notions are presented as having an ethical import as well. For the term *metron* refers also to the right measure men should not overpass in order to not incur in the loss of their possessions, or, worse, of their life, as illustrated in the final lines of the *Nautilia*, which is closed, and summed up, by a last precept inviting to observe the right measure (*metra phulassesthai*) in all circumstances[65]. In this light, the connection to Zeus' *noos* is further strengthened, since it is in the mind/plan of the god that the ethical structure of the world has its foundation. Thus, Hesiod's treatment of navigation is characterized by the attention given to the way this human activity is inserted in the context of the cosmic order established by Zeus, and the same holds for the other

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[63] On the difference of content between Homeric and Hesiodic poetry, see also Vernant 1983, p. 353.
[64] Cf. *Op*. 648-662.
[65] Cf. *Op*. 684-694.

occupations described in the poem[66]. The invocation contained in the proem of the *Works and Days* well exemplifies this aspect: while Hesiod prays to Zeus to deal with justice, he himself will expound to Perses genuine/concrete things (*etētuma*) regarding mortal life, thus implying that the realities of the world find their significance only if placed in the wider ethical order of the universe, which transcends the concreteness of human experience[67].

These considerations clarify why I take the Muses' statement as a distinction between two types of narration: while, on the one hand, *alēthea* indicates true things in their universal validity, on the other hand, *etuma* comes to specifically signify the concrete realities and events of human life. But a poetry grounded on *etuma*, like the Homeric poems, can be false. Truth belongs to another type of narration, which does not reproduce the multiformity of experience, but which rather expounds the universal and stable character of the world, as Hesiod aims to do in his poems. It is important to notice that what the Muses say is not equivalent to equating a poetry dealing with *etuma* with falsehood, or stating that heroic poetry is false, as demonstrated by the reference to the events of the Trojan war present in the Hesiodic poems[68]. Rather, the phrase *pseudea polla etumoisin homoia* stands as a reminder of the possibility that what is narrated, despite its apparent adherence to real events, could be completely false. Moreover, Odysseus' example demonstrates that such accounts could be fabricated by anyone, provided he has the relevant experience necessary to make his tale credible and not subject to confutation. By contrast, the fact that Hesiod provides an account of the order

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[66] Cf. Arrighetti 1987, pp. 49-50. On the "universal" value of Zeus' *noos*, see also Nannini 2010, pp. 44-45.

[67] It is important to notice that at *Op*. 10, Hesiod employs the form *mythēsaimēn*, which, combined with the particle *ke*, expresses potentiality, so that it should be translated as 'I would tell' or 'I should like to tell' (cf. Krischer 1965, p. 173 and Tor 2011, p. 41). In other words, Hesiod wish to tell Perses things that will prove conform to events, a difficult task because of the inscrutability of divine will (on this point, see below).

[68] Cf. *Op*. 651-653.

of the universe and of Zeus' dominion over it marks the diversity *and* the superiority of his poetry, since it deals with contents which no mortal could know.

However, while on the one hand, the fact that the content of the Hesiodic poems relates to events beyond human experience reveals their divine origin, on the other hand, it represents a serious problem for the truth status of the poems. For the total dependence on the Muses leaves open the possibility that they are telling lies to Hesiod as well. The audience, like the poet himself, is totally deprived of any criterion to judge about the truth or falsity of the content of the poems. But despite this, I would say that Hesiod's faith in the authenticity of what the Muses tell him cannot be questioned, especially considering his claim to authority, which he substantiates by narrating the particulars of his investiture in the *Theogony*. The scene is described at lines 22-34 by means of a ring composition whose central element consists in the Muses' address to Hesiod (ll. 26-28). The lines can be schematised as follows[69]:

A1   One time they [i.e. the Muses] taught Hesiod a beautiful song
        While he was pasturing lambs under holy Helicon (*Th*. 22-23).

B   The Muses' address (*Th*. 24-28).

A2   So spoke great Zeus' ready-speaking daughters, and they
        plucked a staff, a branch of luxuriant laurel, a marvel, and
        gave it to me[70]; and they breathed a divine voice into me, so
        so that I might glorify what will be and what was before, and
        they commanded me to sing of the race of the blessed ones
        who always are, but always to sing of themselves first and last (*Th*. 28-34).

The external elements of the ring (A1 and A2) are related through the couple of terms song/voice, so that A2 constitutes both an explanation and an expansion of Hesiod's statement about the song which the Muses taught him. Actually, the scene described in A2 acquires its significance in the light of what the Muses say in B[71]. Considered

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[69] I adopt Most's translation of the passage.

[70] The translation is based on the variant *drepsasai*. According to another textual tradition, instead of the participle, *drepō* is in the infinitive (*drepsasthai*). For a discussion of the implications of either readings, see Pucci 2007, p. 71.

[71] On ring composition, see Thalmann 1984, pp. 8-21.

together, the three elements configure a framework which emphasizes Hesiod's authoritative role. The first mark of authority is represented by the name 'Hesiod' (l. 22), a striking innovation if compared with the traditional singers' anonymity we find in the Homeric poems. For the function of the name is to sanction the content of the poem. In fact, the name serves to stress the privileged relationship between the Muses and one single poet, Hesiod, which they chose in order to reveal to him the origins of the world and the birth of the gods[72]. The importance of divine choice is further highlighted by the fact that the Muses, descend from the Helikon to teach Hesiod a divine song, while in the Homeric poems the poet had to invoke them in order to obtain the information necessary for singing. In B, the goddesses themselves emphasize this aspect by saying that they tell the truth *when they wish*[73], and Hesiod wants the audience to believe that they have chosen him as the authorized spokesman of this truth. In a competitive context like that characterizing Archaic poetry, I would say, the acknowledgement that the Muses can tell false things makes sense only if the poet reporting it is sure of his own authority[74]. Finally, in A2, Hesiod receives a sceptre from the Muses as the tangible proof of his investiture. For traditionally the *skēptron* was regarded as an instrument of divine origin which allowed its owner to speak authoritatively words conveying the gods' will[75]. The sceptre in itself, however, does not guarantee the truth of the song. As noted by Tor, in the *Iliad* Agamemnon is deceived by Zeus while holding the very sceptre he received by favour of the god[76]. But, I argue, even though the sceptre alone is not sufficient to support Hesiod's claim to authority, when granted alongside the

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[72] Cf. Nannini 2010, pp. 45-46.

[73] *Th*. 28.

[74] In this respect, it is important to notice that, as stressed by Verdenius, in the *Theogony*, Hesiod provides a negative representation of *pseudea*, cf. Verdenius 1972, p. 235.

[75] For an overview of the figures traditionally associated with the sceptre, see Calabrese De Feo 2004, pp. 45-52. On the sceptre as a mark of authority, see also Nagy 1996, pp. 44-45.

[76] Cf. Tor 2011, p. 29. *Contra* Calabrese De Feo, who argues that, since the sceptre traditionally symbolizes a special connection to Zeus, it stands *per se* as a guarantee of the truth of Hesiod's song (cf. Calabrese De Feo 2004, pp. 45-46).

inspiration of divine voice, as described immediately after, it actually proves the authoritative status of Hesiod's poetry. Indeed, Hesiod's superiority over other poets derives exactly from the fact that, differently from them, he both received the sceptre *and* the Muses inspired him a divine voice, so that he could sing the truth about the gods' birth and the cosmic order established by Zeus[77].

However, notwithstanding Hesiod's commitment to prove his authority, it is undeniable that the dependence on the gods' will, which as he himself admits, is difficult for mortals to understand[78], does not guarantee the validity of what he says. Moreover, despite the particularity of his poetic investiture, which should serve to sanction Hesiod's authority, and thus the contemporary exclusion of other rival versions, there remains the possibility of other poets claiming the same prerogative. Hesiod's universal truth, then, turns out to be built on potentially shaky foundations. It is now time to show how Parmenides address this question left unsolved by Hesiod's poetry and evaluate his solution in order to provide a universal truth with more solid foundations.

3.3 – Parmenides' *alētheia*

Parmenides' engagement with Hesiod's conception of truth and, broadly speaking, similar poetical programmatic claims, is indicated by the echoes of the Muses' statement of *Theogony* 27-28 contained in the goddess's announcement to the *kouros* of the

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[77] Noticeably, Hesiod tells us that the Muses inspired him to sing the past, the future and the immortal gods (l. 32), thus hinting at the permanent arrangement of the universe brought about by Zeus' dominion. On this point, cf. Rudhardt 1996, pp. 35-39; Pucci 2007, p. 74. It is worth noticing that Hesiod employs the term *audē*, which indicates human voice specifically, but he qualifies it as divine (*thespis*), thus stressing the divine origin of his poetry and thereby his role as spokesman of the Muses. On Hesiod's use of *audē*, see further Tor 2011, pp. 30-31, with references.
[78] Cf. *Op*. 483-484.

content of her revelation[79]. These lines, however, present significant differences which, I argue, respond to the issues raised by the Muses' words. The text runs as follows:

χρεὼ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι
ἠμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος[80] ἀτρεμὲς[81] ἦτορ
ἠδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής.

You must be informed of everything,
both of the unmoved heart of persuasive truth
and of the beliefs/opinions of mortals which comprise
no genuine trustworthiness[82].

DK 28 B1.28-30

The distance from Hesiod is marked both by the content and the structure of the passage. First, instead of truths (*alēthea*) and falsehoods (*pseudea*) resembling genuine realities (*etuma*), the goddess speaks, respectively, of the heart of truth (*alētheiēs ētor*) and of the opinions/beliefs of mortals (*brotōn doxai*) which lack in genuine trustworthiness/conviction (*pistis alēthēs*). Secondly, the goddess is clear about what she will reveal to Parmenides and does not leave room for ambiguity: the *kouros* will apprehend both truth and mortal opinions, emphatically kept distinct by the particles *ēmen...ēde*[83]. The same clarity will be maintained later in the poem, when the goddess will announce the exact point where her account of truth ceases and that of opinion begins[84]. Differently from Hesiod, then, the *kouros* is constantly aware of the truth-value

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[79] As long recognized by scholars, see Dolin 1962, pp. 94-96; Pellikaan-Engel 1974, pp. 79-80; Arrighetti 1983, p. 12; Germani 1988, p. 185; Cerri 1999, pp. 184-185; Tulli 2000, pp. 75-77; Mourelatos 2008a, p. 33; Tor 2011, pp. 169-170.

[80] Besides εὐπειθέος, there are two other variants in the text, namely εὐκυκλέος (accepted in the Diels-Kranz edition) and εὐφεγγέος (reported by Proclus, but generally dismissed by commentators). εὐκυκλέος is accepted because is a *lectio difficilior*, but εὐπειθέος fits more in the context, as it marks a contrast with mortals' belief mentioned in the following line, deprived of true trustworthiness. In addition, even though in fragment B8 Being is described as spherical, at this point of the poem such an anticipation would have been missed by the audience (cf. Coxon 2009, pp. 283-284). For a different interpretation, see Tarán 1965, pp. 16-17.

[81] The variant ἀτρεκές ('strict','sure','certain') could work here, but ἀτρεμὲς is more appropriate as a qualifier of *ētor*, especially because it stresses the property of being unmoved by contrast with the inherent movement of the heart. On this point, cf. Tarán 1965, *loc. cit.*; Mourelatos 2008a, pp. 155-156; Coxon 2009, p. 284.

[82] Tr. Coxon, with modification.

[83] On this point, see also Pellikaan-Engel 1974, p. 80. On *ēmen...ēde*, see Smyth 1920, p. 650 (2867).

[84] DK B8.50-51.

of what he is learning from the divinity[85]. However, as shown by the precedent of the *Theogony*, without a further guarantee of the truth of revelation, there still remains the possibility of divine deception. The solution to this problem lies in the phrase "unmoved heart of persuasive truth" (B1.29), which, I argue, hints at Parmenides' original redefinition of the notion of *alētheia*.

In the previous section (3.2), I have argued that, in the Hesiodic poems, the term *alēthea* indicates truths universally valid, in contrast with *etuma*, which signifies the concrete realities of human experience[86]. Before entering the discussion of Parmenides' notion of *alētheia*, it will be useful to consider Palmer's recent interpretation of the term. Palmer argues that in Parmenides *alētheia* and *alēthēs* signify, respectively, 'reality' and 'real'/'genuine', thus excluding that they relate to truth as a property of speech and thought[87]. In particular, he stresses that the goddess never qualifies her speech as true, but rather describes it as a "speech about *alētheiē*" (B8.51). Such an expression could not, in his view, but indicate that *alētheiē* refers to Being, whose characteristics are discussed in the preceding lines[88]. Such an interpretation, however, tells only a part of the story. As I will try to demonstrate, it actually misses an essential point of Parmenides' construction of the poem. For while it is correct to say that the goddess' speech is about Being, that is, what "genuinely and really is"[89], at the same time, it configures a new notion of *alētheia* in terms of rational deduction. This means that the truth expounded in the poem is both about reality and the nature of truth itself. Indeed,

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[85] Noticeably, the fact that the *kouros* is told that he will learn both truth and opinions is a novelty in itself, since traditionally, in didactic poems the *persona loquens* expounds to the addressee *gnōmai* presented as reliable, as in the case of Hesiod and Perses in the *Works and Days*, or Theognis' elegies addressed to Cyrnus.

[86] Cf. *supra*, p. 95.

[87] Cf. Palmer 2010, p. 89ff. Similarly, Coxon 2009, p. 282-283; Cole 1983, p. 25.

[88] Cf. Palmer, *loc. cit.*

[89] Tor 2011, p. 162.

as it will emerge from the following discussion, the two aspects conflate, since What-Is and truth come to assume the same characteristics[90].

As mentioned above, the goddess speaks of her account of Being as a "speech and thought about truth" (B8.51), which actually consists in a long deductive argument meant to provide the justification for the attributes of Being listed at the beginning of the fragment. The goddess introduces her deduction by stating that on the path of Being there are many signs (*sēmata*) that What-Is is ungenerated, unperishable, whole, unique, immobile, and complete[91]. As argued by McKirahan, the term *sēmata* should be taken as indicating the very arguments which prove that What-Is possesses such attributes[92]. In fact, the justification of each attribute is provided by a deduction based upon the Principle of Non-Contradiction, since their negation would entail speaking or thinking of What-Is-Not, a possibility whose refutation in B2 led to the dismissal of the path of Not-Being[93]. That each attribute is true in virtue of its being validly deduced is further reinforced when mortals are said to be (wrongly) persuaded that the names they give to What-Is are true (B8.39). Indeed, these names are verbs which denote actions/states contradicting the essential attributes of Being, such as "to come into being and to perish" (*gignesthai te kai ollusthai*), and "to change place" (*topon allassein*) (B8.40-41). The importance of deduction further emerges from another passage of B8, where the goddess speaks again of the choice between the road of Being and that of Not-Being. While the latter, being not true (*ouk alēthēs*), has been discarded by necessity as "unconceivable and nameless", the former is said to be "genuine" (*etētumos*)[94].

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[90] On this point, see Cole, *loc. cit.*; Mourelatos 2008a, p. 67.

[91] On the textual problems regarding *ateleston* ('unaccomplished', 'endless'), see Tarán 1965, pp. 93-95; Coxon 2009, p. 315; Cerri 1999, pp. 222-223.

[92] Cf. McKirahan 2008, p. 221, n. 9.

[93] The correlation of asserting with thinking and knowing is stated in fragments B2.7-8; B3; B6.1-2; B8.7-9, 15-18, 50 (on this point, see Coxon 2009, p. 294). In Wedin's reconstruction of Parmenides' arguments, B2 and B3 together contain the "Governing Deduction", upon which all the other deductions are based (cf. Wedin 2014, pp. 9-33). It is beyond the scope of the present work to enter the details of Parmenides' arguments in B2 and B8, but, for an analysis of the arguments, I refer the reader to Wedin 2014, *loc. cit.* and pp. 83-192; McKirahan 2008; Palmer 2009, 137-159; Barnes 2005, pp. 122-136 (discussion of B2).

[94] Cf. B8.15-18. On the role of necessity, see below.

Considering that the decision about the right path of enquiry rests upon the refutation contained in B2, the qualification of the two roads as "not true" and "genuine" is determined by the fact that there are valid arguments indicating which is the road to follow. It is worth noticing that, in this perspective, Parmenides' modification of the concept of truth effects a change in the semantics of *etumos*/*etētumos* as well. For, if previously *etumos* designated a communication conforming to the actual state-of-affairs, and, consequently, not disprovable by events, in Parmenides the term comes to qualify a statement which is genuine because it has not been refuted by argument.

Since the truth expounded by the goddess consists in the conclusions of a deduction, the *kouros* can actually put to the test and verify the correctness of divine revelation, as the goddess herself encourages him to do at B7.5-6: "judge by discourse/reason the much-contested test (*elenchos*) which has been said by me"[95]. Parmenides' characterization of *alētheia* as rational deduction thus provides the poet, and consequently the audience, with that independent criterion of truth whose absence condemned Hesiod's poetry to unsolvable ambiguity. Parmenides' decisive move to solve the issue of poetical truth consists in the shift from narration to logical argumentation. As long as poetry was conceived as a means of reporting events distant in place and time, as in Homer, there always remained the possibility that what the poet sang actually did not correspond to actual state-of-affairs. The same consideration holds in the case of Hesiod's *Theogony*, as the *alēthea* to which the Muses inspired him still related to events of which humans could not have knowledge, and thus were devoid of any guarantee. Similarly, when Hesiod deals with everyday human experiences, as he does in the *Works and Days*, the dependence on divine will prevents him from the

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[95] Compare with the unreliability of the test employed in the *Odyssey* discussed above. My observation holds regardless of whether we interpret *elenchos* as referring to the argument developed in B8 or to the decision about the right path of enquiry (on this point, see Mourelatos 2008a, p. 91; Tarán 1965, p. 81). On *elenchos* as a test for truth, see Furley 1989; for a detailed discussion of these lines, see Lesher 1984.

possibility of stating assuredly true things. By contrast, if poetry is used to illustrate a truth which is the result of a logical argument, there is no room for uncertainty[96]. Indeed, being the conclusion of an *a priori* deduction based on internal consistency only, such a truth is universal, and thus absolute and eternal. As I have anticipated, Parmenides' poetry has the same claim to universality as Hesiod's, but with the fundamental difference that the truth it expounds is unequivocal and, as a result, humans can place confidence in it. Parmenides emphasizes this aspect by constantly making use of terms indicating trust/trustworthiness (*pistis*) and persuasion (*peithō*), which serve to emphasize the opposition between *alētheia* and *doxa* from the very beginning of the poem: while truth is persuasive and trustworthy (*eupeitheos*), mortals opinions are never to be trusted, as there is no true *pistis* in them.

It is important to stress that, without grounding truth on deduction, Parmenides' appeal to trust and persuasion would not have been sufficient to guarantee the genuineness of his poetry[97]. In fact, by means of his original conception of *alētheia*, Parmenides addresses the issue stemming from the traditional ambiguity regarding the persuasiveness of poetic compositions. Broadly speaking, in Archaic Greek poetry *peithō* represents the seductive power of speech, which plays a determinant role both in deception (*apatē*) and in the communication of truth, while *pistis* designates the relationship which is established between persuader and persuaded[98]. There, the divine personification of persuasion, the goddess *Peithō*, is an all-powerful deity who bestows enchanting sweetness on words, with both beneficial and harmful effects[99]. In virtue of her abilities, she is often associated with Aphrodite, the goddess capable of deceiving both gods and men with her charms. Eloquent in this respect is the Iliadic episode of the

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[96] Significantly, ambiguity and deceit are proper of the narrative *Doxa*, see section 3.4.
[97] This was the problem which Hesiod did not resolve, despite his attempt to support his claim to truth by means of the scene of his investiture (cf. above).
[98] In presenting the basic features of *peithō* in Archaic poetry, I follow Detienne 1996, pp. 76-81 and Mourelatos 2008a, pp. 136-144.
[99] Cf. Detienne 1996, p. 77.

deception of Zeus: when Hera asks Aphrodite to grant the love and desire by means of which she subdues mortals and immortals, she explains that these powers serve to effect persuasion[100]. As suggested by the passage, inducement is primarily effected by physical appearance, as in the case of the Zeus' deception of men, which is effected by Pandora, who receives her grace directly from Aphrodite[101]. But beauty is crucial to the persuasion effected by means of speech and poetry as well, regardless of the truth of falsity of their content. This fact is vividly illustrated in the *Odyssey*, where, as shown above, the enchantment produced by a beautiful song/speech reporting a genuine account of events is the same as that attained through lies. Similarly, in the second *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the poet asks Aphrodite to inspire him in order to win the contest he is competing in, thus implying that a song must be beautiful at the cost of everything else[102].

That persuasion is one of the most notable properties of poetic composition, and, at the same time, a power inevitably equivocal is eloquently illustrated by Hesiod, who, in the *Theogony*, establishes a kinship between poetry and political discourse. Both types of speech benefit from the Muses' gift of sweetness in speaking, which enables the kings to put a stop to quarrels by persuading the litigants, and the poets to soothe their audience[103]. But, since the Muses are capable of inspiring both falsehoods and truths, which are, in fact, indistinguishable by mortals, one cannot, *a priori*, rule out the possibility that what he is listening to is actually deceptive.

By contrast, Parmenides' conception of truth eliminates the ambiguity of *pistis* and *peithō*. The trust in the goddess' account can be confidently qualified as "true" (*alēthēs*), since it depends on the correctness of argumentation, and thus it is subject to

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[100] Cf. *Il*. 14.160.
[101] Cf. Hes. *Op*. 65-66.
[102] Cf. *h.Ven*. (6).19-21. On this point, see Accame 1964, p. 131.
[103] These are examples of the good effects of persuasion. On the soothing capacity of poetry, see Thalmann 1984, pp. 129-133; Ledbetter 2003, pp. 48-51.

verification. The close connection between trust and valid inference is further stressed by the occurrences of *pistis* in B8, to the extent that the meaning of the term approximates that of 'deductive proof'[104]. At lines 26-27, for example, the goddess explains that What-Is has no beginning nor end, because *pistis alēthēs* has "thrust away" (*apōse*) becoming and perishing (B8.26-27), that is, the argument against generation and death presented earlier (B8.5-16). Similarly, the "strength of *pistis*" at B8.12 denotes the force of logical proof against the possibility that something alongside What-Is is generated out of What-Is-Not. The same considerations hold for the adjective *pistos*, which designates what is trustworthy because it derives from a valid deduction, as implied by its being used by the goddess to qualify her *logos* on the attributes of What-Is at B8.50[105].

The unambiguous character of persuasion effected by truth is further emphasized by Parmenides' description of the path of persuasion in B2, which contains an allusion to a passage of Hesiod's *Theogony* about the Muse Calliope. The passages run as follows:

> Πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος (Ἀληθείηι γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ)
> […] It is the path of Persuasion (for she attends Truth)[106].
>
> <div align="right">DK 28 B2.4</div>
>
> Καλλιόπη θ᾽· ἡ δὲ προφερεστάτη ἐστὶν ἁπασέων.
> ἡ γὰρ καὶ βασιλεῦσιν ἅμ᾽ αἰδοίοισιν ὀπηδεῖ.

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[104] While Heidel maintains that the phrase *pistis alēthēs* must be understood in forensic terms, thus meaning 'evidence' or 'proof' (cf. Heidel 1913, pp. 717-719), Mourelatos persuasively argues against this reading and translates it as 'true fidelity' (cf. Mourelatos 2008a, p. 150). Recently, Bryan has argued that, indeed, we should interpret *pistis* and, broadly speaking, the vocabulary of Parmenides' fragment B8, in the light of forensic terminology, and opts for the meaning of 'genuine cogency', emphasizing the "objective persuasive force" of the goddess' arguments (cf. Bryan 2012, pp. 90-93). I agree with Mourelatos in not pressing the forensic image, and thus I prefer to take *pistis* as indicating trustworthiness/confidence, as it better fits the poetic context in which Parmenides operates. However, I add the specification that true *pistis* is indeed based on the result of logic argumentation. Similarly, Coxon interprets *pistis alēthēs* as indicating 'genuine conviction', that is, the certainty "resulting from the persuasion which reality exercises on the mind by causing it to reason deductively" (Coxon 2009, p. 284).
[105] DK 28 B8.50: "Here I stop my trustworthy speech to you and thought about truth" (tr. Gallop).
[106] Tr. Mourelatos, slightly modified.

> […] And Calliope: she is the greatest of them all,
>   for she attends upon venerated kings too[107].

<div align="right">Hes. Th. 79-80</div>

These lines have a common structure which can be thus schematized: divine agent – *gar* – thing attended – *opēdei*. In Parmenides' poem, *Peithō*, who is said to attend Truth, significantly replaces Calliope, who, according to Hesiod, attends kings as well as poets. The substitution of Calliope, with *Peithō* is, I argue, an effective image which serves to illustrate the unequivocal nature of Parmenides' poetry. For, since *Peithō* is associated with truth, the ambiguity which inevitably characterized persuasion as effected by kings and poets thanks to Calliope's gift, namely beauty and sweetness of words, is immediately ruled out. Indeed, the patroness of Parmenides' poetry is not Calliope, the "beautiful voiced" Muse, but *Peithō*, the attendant of truth.

The close relationship between *Peithō* and *Alētheia* indicated by the verb *opēdeō* acquires further significance considering that, as shown by Mourelatos, one of the meanings of the verb is 'to attach oneself to', 'to be attached to', rightly, justly or properly[108]. How are we to interpret the normative nature of this relation? While Mourelatos is certainly right in emphasizing the favour which Persuasion bestows on truth, I think that there is another important aspect to consider. In the poem, persuasion and *pistis* are not only used in reference to truth, but also to mortals' *doxai*: at B8.38-39, cited above, for example, human beings are said to be persuaded of the truth of the names they give to What-Is, while the fact that *pistis* is qualified as true implies that it could be false as well. In fact, the very existence of *doxa* is determined by the mortals' trust in their senses and the persuasive power they exercise on their mind, which is consequently led to error[109]. Persuasion is thus responsible for deception as well. In this scenario, the goddess' specification that Persuasion rightly/justly attends *alētheia*, I

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[107] Tr. Most.
[108] Cf. Mourelatos 2008a, pp. 158-160.
[109] As implied in fragment B7. On this point, see below.

argue, serves exactly to distinguish between persuasion effected by truth and that resulting from deceit. To illustrate how the distinction is made, it is useful to consider a passage of the *Works and Days* where Hesiod states that wealth unjustly acquired attends (*opēdei*) those who have seized it only for a short time[110]. Similarly, the beliefs of which humans are persuaded are far from stable, and, in fact, continually change, as vividly described by Parmenides in fragment B6 where mortals are described as wandering on a "backward-turning (*palintropos*) path"[111]. By contrast, persuasion produced by truth is stable, since *alētheia* itself is absolute and eternal.

The foregoing analysis allows us to clarify the meaning of the phrase "unmoved heart of persuasive truth" (B1.28), which the goddess employs at the beginning of her revelation to indicate the part of her speech devoted to truth. First, it must be noticed that the locution "heart of truth" is a Parmenidean innovation, since in epic and lyric poetry, *ētor* is always used in reference to gods or humans to indicate their inner self as the seat of emotion and life[112]. The *ētor* of truth thus may be reasonably taken as signifying the vital principle of *alētheia*, or in other words, its very foundation. This consists in the conception of truth as rational deduction, which, as shown above, also explains truth's persuasiveness. At the same time, "heart" as inner being refers to What-Is, that is, reality as it is in itself. Reality and the principle of truth actually have the same characteristics, as indicated by the adjective "unmoved" (*atremes*[113]), which appears also at B8.28 as one of the attributes of What-Is. In fact, truth and its principle are not subject to change, and thus hold regardless of any external factor. Truth is thus absolute, and then complete and eternal. In this respect, it is important to notice Parmenides' use of the vocabulary of necessity (*anankē, moira*) and justice (*dikē,*

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[110] Cf. Hes. *Op*. 320-326.
[111] I adopt Taran's translation of *palintropos* (Tarán 1965, p. 54). On the context of this line, see below.
[112] Cf. Coxon 2009, p. 283.
[113] Also at DK B8.4.

themis), which, on the one hand, represents the bonds that hold fast What-Is, on the other hand, emphasizes the inalterable and everlasting validity of truth. In particular, since traditionally even the gods cannot subvert the decrees of Necessity/Fate, the recourse to necessity marks again the distance from Hesiod, where the truth and validity of the account ultimately rested upon divine will.

As argued so far, Parmenides' redefinition of *alētheia* in terms of rational deduction responds to the problem of poetic ambiguity found in the Homeric and the Hesiodic poems. But the poem has also other polemic targets, represented by other kinds of philosophical speculation. In order to show how Parmenides challenged these other rivals, I will now turn to the second part of his work: the *Doxa*.

3.4 – The *Doxa*

The second part of the goddess' speech to the *kouros* is about mortals' *doxai*, which, as previously illustrated, are distinguished and opposed to *alētheia*, since they lack in true trustworthiness. As anticipated above, the opinions/beliefs of mortals take the place of the Hesiodic false things resembling concrete realities (*etuma*). As in the case of *aletheia*, this modification has important consequences. Actually, I argue that mortals' *doxai* do not only replace falsehoods, but all *etuma* as a whole. For the content of the *Doxa* consists in a description of the world of experience, but due to the redefinition of truth and the real in terms of rational deduction, the *etuma* of experience cannot count as a type of truth, but rather, they contribute to the formation of a false conception of reality[114]. The rejection of *doxa* is strengthened by Parmenides' condemnation of sense experience, which leads mortals to believe that reality is subject to generation, destruction and change and thus to include What-Is-Not in their speculations. In fact, in fragment B7, the habit of relying on sensory experience (*ethos polupeiron*) is indicated

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[114] Cf. the meaning of *etētumos* in B8, discussed above.

as the cause of humans' belief that things that are not, i.e. everyday phenomena[115], really are. The same position is pointedly criticized in B6, where mortals are described as a "race without judgement" (*akrita phula*, l.7), which, at the same time, considers Being and Not-Being as identical and different, and thus follows a path which is back-turning[116].

The misleading effects of sense experience and the consequent mistakes inherent to mortals' *doxai* are eloquently illustrated by the goddess' characterization of her doxastic account at the end of fragment B8:

<div align="center">

δόξας δ᾽ ἀπὸ τοῦδε βροτείας
μάνθανε κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων.

</div>

From here onwards learn human beliefs/opinions
listening to the deceitful order of my words[117].

<div align="right">DK 28 B8.51-52</div>

<div align="center">

τόν σοι ἐγὼ διάκοσμον ἐοικότα πάντα φατίζω,
ὡς οὐ μή ποτέ τίς σε βροτῶν γνώμη παρελάσσηι.

</div>

This arrangement I declare to you to be plausible in its entirety
in such a way that never shall any mortal judgement outstrip you[118].

<div align="right">DK 28 B8.60-61</div>

The account of mortal *doxai* (the *Doxa*) is characterized as a "deceitful order/arrangement of words" (*kosmon epeōn apatēlon*). While the adjective *apatēlos* ('deceitful') emphasizes the deceiving aspect of *doxa*, that is, its description of a reality, which, in fact, is not reality at all, since only Being genuinely is, the phrase *kosmon epeōn* is significant as it hints at poetic tradition. The expression is used by Solon (fr. 1 West) to indicate poetic composition as opposed to prose speech, and, broadly speaking, *kosmos* is associated with the idea of composition and ordering typical of poetry, and in particular, as shown above, with the narration of details about a specific event[119]. In this

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[115] Cf. Tarán 1965, p. 75.
[116] See *supra*, p. 18. Scholars have seen a polemic reference to Heraclitus in these lines, but the question is debated: see Tarán 1965, pp. 69-72; Cerri 1999, pp. 205-213; Graham 2002; Nehamas 2002.
[117] Tr. Gallop.
[118] Tr. Coxon, with modifications.
[119] Cf. Cerri 1999, pp. 243-244; Coxon 2009, p. 342; and *supra*, p. 92. In this perspective, the phrase *kata*

light, Parmenides' use of *kosmon epeōn* to indicate the doxastic account of the cosmos should be interpreted as a critical reference to traditional poetry, which, as shown above, by focusing on events narration was inevitably condemned to ambiguity[120]. In particular, Parmenides' poetic cosmogony critically alludes to Hesiod's *Theogony*, in which the order of the song actually reproduces the development of the cosmos. Since, as I argued, Hesiod's choice of narrating the origin of the gods and the world served as a mark of his superiority and, consequently, of the truth of his poetry, Parmenides' critical reference is meant to stress the fact that, in fact, his poetry, not Hesiod's, is true. Indeed, the *kosmos* of words is eloquently contrasted with *logos* at line 50, which refers to the clear and trustworthy deduction of the attributes of Being conducted in the previous lines[121].

The interrelation between the order of words and that of cosmos is further emphasized by the use of the term *diakosmos* to indicate the content of mortal *doxai*. In fact, since lines 51-52 and 61-62 are in ring composition, the term *diakosmos* must be read as the full explication of the idea contained in the phrase *kosmon epeōn*, in the light of what is said in the central section (ll. 53-59). There the goddess describes the starting point of mortal *doxai*, which consists in the distinction and naming of two forms, then employed to explain cosmic phenomena[122]. Indeed, in Homer, the term *diakosmos* mainly refers to the ordering of the army, and thus to an arrangement effected by means of division/separation, as conveyed by the prefix *dia-*[123]. Thus, the *diakosmos* actually is the *kosmos epeōn* as essentially characterized by the original division operated by mortals. In this perspective, the terms *kosmos* and *diakosmos* come to indicate both the

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kosmon in fragment B4 should be interpreted as indicating an ordered disposition, rather than the distribution of things in the universe (on this line, see Cerri 1999, pp. 199-200; Coxon 2009, p. 308; *contra* Palmer 2009, p. 184).

[120] See *supra*, pp. 92-93.

[121] Interestingly, the only occurrence of *apatēlon* in Homer is used to express the idea that the word to which Zeus nods is not deceptive, as it is neither revocable (*palinagretos*) nor unfulfilled (*ateleutētos*) (*Il.* 523-527). Mortals' opinion are qualified by opposite attributes, cf. especially the *palintropos* path which conflates Being and Not-Being (DK 28 B6.9).

[122] Cf. DK 28 B8.53-59.

[123] Cf. Mourelatos 2008a, pp. 231-232.

account *and* the content of mortals' *doxai*. Although deceptive, this *kosmos*/*diakosmos* is qualified as plausible in its entirety (*eoikōs pas*)[124] by the goddess. The plausibility of doxastic cosmology is determined by the fact that, by offering a description of the development of the world in terms of change and generation, it fits humans' (mis)conception of reality[125]. In other words, the *Doxa* resembles what mortals are falsely persuaded to be the truth. It is thus an account which mortals can trust, and probably the best possible one, as implied by the use of *pas*, which stresses its being completely plausible. This idea is further emphasized by the fact that the goddess tells the *kouros* that, by listening to her exposition of humans' *doxai*, he will not be outstripped by mortals' judgements/opinions (*gnōmai*) on the world[126]. For, since the *kouros* has learned the nature of Being, he is perfectly aware of the falsity of what the goddess tells him. Thus, by realizing that even the best possible cosmology is false, he could not be persuaded of the authenticity of any other inferior account of the world.

Still, what remains is to determine why Parmenides includes the *Doxa* in his poem, despite declaring it completely deceitful. The fact that it prevents the *kouros* to be outstripped by mortal opinions is not a satisfactory answer, since the proofs provided in the section about Being would have been sufficient to reject *any* doxastic account of the world as false, without having to expound a detailed cosmology. In fact, this issue is a debated one, and scholars have advanced many different interpretations, but no consensus has been achieved[127]. A solution to the problem might come, I argue, from

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[124] On *eoikōs* in Parmenides, see Bryan 2012, pp. 58-113.

[125] Cf. Bryan 2012, pp. 106-108. On this point, see also Tor's discussion of B1.31-32, which configures *Doxa* as an account which mortals, ignorant of truth, deem as acceptable (cf. Tor 2011, pp. 111-112).

[126] The interrelation between judgement and opinion is explained by considering that, by contrast with the correct *krisis* about being and not-being in the account of truth (see B7.5; B8.15-16), mortals' wrong judgement led them to distinguish two basic forms is the origin of opinions. On the importance of *krisis*, see Tor 2011, pp. 151-153.

[127] Proposed interpretations of *doxa* include: dialectical exercise (Owen 1960, p. 89); study in self-deception (Mourelatos 2008a, pp. 221-263); model of reference to refute any account of phenomena and preserve the *kouros* from the temptations of cosmology (Tarán 1965, pp. 226-228; Barnes 2005, p. 123; Gallop 2000, p. 23; Warren 2007, pp. 100-101); collection of the provisional results of scientific enquiry (Cerri 1999, pp. 69-77); didactic account about the wrong way of constructing a cosmology (Curd 1998, pp. 11-116).

considering Parmenides as in competition with other poets and other philosophers or wisdom practitioners. I have already shown that the presence of a cosmology hints at other poetic works, especially that of Hesiod, which Parmenides takes as critical target also for his conception of truth. But the attack on accounts of the world which consider generation, destruction and change as inherent to reality, alongside the rejection of senses as reliable means of knowledge, can be also seen as a criticism against the Ionian investigation on nature and, broadly speaking, any pretence to wisdom and truth ultimately based on direct observation[128]. In fact, the coupling of wisdom with personal enquiry and/or observation was one of the most common traits of Archaic approaches to *sophia*, and characterized also the original speculations of 6th-5th centuries BCE, as attested by Heraclitus' criticism of rivals in his fragments, in particular B40 and B129[129].

In fragment B40, besides Hesiod, Heraclitus attacks Pythagoras, Xenophanes and Hecataeus saying that they do not possess intelligence/understanding (*noos*), but only *polumathiē*, the much learning acquired by means of enquiry[130]. Personal enquiry appears to have had a central role in Xenophanes' and Hecataeus' claims to wisdom, as reflected by the broad scope of their enquiries. Although, according to Xenophanes, relying on investigation and observation inevitably barred humans from the acquisition of knowledge and confined them to opinion, the recourse to experience could, at the

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[128] Not necessarily made directly by the author (cf. Huffman 2008, pp. 28-29). According to some interpretations, fragments B1.31-32, B6 and B7 contain the description of a third way of enquiry which accommodates natural speculations like those of the Ionian tradition (cf. Palmer 2009, p. 163; Curd 1998, pp. 98-126), but see Wedin's criticism of this position (Wedin 2014, pp. 53-71).

[129] As argued by Montiglio, the prominent role assigned to enquiry by early philosophers can be seen as a legacy of the correlation between wandering and acquisition of knowledge already present in the *Odyssey*, cf. Montiglio 2000, pp. 87-90.

[130] Cf. B40: "Learning of many things does not teach intelligence; otherwise it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and again Xenophanes and Hecataeus" (tr. Marcovich). *polumathiē* can also be considered as characterizing the wisdom attributed to the Seven Sages, who represented the standard of *sophia* already in the Archaic period. As argued by Martin, the Sages should be seen as in competition with each other (cf. Martin 1993, p.120), and Pythagoras, whose name sometimes is included or added to the list of Sages, probably sought to outdo their fame. Significantly, Iamblichus says that Pythagoras followed the example of the Sages by including in his *akousmata* responses to questions of the type *ti malista* (Iamb. *VP.* 83; on this point, see Burkert 1972, p. 169).

same time, represent an effective means of improving men's beliefs on the world[131]. Indeed, both Xenophanes and Hecataeus could criticise their rivals and claim to have made better discoveries than their predecessors. As regards Pythagoras, his possession of a vast knowledge resulting from enquiry and experience must have been one of his most distinctive marks of wisdom, probably the most renowned, especially due to his alleged multiple reincarnations and superhuman powers, as emerging from his praises by Empedocles and Ion of Chios. Empedocles emphasizes Pythagoras' capacity of easily seeing "each of all the things that are, even in ten or twenty generations of men"[132], while Ion characterizes his wisdom in terms of knowledge and learning of the opinions of men (*gnōmai*)[133]. According to Heraclitus, however, Pythagoras' alleged wisdom is not the result of his extraordinary capacities, but rather of his fraudulent appropriation of others' opinions, as stated in B129:

> Πυθαγόρης Μνησάρχου ἱστορίην ἤσκησεν ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα πάντων καὶ ἐκλεξάμενος ταύτας τὰς συγγραφὰς ἐποιήσατο ἑαυτοῦ σοφίην, πολυμαθίην, κακοτεχνίην.

> Pythagoras, son of Mnesarchus, practised enquiry most of all men and, by making a selection of these writings, he contrived a wisdom of his own, much learning, base trickery[134].

<div align="right">DK 22B129</div>

The fragment's critical force is effected by the fact that enquiry (*historiē*), which is what makes one acquire *polumathiē*, in the case of Pythagoras consists in his investigation into others' teachings with the aim of appropriating them. Thus, in addition to not being

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[131] Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 73-76.

[132] Cf. DK 31 B129. There are, in fact, doubts about the identity of the man praised by Empedocles in B129. According to Diogenes Laertius (D.L. 8.54), some thought that the man was Parmenides. For the sake of my argument, it is important to notice that, even if Empedocles did not praise Pythagoras, the fact that later interpreters read the fragment in this way still provides an important indication of the kind of wisdom that was ascribed to him in antiquity. For an analysis of the issues raised by the fragment, see further, Chapter 4, pp. 150-152.

[133] Cf. DK 36 B4. Compare with the mortals' *gnōmai* in Parmenides' poem at DK 28 B8.61.

[134] Tr. after Horky.

other than mere *polumathiē* and, then, not real *sōphiē* (as already said in B40), Pythagoras' professed wisdom is actually a forgery and a base artifice (*kakotechniē*)[135].

Heraclitus' criticism of Pythagoras as expressed in fragment B129 reveals another important aspect of his view on *polumathiē* and the wisdom claimed by his polemic targets. As argued by Mansfeld, the structure of B129 is modelled, for the purpose of parody, on the *incipit* of the treatises of the period, whose usual pattern includes: the name of the author (*sphragis*); the contrast between the author's truth and the untruths expounded by others; the presentation of the subject of the work[136]. The motif is already present in Hesiod's *Theogony*[137], and was later adopted by prose writers. At the beginning of his *Histories*, for example, Hecataeus mentions his name and states that he is writing what seems true to him, because the *logoi* of the Greeks are, in his opinion, many and ridiculous[138]. Other examples of *sphragis* are provided by Alcmaeon of Croton, and later in the 5th century by Ion of Chios and Antiochus of Syracuse[139]. Considering this traditional pattern, the parodic effect of Heraclitus' fragment is achieved by the substitution of the expected claim to truth with the declaration of Pythagoras' theft of others' ideas. But Pythagoras, I would argue, is not the only victim of Heraclitus' parody. In fact, the fragment can be seen as an attack to the tradition of self-declared *sophia* on the part of poets or other wisdom practitioners who, from Heraclitus' point of view, were in possession of *polumathiē* only. For the imposition of a *sphragis* on their works served both to indicate their authority and to mark the differentiation of their version of truth against that of rivals[140]. But in Heraclitus' eyes,

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[135] In DK 22 B81, Heraclitus calls Pythagoras "the chief of swindlers" (*archēgos kopidōn*). Huffman translates *kakotechniē* as 'evil conspiracy', interpreting the passage as referring to a Pythagorean conspiracy based on false testimony about Pythagoras' doctrine of metempsychosis (cf. Huffman 2008, pp. 44-45).
[136] Cf. Mansfeld 1989, p. 232.
[137] Cf. *supra*, pp. 96-97.
[138] Cf. Hecat. F1 Jacoby: "Hecataeus of Miletus speaks in this way: I write these things as they seem true to me. For the accounts of the Greeks, as they appear to me, are many and ridiculous".
[139] On the use of *sphragis* in prose works, see also Kranz 1961, pp. 44-45.
[140] Cf. Kranz *loc. cit.*

the truth which they were trying to impose could only be, at most, a partial truth, deriving from their limited view of reality[141]. By contrast, Heraclitus expounds a truth which he presents as the content of the universal *logos* according to which the events of the cosmos take place. In fact, in fragment B50, Heraclitus eloquently presents himself as the spokesman of the *logos*: "Not listening to me, but to the *logos*, it is wise to agree that all things are one"[142]. In this perspective, the absence of Heraclitus' name from his fragments, in particular in B1, which seems to have opened his work, should be considered as determined by the desire to emphasize that the truth presented in the work is not Heraclitus' own private truth, but the universal truth of the *logos*[143].

Parmenides' view on any pretension to wisdom based on the collection of experiences is, in some respects, similar to Heraclitus'. For even according to Parmenides the results of observation cannot be equated with understanding and, ultimately, truth. In addition, as in Heraclitus, Parmenides does not appear to include a *sphragis* in the poem, thus emphasizing the universal character of the truth expounded in his work. With his criticism, however, Parmenides takes a step further than Heraclitus. In fact, at a closer inspection, the fault which Heraclitus ascribed to his rivals did not consist in enquiry *qua* enquiry, which he indicates as one of the necessary requisites for those who aspire to wisdom[144], but rather in the incapacity of identifying the principle common to all phenomena. Indeed, Heraclitus appears not to reject *in toto* the testimony of the senses, as implied, for example, by fragments B101a ("The eyes are witnesses more accurate than the ears") and B107 ("The eyes and the ears are bad witnesses for men who have barbarous souls")[145]. By contrast, in the light of

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[141] On the limitedness of common human understanding, see, for example, fragments B1, B2, B17, B34, B89, B108.

[142] Cf. DK 22 B50.

[143] *Contra* Mansfeld (cf. *loc. cit.*), who thinks that Heraclitus' *sphragis* was probably lost.

[144] Cf. DK 22 B35: "Men who love wisdom must be inquirers (*histores*) into many things indeed" (tr. Kahn).

[145] See also DK 22 B55.

Parmenides's ontology, any form of wisdom relying on empirical enquiry can only be an example of *doxa*. In this perspective, even Heraclitus' doctrine is just another example of mortals' self-deception and of their confusing What-Is and What-Is-Not.

Despite his rejection of these rival forms of wisdom, however, Parmenides included in his poem an elaborate cosmology along the lines of those of his predecessors. As I have anticipated, the reason why he expounded a doxastic account of the world, although deceitful, should be ascribed to his being in competition with other wisdom-practitioners. In fact, by proposing a plausible cosmology which enables the *kouros* to be outstripped by mortals' opinions, Parmenides demonstrates that he could outperform them in their own game[146]. Indeed, by entering the game, Parmenides strengthens his offensive strategy against his rivals, as he attacks them on two different levels. For he not only defies his competitors' accounts of the world by presenting the best possible cosmology, but he also proves their inherent deceitfulness by deducing the attributes of What-Is, which reject the very premises upon which such accounts were based, like the reality of change and motion. Parmenides' superiority over his adversaries thus stems from his capacity of both providing the best possible cosmology and, at the same time, of recognizing its falsity, because he learned the truth about reality itself.

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[146] In this perspective, Mourelatos' observation that the verb *parelaunō* ('to outstrip') belongs to the terminology of chariot races acquires new significance. Actually, Mourelatos argues that, since in the poem men are not represented as charioteers in a race towards truth, Parmenides used the form *parelassēi* instead of *parelthēi* for metrical reasons (cf. Mourelatos 2008a, pp. 226-227, n. 15). But considering the competitive connotation of the chariot, especially in poetic context (cf. *supra*, p. 86), I would say that *parelaunō* well illustrate the idea that Parmenides' account will not be defeated by rival ones. For a defence of the reading *parelassei* and an alternative explanation of its meaning in the context of the chariot metaphor, see Lesher 1984, pp. 24-30.

Conclusion

The study of Parmenides' work proposed in this chapter has been conducted by considering the competitive context which characterized Archaic poetic production. As I argued, Parmenides' poem is informed by a critical stance which targets different rivals at the same time, and the proem of his work, by means of more or less indirect references and allusions to his competitors, represents a challenge to all of them. In particular, I have argued that Parmenides' doctrine of Being, besides illustrating a conception of reality which, by excluding change, generation, and destruction, is directly opposed to common human beliefs about the world, actually configures a redefinition of the notion of truth (*alētheia*) in terms of rational deduction by which he challenges the authority of other poets, especially Hesiod. By operating this modification, Parmenides addresses and solves the problem concerning the ambiguous nature of poetry.

The same issue had already been tackled by Hesiod, who, I argued, operated a distinction between two types of poetic narration, corresponding to two different conceptions of the truth which poetry should convey. The first type of narration, represented by Homeric and heroic poetry, was based on the equation of beauty and truth with the exhaustive account of a multitude of details pertaining to the concrete realities of experience (*etuma*). But such narration did not guarantee the truth of poetry, as exemplified by Odysseus' lies in the *Odyssey*, which by resembling actual events, deceived his audience without being detected. In contrast, Hesiod's poetry, by focusing on the narration of universal and eternal truths regarding the cosmic order established by Zeus (*alēthea*), testified both the truth of its content and Hesiod's superiority over other poets. For only a poet who received the investiture from the Muses, like Hesiod,

could sing truths which no mortal could have accessed. Indeed, the particulars of the scene of Hesiod's investiture served to strengthen his claim to truth and present his song as authorized by the divinity. However, Hesiod's total dependence on the Muses did not eliminate the possibility that the goddesses told him falsehoods. Actually, without an independent criterion by which to judge the authenticity of the goddesses' revelation, the poet and the audience could not be assured of what they apprehended from the divinity.

Parmenides appropriates Hesiod's conception of poetry as conveyor of universal and eternal truth, but, by redefining *alētheia* as the result of logical deduction, he manages to eliminate the uncertainty which still affected the Hesiodic poems. His decisive move consists in the shift from the idea that truth is determined by the content of poetic narration to the conception that it is effected by the formal validity of argumentation. Since the truth about Being consists in an *a priori* deduction based on internal consistency only, humans could test the content of the goddess' revelation and be assured of its truth, which being absolute, is also universal and eternal. The persuasiveness of divine account, and, consequently, of Parmenides' poetry, is then deprived of the ambiguity traditionally characterizing poetic persuasion, which was inextricably associated with deception.

The sure apprehension of a universal and eternal truth thus testifies Parmenides' superiority over Hesiod, who, despite his commitment to truth, did not manage to eliminate the ambiguity inherent to poetic narration. The distance from Hesiod is stressed by the different role which Parmenides assigns to divine inspiration: while Hesiod needs to elaborate a scene of investiture to justify his claim to truth, in Parmenides' poem, *alētheia*, although presented in the form of divine revelation, is grounded and justified on independent logical principles which men can access. Thus, the divinity is not seen, as in the previous poetic tradition, as the exclusive owner of

truth. In fact, Parmenides' rejection of such a model is illustrated by the diversity of the goddess' reception of the *kouros* from the Muses' attitude towards Hesiod: the goddess is benevolent, while the Muses open their speech to Hesiod with insults (*Th*. 26); the *kouros* is not a passive recipient as Hesiod, but is urged to learn and judge on his own about the goddess' account; finally, the *kouros* remains anonymous. There is no need to include his name as a mark of authority, as Hesiod does, since the truth he is going to learn, because of its nature, is universally valid and independent of external authorization.

Parmenides poetic ability, however, is shown not only by his superiority over Hesiod, but also over Homer. In fact, Parmenides demonstrates that he is capable of skilfully reproducing the Homeric type of narration, especially in the proem, where he vividly describes his voyage to the goddess' dwelling with abundance and vividness of details. In addition, by the systematic allusions to the *Odyssey*, Parmenides emphasizes that he is narrating a journey superior to that of Homer's poem, since it makes the *kouros* a genuine "man who knows", whose *noos*, having deduced the *sēmata* of reality, is better even than Odysseus', which, until then, represented the poetic paradigm of mind's excellence.

As I argued, Parmenides' conception of truth and reality expounded in the first part of his poem serves not only to challenge his poetic predecessors, but also to undermine the pretence to authority of rival wisdom practitioners and philosophers. For the denial of generation, destruction and change, alongside the condemnation of sense perception and experience as reliable means of enquiry, constitutes a powerful attack on Ionian natural philosophy, and, broadly speaking, on any claim to wisdom based on empirical observation and investigation. Furthermore, the rejection of phenomena as non-reality marks as deceptive and illusory traditional poetic cosmogonies, like that of

Hesiod, or the one attributed to Epimenides. In this light, Parmenides' *Doxa*, described in terms of poetic discourse (*kosmon epeōn*) and qualified as deceptive, beyond attacking a certain type of philosophical enquiry, also represents a criticism of previous poetic narrations. Parmenides' superiority over poetic cosmogonies and competing philosophical speculations about the universe is further emphasized by his capacity to elaborate the best possible cosmology, which, nonetheless, he recognizes as deceitful in the light of the truth about reality expounded in the first part of the poem.

Significantly, both Parmenides' doctrine of Being and redefinition of truth, by which he conquers his adversaries, appear to be aimed at stopping competition itself, since they excise the possibility that rival speculations might outdo that of Parmenides. Consider the case of cosmological speculation: even if someone proposed a better explanation of natural phenomena, at any rate such an account could not have any pretence to describing reality, since reality coincides with Being as described by Parmenides. Similarly, since *alētheia* does not pertain to the narration of events, any form of poetry other than Parmenides' cannot have any realistic pretence to truth.

Despite Parmenides' intention, however, the philosophical-poetic competition did not end, and his doctrines were modified, discussed and challenged by those who came after him. There can be little doubt that he irrevocably changed the rules of the game, and his successors could not ignore them. In this perspective, I will now turn to evaluate the poetic responses to Parmenides provided by Empedocles and Epicharmus.

Chapter 4

Empedocles, the divine poet

In this chapter, I will analyse Empedocles' competitive stance towards his philosophical and poetic adversaries. In particular, I will focus on some passages which reveal Empedocles' confidence in his poetic authority and superiority over competitors. Before turning to the fragments, however, I will consider some aspects related to Empedocles' poetic production and performance, which serve as a general introduction to my analysis.

Any study of Empedocles must take into account the problems regarding: 1) the unity of Empedocles' thought; 2) the existence of two separate poems, namely *On Nature* and the *Katharmoi*. The roots of the first issue are to be traced to the late 19th and early 20th century tendency to separate rigidly scientific and religious topics, which led scholars to see Empedocles' physics as in contradiction with his quasi-mythical account of transmigration. As a consequence, Empedocles' extant fragments were assigned, depending on their content and context (as reconstructed through later testimonia), either to the purely scientific *On Nature* or to the "theological" *Katharmoi*[1]. This view has been challenged starting from the 1980s by a minority of scholars who argued against the idea of incompatibility between natural and religious material, and thereby advanced the hypothesis that Empedocles wrote a single poem, in which he described both the destiny of the cosmos and that of the soul[2]. In 1999, the publication of the Strasbourg Papyrus provided decisive evidence for the unity of Empedocles' thought, as

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[1] Most notably Diels, then followed by the majority of scholars (on this point, see Inwood 2001, p. 9; Trépanier 2004, p. 1).

[2] The first to make a case for the existence of a single poem was Osborne (1987). More recently, the single poem hypothesis has been proposed by Inwood (2001, pp. 8-19) and Trépanier (2004, pp. 1-30 and *passim*). Regardless of the issue concerning the number of poems, the unity of Empedocles' thought has been defended by Barnes 2005, pp. 391-396, Kahn 1960, Sassi 2009, pp. 190-191, Curd 2001, pp. 38-44, Gallavotti 1975, pp. xii-xvi.

it contains sections which display a close interrelation between physical and religious themes[3]. Important as the evidence of the Papyrus is, however, it does not help to decide either against nor in favour of the single-poem hypothesis. In the light of these considerations, I will conduct my analysis of Empedocles' fragments on the premise of doctrinal unity, but I will refer to *On Nature* and the *Katharmoi* as two separate poems. It is worth noting, however, that the existence of one or two poems does not directly affect my argumentation.

The second aspect to consider regarding Empedocles' poetic production is related to the information about the public performance of his poetry preserved by Athenaeus. In a passage containing a long list of famous rhapsodes, Athenaeus quotes Dicearchus of Messana, a pupil of Aristotle who, in a work titled the *Olympic*[4], says that the rhapsode Cleomenes recited the *Katharmoi* at Olympia[5]. Leaving aside the issue concerning the import of Dicaearchus' testimony on the question of the number of poems, the fact that Empedocles' poetry was publicly recited constitutes an important piece of information, especially from the point of view of poetic agonism. For, even though rhapsodic contests were not part of the Olympic program[6], the Panhellenic gathering represented a major opportunity for wisdom practitioners to display and "advertise" their expertise[7]. This inevitably involved a competitive confrontation among intellectuals, who aimed to gain the favour of the public, to the detriment of their rivals[8].

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[3] In particular, Ensemble d. On the significance of the Papyrus, see further Curd 2001, pp. and *passim*, Trepanier 2004, pp. 3-6, Inwood 2001, pp. 19-24 and 75-79.

[4] The work was probably in the form of a dialogue, as implied by Cicero's testimony in *Att.* 13.30.2.

[5] Cf. Ath.14 12.620d. The information is preserved also by Diogenes Laertius, who derives it from Favorinus (cf. D.L. 8.63).

[6] See Chapter 1, p. 32 n. 61.

[7] Obbink (1993, pp. 77-80) argues that Cleomenes performed an abridged version of the *Katharmoi*. Sedley (1989, p. 273) advances the hypothesis that the *Katharmoi* contained a set of oracles and purifications, rather than doctrinal exposition. For a discussion of the issue, see further Inwood 2001, p. 15 n. 35; Trépanier 2004, pp. 23-24.

[8] An interesting testimony by Galen reports that Empedocles was involved in a "good" kind of competition among medical schools (Gal. *Method of Healing* 1.1, 10.5-6 K): "In past times, too, there was no little contention as those in Cos and Cnidus strove to prevail over each other in the number of their discoveries. There were still two groups of Asclepiads in Asia, even when the one on Rhodes had failed. And the Italian doctors Philiston, Empedocles, Pausanias and their colleagues contended with them also in

In this scenario, Empedocles' polemic allusions to his poetic and philosophical predecessors acquire special significance, since, as I will argue, they were intended to increase and spread Empedocles' fame as a sage.

I will start my analysis of Empedocles' agonistic stance towards rivals by examining the polemic connotation of the term *stolos* at B17.26 (section 4.1), and next I will move to Empedocles' invocations to the Muse in fragments B3 and B131 (section 4.2). Finally, I will consider Empedocles' self-presentation as a divine being and evaluate how it serves to ground his claim to poetic primacy (section 4.3).

4.1 – The meaning of *stolos* at B17.26

The first instance that Empedocles takes a competitive stance towards his poetical and philosophical predecessors is contained in B17, the longest fragment in our possession and, actually, one of the most important of the collection, as it contains the description of the basic interactions between the four roots whereby living beings are generated. At B17.26, Empedocles invites Pausanias to listen attentively to his account with the following words:

> […] σὺ δ᾽ ἄκουε λόγου στόλον οὐκ ἀπατηλόν
> […] but you hear the non-deceptive *stolos* of the account.
>
> DK 31 B17.26

The phrase λόγου στόλον οὐκ ἀπατηλόν has proven hard to translate and understand properly, due to the difficulty posed by the phrase *stolos logou*, as the term *stolos* is absent in Homeric epic and attested only since the 5th century BCE. Proposed translations include: "the progression of my argument" (Wright), "array of words" (Trépanier), "il seguito del mio discorso" (Gallavotti), "l'ordine non ingannevole del mio messaggio" (Bignone), "cursum sermonis" (Karsten), "l'équipée de ces paroles"

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that noble kind of rivalry which Hesiod praised. So there were these three admirable troupes of doctors vying with each other" (tr. Johnston and Horsley).

(Bollack), "the expedition of [my] account" (Inwood), "the ordering of my discourse" (Kirk-Raven-Schofield). Despite the lack of agreement concerning the translation, the majority of scholars recognizes in this phrase a polemic reference to Parmenides' rejection of doxastic cosmology, which the goddess presents as a "deceptive order of words" (*kosmos epeōn apatēlos*)[9]. This mainstream view has been criticized by Bollack, who contends that the phrase *ouk apatēlon* is not critical of Parmenides, but rather of the wrong opinions of men in general[10]. More recently, Palmer has argued that, since Empedocles appears to qualify as not deceptive only his account of the action of Love on the four roots, the line cannot be interpreted as a criticism of Parmenides' rejection of cosmology[11]. However, Palmer's argument loses its force when one considers that, being responsible for the mixing of the four roots whereby plurality and change are generated, Love is, in fact, a cosmogonic agent. Indeed, Parmenides could not have accepted the description of Love's function, as it is based upon the admission of plurality and change[12]. Moreover, both Palmer and Bollack have failed to notice that the polemic force of the passage lies in the use of the term *stolos* as a metaphor for poetry. Such an image, employed in a line which clearly echoes Parmenides, as Bollack and Palmer themselves acknowledge, cannot but indicate, I argue, Empedocles' highly competitive stance towards his predecessor. As I now turn to show, a detailed analysis of *stolos* as poetological image[13] reveals that Empedocles is not only targeting Parmenides, but also affirming his poetic authority by putting his work on the same level of Homeric and Hesiodic epic[14].

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[9] Cf. DK 28B8.52: "μάνθανε κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων".
[10] Cf. Bollack 1969, pp. 71-72.
[11] Cf. Palmer 2009, pp. 273-274 and 2013, pp. 326-327.
[12] Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 110-111.
[13] I am using the term after Nünlist (1998, pp. 1-10).
[14] Even Nünlist, who analyses the implications of the poetological images *stolos logou* and *kosmos epeōn*, still claims that there are no decisive elements to decide whether Empedocles' verse is actually polemic (cf. Nünlist 2005, especially pp. 81-83).

The term *stolos* derives from the verb *stellō*, whose basic meanings in the active are 'to arrange', 'to prepare', 'to equip with weapons', 'to prepare for departure', 'to send'; in the middle-passive, the verb signifies: 'to get prepared', 'to get for oneself', 'to set on a journey'[15]. In Homer, the verb is most frequently used in (a) military and (b) nautical contexts. As to group (a), the verb indicates the action of preparing and sending troops or single individuals to battle. For example, in the *Iliad*, at 4.294 Nestor is said to marshal and urge his comrades to fight (ἑτάρους στέλλοντα καὶ ὀτρύνοντα μάχεσθαι), while, at 12.325, Sarpedon tells Glaucon that he would not send him to fame-giving battle (οὔτέ κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν), if death did not await them outside war anyway. The idea of preparation for hostile activities is present also in non-warlike contexts: for example, at 23.285, *stellō* is employed to indicate the preparation for competing at the funeral games held in honour of Patroklos. Group (b) counts the major number of instances. In such contexts, phrases like *nēa/nēas stellein* (*Od*. 2.287; 14.247-248) and *istia stellein* (*Il*. 1.433; *Od*. 3.11 and 16.353) refer, respectively, to the equipment of ships and the rigging of sails.

In later texts by tragedians and historians, *stellō* is used to describe the deployment of armies both by land and sea, and to indicate the action of getting ready for terrestrial or maritime journeys[16]. Furthermore, given the basic meaning 'to prepare'/'to arrange', *stellō* sometimes signifies 'to adorn with garments' or 'to dress'[17]. In accordance with the meanings of *stellō*, the derivative *stolos* generally signifies 'equipment' (with the stress put on the activity involved in the process)[18], 'expedition',

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[15] Cf. Chantraine 1990, *s.v.* στέλλω.

[16] See, for example, Aeschylus (*Pers*. 177; *Ag*. 799), Sophocles (*Aj*. 1045; *Ph*. 911, 1077, 1416), Herodotus (1.165; 3.52; 5.64; 4.153) and Thucydides (2.69; 3.86, 3.91,7.20).

[17] See, for example, Herodotus (3.14): "He [sc. Cambyses] dressed his [sc. the king] daughter as a slave (στείλας αὐτοῦ τὴν θυγατέρα ἐσθῆτι δουληίῃ), and sent her out [...] together with other girls from the families of the leading men, dressed like the daughter of the king (ὁμοίως ἐσταλμένας τῇ τοῦ βασιλέος)"; Sophocles (*Tr*. 610-612): "If I ever saw or heard that he was coming safe at home, I would dress him properly with this tunic" (εἴ ποτ᾽ αὐτὸν ἐς δόμους/ἴδοιμι σωθέντ᾽ ἢ κλύοιμι πανδίκως/στελεῖν χιτῶνι τῷδε). From this particular meaning of *stellō* derives the noun *stolē* which generally signifies 'garment', 'robe'.

[18] On this point, cf. Chantraine, *loc. cit.* and Nünlist 2005, p. 77.

'voyage'[19]. As in the case of its cognate verb, *stolos* is mostly used in contexts which relate to bellicose activities, to the extent that it can also mean 'army' or 'fleet'[20]. In this respect, in Aeschylus' *Persians*, *stolos* indicates the ship's prow plated with bronze (*chalchērēs stolos*) used to attack and destroy the enemy's ships[21].

As emerges from the above analysis, *stolos* is usually employed to refer to processes involving the arrangement of things, in most cases for hostile purposes. In this light, I think that Inwood's translation of the term as "expedition" appears to be the most appropriate choice, since, differently from the other alternatives, it includes both the ideas of ordering and progression towards a specific target. At any rate, given the competitive connotation of *stolon* and cognates, it is reasonable to think that even in Empedocles' passage the term possesses agonistic implications. This reading appears even more plausible when one considers the following passage from Pindar's second *Pythian Ode*, in which *stolos* is used as a metaphor for his poetic composition:

εὐανθέα δ᾽ ἀναβάσομαι στόλον ἀμφ᾽ ἀρετᾷ
κελαδέων.

But to proclaim your prowess I shall board a flower-garlanded ship[22].

Pi. *P.* 2.62-63

At lines 67-68, Pindar further develops the image by comparing his song to a cargo sent over the sea to reach Hieron of Syracuse, to whom the ode is dedicated ("This song is sent to you over the grey sea like Phoenician merchandise"[23]). The depiction of poetic activity as a voyage by ship is part of a broader field of nautical metaphors extensively exploited in Archaic Greek poetry[24]. Indeed, navigation offers a wide range of images

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[19] For example: S. *Ph.* 499, 781; Hdt. 3.26, 5.64, 4.145. In connection with this meaning, the term can also indicate groups of people, usually set out to a particular purpose, as in A. *Supp.* 2, 28; *Eu.* 1027; S. *OT* 170.

[20] For example: A. *Ag.* 45, 577; *Pers.* 400, 795. S. *Ph.* 73, 247, 916; *OC* 1305. Hdt. 3.25, 3.138, 4.145; Thuc. 1.9, 1.10, 6.31.

[21] See A. *Pers.* 408, 416.

[22] Tr. Verity, with modifications.

[23] Pi. *P.* 2. 67-68.

[24] For an overview, see Durante 1976, pp. 128-129. Nünlist provides a useful collections of poetic passages where nautical metaphors are employed (see Nünlist 1998, pp. 255-276).

which includes: poetic activity as the rigging of sails[25]; the Muse as steersman and provider of fair wind[26]; and the sheering to another route of song[27]. It is worth noticing, moreover, that Pindar uses *stolon* in a competitive context, as his poetic task is contrasted with potential slanderers of Hiero, who might question the extent of his possessions and reputation[28]. A similar agonistic stance is present in other poems in which Pindar employs nautical images with reference to his activity as poet. In the seventh *Olympian*, for example, he declares that he made a voyage by ship to praise Diagoras and his father Damagetus with a song in which he provides the correct account about their ancestors[29], while in the thirteenth *Olympian*, he compares his poetic task to a maritime trip and declares that he will not tell a false tale about Corinth (thus implying that such stories had been told by others) to celebrate Xenophon and his forefathers[30].

The use of nautical images within the context of poetic competition is part of a tradition which dates back at least to Hesiod, as emerging from the polemic allusion to Homeric epic contained in the part of the *Works and Days* known as *Nautilia* (*Op*. 618-694). There, in narrating the brief voyage to Calchis which he made to participate in the

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[25] Cf. Pi. *N*. 5.50-51: "give voice, unfurl your sails at the highest yard" (tr. Verity).

[26] Cf. B. 12.1-3: "Like a skilled helmsman, Clio, queen of song, steer my thoughts straight now" (tr. Campbell). The metaphor of the steersman is employed also by Alcman, but to refer to the chorus leader Hagesichora (Alcm. 1. 94-95 Page). As regards the other type of image, cf. Pi. *N*. 6.28-30: "Come, Muse, guide a glorious wind of poetry onto this house, for when men die it is songs and stories that recall their fine deeds" (tr. Verity). See also Pi. *P*. 4.1-3: "Today, my Muse, you must stand at the side of a friend, Arcesilas [...] so that with him in his victory revel you may swell the winds of song" (tr. Verity).

[27] Cf. Pi. *N*. 4.69-72: "But it is not permitted to pass to the west of Gadeira; set your ship's sails back to Europe's mainland, for I cannot run through the whole tale of Aeacus' offspring" (tr. Verity). The idea of poetry as a nautical route can be found also in Anacreon's poetry: "I'm borne over unmarked reefs" (Anacr. 403 Page, tr. West).

[28] Cf. Pi. *P*. 2.58-61: "If anyone today says that another man of former times in Greece was superior to you in possessions and reputation, he is empty-minded, and wrestles to no purpose" (tr. Verity). It is noteworthy that the other occurrence of *stolos* in Pindar is in a competitive context as well, as it is used to refer to the pankration (cf. *N*. 3.17).

[29] Cf. Pi. *O*. 7.20-21: "I have come ashore with Diagoras, singing of Rhodes, his island home, child of Aphrodite and bride of Helios, to praise this giant of a man, a straight fighter, who has won a crown for boxing by Alpheus' river and at Castalia,and also to celebrate his father Damagetus, friend of justice [...] My hope is to make known the correct account (ἀγγέλλων διορθῶσαι λόγον), starting from Tlepolemus" (tr. Campbell, with modifications). On the phrase *diorthōsai logon* as implying the correction of previous versions of the myth, see Verdenius 1987, 56-57 *contra* Young, who interprets as "to tell the tale aright or exalt" (cf. Young 1968, p. 78 n. 2).

[30] Cf. Pi. *O*. 13.49-52: "I am a private passenger on a public voyage, and when I speak of the talents of their forefathers and their heroic deeds in war I shall give no false account of the people of Corinth" (tr. Campbell, with modifications)". On the nautical metaphor of the passage, see Nünlist 1998, p. 269.

funeral games for Amphidamas, Hesiod explicitly refers to the Trojan war by saying

that he departed from Aulis, the same place from which the Achaean fleet sailed to Troy:

οὐ γάρ πώ ποτε νηὶ [γ᾽] ἐπέπλων εὐρέα πόντον,
εἰ μὴ ἐς Εὔβοιαν ἐξ Αὐλίδος, ᾗ ποτ᾽ Ἀχαιοὶ
μείναντες χειμῶνα πολὺν σὺν λαὸν ἄγειραν
Ἑλλάδος ἐξ ἱερῆς Τροίην ἐς καλλιγύναικα.

For never yet did I sail the broad sea in a boat,
except to Euboea from Aulis, where once the Achaeans,
waiting through the winter, gathered together a great host to sail
from holy Greece to Troy with its beautiful women.

<div align="center">Hes. Op. 650-653</div>

Hesiod's agonistic stance towards Homeric poetry is revealed by his skilful

appropriation and manipulation of Homeric diction. First, the typical epithets of Troy

and Greece employed in the *Iliad*, respectively "holy" (*hierē*) and "of beautiful women"

(*kalligunaix*), are reversed. Then, in order to describe his extremely short voyage[31],

Hesiod employs the phrase "broad sea" (*eurea ponton*) which in Homer is used to evoke

heroic enterprises[32]. Such a skilled employment of typical Homeric expressions serves

to demonstrate Hesiod's poetic calibre, which, in fact, surpasses Homer's, as implied by

the narration of his victory in the poetic contest dedicated to Amphidamas contained in

the following lines. Indeed, Hesiod's success in Chalcis represents a victory over Homer

himself[33], which he emphasizes by contrasting the grandiosity of Homeric epic,

symbolized by the great Achaean fleet, with his brief voyage to Euboea. Noticeably,

Hesiod's declaration of superiority over Homer acquires deeper significance when we

consider his claim to be able to sing the mind (*noos*) of Zeus at line 661. Since, as I

have previously argued, the mention of Zeus' *noos* hints at the universal character of

Hesiod's poetry, the passage as a whole implies that Hesiod's poetic primacy is not

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[31] About 65 metres long, according to West (cf. West 1978, *ad loc.*).
[32] On these points, cf. Graziosi 2002, p. 170.
[33] That may be why, although Hesiod does not mention his rival, later in antiquity these lines were used as a basis for the legend of the contest between Homer and Hesiod as narrated in the *Certamen* (see Chapter 1, pp. 38-39).

simply due to his being able to perform a poetry as beautiful as Homeric epic, if not

more, but also to the fact that his poetry deals with universal topics which only he, the

poet chosen by the Muses, can narrate[34].

The agonistic implications of the *Nautilia* are later appropriated by Ibycus in his

Encomium to Polycrates, which contains allusions both to Homer and Hesiod, as

emerges by the following lines:

> καὶ τὰ μὲ[ν ἂν] Μοίσαι σεσοφι[σ]μέναι
> εὖ Ἑλικωνίδ[ες] ἐμβαίεν λόγω[ι·
> †θνατ[ὸ]ς δ᾽ οὔ κ[ε]ν ἀνὴρ
> διερὸς [......]† τὰ ἕκαστα εἴποι,
> ναῶν ὅ[σσος ἀρι]θμὸς ἀπ᾽ Αὐλίδος
> Αἰγαῖον διὰ [πό]ντον ἀπ᾽ Ἄργεος ἠλύθο[ν ἐς Τροία]ν
> ἱπποτρόφο[ν, ἐν δ]ὲ φώτες
> χ]αλκάσπ[ιδες, υἷ]ες Ἀχα[ι]ῶν[35]

> On these themes the skilled Muses
> of Helicon might embark in story,
> but no mortal man (untaught?)
> could tell each detail,
> the great number of ships that came from Aulis
> across the Aegean sea from Argos to the horse-rearing
> Troy, with bronze-shielded warriors on board sons of the Achaeans[36].

<div align="right">Ibyc. 282.23-31 Page</div>

The passage recalls the invocation preceding the *Catalogue of the Ships* (*Il*. 2.484-494),

as the Muses' ability to tell all the details and the number of the Achaeans' ships is

contrasted with mortals' incapacity to do the same. The allusion to Hesiod is conveyed

through the use of the epithet 'Heliconian' to refer to the Muses[37] and their being

described as 'skilful' (*sesophismenai*), the same term employed by Hesiod to describe

his lack of expertise in navigation[38]. In addition, Ibycus explicitly mentions Aulis as the

place of departure of the Greek expedition, and, at line 18, he uses the adjective

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[34] Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 93-96.
[35] The text is as reconstructed by Barron (see Barron 1969, pp. 119-124). For the reading ἐς Τροία]ν, Barron follows Hunt (cf. *ibidem*, p. 129).
[36] Tr. Campbell. The hypothesis about 'untaught' is due to Barron's suggested restoration for the corrupted lines 25-26 (see Barron 1969, pp. 128-129).
[37] In the invocation which opens the *Catalogue*, the Muses are referred to as 'having dwellings on Olympus' (l. 484) and 'Olympian' (l. 491).
[38] Cf. Hes. *Op*. 649.

polugomphos ('with many nails', 'well-riveted'), a rare term which appears in the *Works and Days*[39]. Noticeably, such indirect references to Homer and Hesiod are inserted in a context in which navigation is used as a metaphor for poetic activity, as indicated by the use of the verb *embainō* ('to embark') to describe the Muses' narrative capacities. As I have previously illustrated, Ibycus' allusions to his predecessors need not to be considered as a rejection of epic *qua* epic, but rather as a rhetorical device to extol the qualities of Polycrates[40]. However, I argue, considering the competitive implication of the nautical images for poetry, Ibycus' allusions to Homer and Hesiod serve also to exalt his poetic skilfulness and to emphasize the fact that, although he is not going to compose the same type of poetry as theirs, Polycrates will still obtain undying fame (*kleos aphthiton*) thanks to Ibycus' own fame and song[41]. In other words, even though Ibycus will not embark an epic story, his poetry will nonetheless achieve immortal results.

To sum up, the foregoing analysis shows that the term *stolos* and its cognates have strong agonistic connotations, as they are usually employed in contexts which involve competitive confrontation. In particular, *stolos* is related to the broader field of nautical metaphors traditionally employed by poets to refer to their art, whereby they frequently expressed their polemic stance towards rivals. As anticipated above, then, Empedocles' use of *stolos* at B17.26, which closely resembles Parmenides' B8.52, should be taken to indicate a critical allusion to his predecessor. Indeed, the *stolos logou*, which Empedocles invites Pausanias to heed, functions as a metaphorical poetic expedition aimed to prove that Parmenides' rejection of cosmology was misguided. But the image of nautical enterprise hints also at the epic production of Homer and Hesiod,

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[39] Cf. Hes. *Op*. 660.
[40] Cf. Chapter 2, p. 56.
[41] Cf. Ibyc. 281.46-48: "These have a share in beauty always: you too, Polycrates, will have undying fame, as song and my fame can give it" or, accepting a different punctuation of the Greek text, "Among them, for beauty always you too, Polycrates, will have undying fame [...]" (tr. Campbell). On the function of Ibycus' allusions, see also Barron 1969, p. 134; Nünlist 1998, pp. 274-276.

whom Empedocles wants to emulate, but only to demonstrate ultimately his superiority as a poet. For even Empedocles sets out on a poetic journey of epic dimensions, whereby he wants to provide a comprehensive and complete account of the origin and development of the cosmos which outshines those of his competitors. As I will show in the next section, Empedocles' invocations to the Muse are marked by the same self-confidence in his supremacy over rivals and further contribute to his self-presentation as a poetic authority.

4.2 – Empedocles and the Muse

In the extant fragments, Empedocles directly invokes the Muse twice, in B3 and in B131. Both invocations feature important aspects which help to characterize Empedocles' relationship with the goddess, and thereby to indicate his poetic authority. I will start by considering fragment B3, in which Empedocles appeals to the divinity to grant purity to his poetry:

> ἀλλὰ θεοὶ τῶν μὲν μανίην ἀποτρέψατε γλώσσης,
> ἐκ δ᾽ ὁσίων στομάτων καθαρὴν ὀχετεύσατε πηγήν
> καὶ σέ, πολυμνήστη λευκώλενε παρθένε Μοῦσα,
> ἄντομαι, ὧν θέμις ἐστὶν ἐφημερίοισιν ἀκούειν,
> πέμπε παρ᾽ Εὐσεβίης ἐλάουσ᾽εὐήνιον ἅρμα.

> But gods, turn aside their madness from [my] tongue,
> and channel a pure stream from pious mouths.
> And you, much-wooed maiden Muse of the white arms,
> I beseech you: of what is right for ephemeral creatures to hear,
> escort the well-reined chariot, driving from the [halls] of piety

<div align="right">DK 31 B3.1-5[42]</div>

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[42] I follow, with modifications, Inwood's translation. The structure and meaning of the passage are debated, especially as regards the last two lines. Below I offer a detailed analysis of the main issues and the justification for the translation here proposed. Lines 6-13 of B3 contain further injunctions addressed to an unspecified *se*: lines 9-13 are undoubtedly addressed to Pausanias, who is invited to keep his senses and understanding attentive to Empedocles' teachings. As regards lines 6-8, it is debated whether they are addressed to Pausanias or the Muse: Pausanias is opted for by Karsten, Wright and Inwood, who treat B3.6-13 as a separate fragment (for a commentary, see Wright 1981, pp. 157 and 160-163). Proponents of the Muse include: Diels-Kranz, Bignone, Bollack (cf. Bollack 1969, pp. 31-32), Gallavotti, Calzolari and, more recently, Trépanier, who, however, admits that the question cannot be settled once and for all (cf. Trépanier 2004, pp. 59-65). Given the lack of decisive evidence, and considering that either solution does not affect the following discussion, I prefer to suspend judgement.

The first line is irremediably ambiguous, since we know neither the people to whom Empedocles' refers nor what their madness consists in[43]. However, given Empedocles' insistent use of terms relating to purity and piety, it is plausible to think that the *maniē* refers to some sort of transgression disrespectful of the gods. Regardless of the identity of his targets, Empedocles' request to the gods serves to emphasize that what he is about to say in his poem will be informed by piety, an idea further reinforced by the qualification of his song as a "pure stream", which alludes to the language of libations and purificatory rituals[44].

The appeal to the gods is followed by an invocation to the Muse, who is addressed with three epithets, namely λευκώλενος ('white-armed'), παρθένος ('maiden') and πολυμνήστη. The translation of the adjective πολυμνήστη is controversial, as its meaning varies depending on whether one considers the term as deriving from μιμνήσκω ('to remember') or from μνάομαι ('to be mindful', 'to woo for one's bride'). As to the first possibility, πολυμνήστη would be a rare form of the adjective with two endings πολύμνηστος, which can signify 'much-remembering' or, in a passive sense, 'much-remembered', as attested in Aeschylus[45]. According to the other alternative, πολυμνήστη would mean 'much-wooed', as in the few occurrences of the term in Homer[46]. In fact, πολυμνήστη appears in the *Odyssey* only three times, twice as

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[43] Sextus (*M*. 7.24) says that Empedocles is criticizing those who claim to know more. Diels thinks that the reference is to Parmenides (and so do Bignone 1916, p. 391 and Burnet, *ad loc*.) but it is hard to believe that, although in competition with him, Empedocles accuses of madness the philosopher who had such an important influence on him (on this point cf. Bollack 1969, pp. 26-27, Wright 1981, pp. 157-158, Trépanier 2005, p. 58; but see Calzolari 1984, pp. 78-81). Trépanier argues that Empedocles attacks those who perform blood sacrifice (cf. Trépanier *loc*. *cit*.). For a discussion of the possible interpretations, see further Sassi 2009, p. 233 n. 62.

[44] Cf., for example, Xenophanes' elegy on the ideal symposium marked by the respect for the gods discussed in Chapter 2, pp. 52-54.

[45] Cf. A. *Ag*. 821 and 1459 (in the form πολύμναστος). Whether to take the adjective in the active or passive sense is subject to debate (see Wright 1981, p. 158). For the meaning 'much-remembering', cf. also the form πολυμνήστωρ, in A. *Supp*. 535. The active sense is adopted by Karsten ("memor"), Bollack ("mémoire nombreuse"), Wright ("of long memory"), while the passive by Diels, who translates as "much-celebrated" ("vielgefeierte"), and recently by Bordigoni, who argues that πολυμνήστη is here equivalent to πολύφατος, used in choral lyric (cf. Bordigoni 2004, pp. 215-216).

[46] "Much-wooed" is the translation adopted by Burnet, Guthrie, Bignone ("molto contesa"), and Gallavotti ("molto agognata").

an epithet of Penelope (*Od*. 4.770 and 23.149), and once to describe the wife whom Eumeus hopes that Odysseus will give to him in return for his loyalty (*Od*. 14.64). Despite the numerous attempts to identify the exact meaning of πολυμνήστη in Empedocles, no shared consensus has been attained. By contrast to the hypothesis of a single specific meaning, Cerri has argued that Empedocles' use of the term is intentionally ambiguous, and that it actually accommodates a plurality of meanings[47]. Given the lack of decisive reasons to prefer one meaning over the others, the hypothesis of a polysemic usage of πολυμνήστη cannot be excluded. Indeed, the qualification of the Muse as "much-remembering" refers to the traditional role of the Muses, daughters of Mnemosyne[48], as preservers of memory, and the Muse is certainly "much-remembered/celebrated" by poets. Finally, the Muse is also "much-wooed", since poets seek her to obtain her favours. However, as Cerri himself notices, the meaning "much-wooed" appears to possess special prominence in Empedocles' description of the Muse, as implied by the fact that the goddess is referred to as "maiden". Indeed, as I now turn to show, πολυμνήστη, in the sense of "much-wooed", possesses a connotation which further emphasizes Empedocles' agonistic stance towards his poetic rivals.

In order to illustrate the agonistic implications of πολυμνήστη, we should consider again the use of the term in the *Odyssey*, in particular as an epithet of Penelope. As mentioned above, Penelope is called πολυμνήστη in two scenes which feature a similar pattern: in the first passage, on hearing Penelope screaming in her apartment, some of the suitors think that the "much-wooed queen" has finally decided to marry one of them[49]. However, they are unaware that Penelope' cry is caused by her discovery of

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[47] Cf. Cerri 2004, p. 89.

[48] I cannot see how the the fact that the Muse's knowledge is unlimited could pose a problem to the adoption of the meaning "much-remembering", as argued by De Sanctis (cf. De Sanctis 2007, pp. 17-18, n. 19). Indeed, unlimited knowledge entails the capacity of remembering many things, which, in turn, might become subjects of poetry: compare the Muse who loves to remember great contests in Pindar's first *Nemean* (*N*. 1.11).

[49] Cf. *Od*. 4.770.

the suitors' plan to kill Telemachus. Later in the poem, on hearing sounds of music and dance coming from Odysseus' palace, the people of Ithaca are led to think that Penelope, the much-wooed queen", has finally chosen a husband, and thus criticize the woman for not having waited Odysseus' return[50]. But even in this case, Penelope's intentions are misunderstood, since, in fact, the festive sounds are a trick of Odysseus aimed to keep the massacre of the suitors secret. In both cases, Penelope's fidelity is emphasized by the fact that her supposed betrayal of Odysseus does not correspond to the truth[51]. In the light of these passages, De Sanctis has recently argued that, by calling the Muse πολυμνήστη, Empedocles wants to establish analogies between, on the one hand, Penelope and the Muse, and, on the other hand, the suitors and other poets. In this scenario, Empedocles would figure as Odysseus himself, thus implying that the Muse has chosen him as the only recipient of her favour[52]. While De Sanctis' interpretation appears to be correct in its basic formulation, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the passage and its implications, we must take stock of further aspects. In particular, as I now turn to show, the system of parallels effected by the term πολυμνήστη serves to characterize not only Empedocles' relation with the Muse, but also that between the goddess and his rivals.

As narrated in the *Odyssey*, in order to resist the suitors' insistent proposals, Penelope adopts different stratagems whereby she fools them and thereby manages to await Odysseus' return. Indeed, Penelope's faithfulness is inextricably connected to her ability in deceiving the suitors. It is reasonable to think that the same holds for the Muses' relation to Empedocles and his competitors. For Penelope's most famous trick is that of the loom, by which she succeeds in delaying the choice of a new husband for

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[50] Cf. *Od*. 23.149-152.

[51] Homer stresses the ignorance of the suitors and the people of Ithaca by employing the same phrase on both occasions: ὣς ἄρα τις εἴπεσκε, τὰ δ᾽ οὐκ ἴσαν ὡς ἐτέτυκτο, "so they would say, but did not know how these things were" (tr. Murray-Dimock).

[52] Cf. De Sanctis 2007, especially pp. 19-20.

three years[53]. Noticeably, in Archaic Greek poetry, weaving is a metaphor for poetic activity[54]. In a renowned scene of the *Iliad*, Helen embroiders a purple web with representations of the battles between Achaeans and Trojans, thus offering an illustration of the ongoing process of composition of the *Iliad* itself[55]. 'Weaving' and 'embroidering' as images for poetry were then appropriated by later poets, for example Pindar and Bacchylides who frequently speak of the weaving of hymns or words, or musical embroidering[56]. Empedocles himself appears to resort to the metaphor with reference to his poetry, when, in fragment B17, he speaks of the "threads of the tales" (πείρατα μύθων)[57] which he announced previously in the poem[58]. The connection between textile activities and poetry is also behind the belief that rhapsodes were called in this way because they stitched songs together (from *rhaptein*, 'to stitch' and *aoidē*, 'song')[59]. It is worth noting that the capacity of colourfully embroidering a fabric is also presented as an efficacious means of deception, as eloquently described by Pindar in the first *Olympian*: "stories are embroidered beyond the truth, and so deceive us with their elaborate lies"[60]. As I have illustrated in the previous chapter, this idea is related to the conception according to which beautiful poetry might be deceptive, as it can simply imitate the multiform variety of human experience, without corresponding to reality[61].

[53] Cf. *Od*. 2.93-110; 19.138-156.

[54] On weaving as an image for poetry, see Bergren (2008), in particular pp. 215-141 on Penelope. On weaving in Greek and Roman culture, see further Scheid and Svenbro (2001).

[55] Cf. the scholiast's remark (bT): " The poet fashioned a noteworthy model of his own poetry".

[56] E.g. Pindar: *O*. 6.85-86: πλέκων ποικίλον ὕμνον ("weaving a many coloured hymn"), *N*. 4.93-94: ῥήματα πλέκων ("weaving words"), *N*. 8.14-15: φέρων Λυδίαν μίτραν καναχηδὰ πεποικιλμέναν ("bringing a Lydian headband embroidered with resonant music". Bacchylides: 5.9-10: ὑφάνας ὕμνον ("a woven hymn"), 19.8-10: ὕφαινέ νυν τι καινὸν ("now weave something new"). For an overview and other examples, see Nünlist 1998, pp. 110-118.

[57] DK 31 B17.15.

[58] On the translation of *peirata* as 'threads', cf. Graham 1988, pp. 300-301. Similarly, in the first *Pythian*, Pindar speaks of the importance of "plaiting the threads of many matters into a brief whole", πολλῶν πείρατα συντανύσαις ἐν βραχεῖ (Pi. *P*. 1.81-82, tr. Verity). The verb *suntanuō* is an *hapax* glossed as 'to stretch together' and taken as a synonym of *sumplekō* 'to twine/ plait together'. On this line, see further Onians' discussion included in his analysis of the meaning of *peirar* (Onians 1954, pp. 310-342, especially 338-340). For a discussion of the issues related to the line and an alternative interpretation, see further Bergren 1975, pp. 148-162.

[59] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 34-35.

[60] Pi. *O*. 1.28-29, tr. Verity.

[61] Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 92-93.

In the light of these considerations, the parallel between Penelope and the Muse established by means of πολυμνήστη acquires its full import. For we can see how the three-member relation Muse-Empedocles-poets exactly mirrors the Penelope-Odysseus-suitors one: while, on the one hand, the Muse/Penelope is faithful to Empedocles/Odysseus, on the other hand, she preserves her fidelity by deceiving rival poets/suitors. As regards the latter point, Penelope's treacherous weaving is paralleled by the Muse's fabrication of false accounts which she inspires to other poets. Empedocles then seems to appropriate Hesiod's idea that the Muses are equally able to inspire truth and falsehoods, as stated in the *Theogony*[62]. Indeed, similarly to Hesiod, even Empedocles emphasizes that he is the chosen one by the Muses. However, I argue, Empedocles' status as a poet is, in fact, very different from that of Hesiod, as emerges from the analysis of the passages in which the Muse is invoked. I will start by considering the rest of fragment B3, which contains Empedocles' request to the Muse. For the sake of clarity, I quote again the Greek text:

> καὶ σέ, πολυμνήστη λευκώλενε παρθένε Μοῦσα,
> ἄντομαι, ὧν θέμις ἐστὶν ἐφημερίοισιν ἀκούειν,
> πέμπε παρ᾽ Εὐσεβίης ἐλάουσ᾽ εὐήνιον ἅρμα.

<div align="center">DK 31 B3.3-5</div>

Lines 4 and 5 are notoriously difficult to translate and interpret, as their very structure is subject to debate. In what follows I will briefly sketch the main issues arising from the passage and then propose what I consider the most plausible reading. As to the lines' syntax, some scholars put a stop at the end of line 4, after ἀκούειν, and thus make the verb depend on ἄντομαι. The line would then mean that Empedocles is asking the Muse to hear from her the things which are lawful for mortals to apprehend[63]. Alternatively, as proposed by Bollack, ἄντομαι can be construed with two objects, namely the *se*

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[62] Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 90-91.
[63] Cf. Karsten: "precor, quantum fas sit mortalibus, ex te audire"; Burnet: "And thee, much-wooed, white-armed Virgin Muse, do I beseech that I may hear what is lawful for the children of a day!"

indicating the Muse (line 3), and an omitted demonstrative *tauta* generically referring to "things" whose characteristics are then specified by the relative clause introduced by *hōn*. Bollack's reading is based on a parallel construction of the verb *lissomai*, which, in tragedy, is a synonym of ἄντομαι. As Bollack figures it, the line would thus translate as: "I come to you for the words that the Law allows men to hear"[64]. In both cases, line 5 would be an independent sentence in which *harma* is the object of the verb *pempe*. As a consequence, Bollack, following Karsten, reads *para elaousa* as a tmesis, and thus takes the genitive Εὐσεβίης as indicating the owner of the chariot which the Muse is asked to conduct to Empedocles[65]. By contrast, Burnet considers the phrase *par'eusebiē* as indicating the starting point of the Muse's journey by chariot and takes Empedocles as the object of *pempe*. He thus translates the line as follows: "Speed me on my way from the abode of Holiness and drive my willing car!".

Although possible, the above readings of lines 4-5 demand further additions and integrations on the part of interpreters which, in fact, are not necessary. Actually, the lines can be plausibly construed even by keeping the punctuation adopted by Diels-Kranz. To start with line 4, it must be noticed that, although *antomai* can take the infinitive[66], the dependent verb indicates the action which the person to whom the prayer is addressed is asked to do. But, of course, it is hard to believe that the Muse is entreated to hear what is lawful for mortals[67]. As regards Bollack's reading, there is no need, I argue, to consider *antomai* as a synonym of *lissomai*, as happens in tragedy. For, besides the fact that Empedocles could have used *lissomai*, which is metrically

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[64] Cf. Bollack's French translation: "je viens à toi pour les mots que la Loi permet aux hommes d'entendre".

[65] Cf. Karsten: "Age, vehe mihi agilem religionis currum!"; Bollack: "Mène le char d'Eusébie, guide-le, docile aux rênes"; Gallavotti: "[...] guidando avanti il carro ben governato dell'amore devoto".

[66] *Pace* Wright: cf. Aristophanes *Th*. 977-980: Ἑρμῆν τε νόμιον ἄντομαι/ καὶ Πᾶνα καὶ Νύμφας φίλας/ ἐπιγελάσαι προθύμως /ταῖς ἡμετέραισι/χαρέντα χορείαις.

[67] This explains why Karsten has to supply a "ex te" which, in fact, is not in the Greek text. Burnet's rendering "I beseech that I may hear" would require a verb in the subjunctive or optative, not infinitive (cf. E. *Heracl*. 226).

equivalent to ἄντομαι, a rapid overview of the occurrences of *antomai* in dramatic texts is sufficient to notice that the verb is most frequently accompanied by a verbal form in the imperative[68]. Thus, given the presence of the imperative *pempe* at line 5, it is more natural to consider lines 4 and 5 as not independent, and to take the verb as specifying the action which the Muse is asked to perform.

On the basis of this construal, the lines can be read in two ways, depending on which object one assigns to *pempe*. On the one hand, (a) the object of *pempe* can be the omitted *tauta* before the relative clause. In this case, *harma* would depend on *elaousa* and the lines would read as follows: "I pray you, escort the things which it is lawful for mortal to hear, driving the well-reined chariot from the halls of Piety". On the other hand, (b) the phrase can be construed by taking *harma* as the object of *pempe*. The relative clause would then depend on *harma*[69], and the lines would translate as: "I pray you, escort the well-reined chariot of the things which it is lawful for mortals to hear, driving from the halls of Piety". Before continuing with the discussion of these alternative readings, I want to draw the attention on two aspects of the translations which I have proposed. First, I have taken the genitive *Eusebiēs* as depending on *para*. The construction *para* + genitive is frequent in Homer and, indeed, there is no need to introduce another female divinity to make sense of the passage, as in Archaic poetry the poetic chariot traditionally belongs to the Muse[70]. Empedocles' request to the Muse to drive the chariot from the halls of Piety then should be read as a way of further stressing the pious character of his work, after the prayer to the gods to grant purity to his song. Indeed, both phrases *ek hosiōn stomatōn* and *par'Eusebiēs* metaphorically indicate the religious framework of Empedocles' teachings[71]. The second point regards the meaning

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[68] E.g.: S. *OC*. 250; E. *Med*. 709, *Andr*. 921, *Supp*. 278; A.*Th*.1155.
[69] Cf. Cerri 2004, p. 89. For the image of the chariot of song, cf. Pindar *Fr*. 124a*-b.1.
[70] Against the idea of Piety's chariot, see further Wright 1981, p. 158; Calzolari 1984, p. 79 n. 25; Obbink 1993, pp. 62-63.
[71] On this point, see also Nünlist 1998, p. 259.

of *pempe*, which I have translated as 'escort' (or 'conduct'), while most of scholars, interpreting the lines along (a), translate 'send' and thus render the passage in the following way: "I pray you, send [to me] the things which is lawful for mortals to hear, driving the well-reined chariot from the halls of Piety"[72]. By contrast, I argue, 'escort' appears to be more appropriate in this context. First, if we consider the usage of *pempō* in epic poetry, while the verb is frequently used to indicate the action of sending, when divine agents are involved it often refers to the action of escorting/conducting, in particular, mortals to some destination[73]. Furthermore, it would be otiose if the Muse were to be asked to *send* to Empedocles the things which can be heard by mortals, an action which implies separation between the thing sent and the sender, but at the same time to drive her chariot in the same direction. Surely, she could more easily *bring/escort* them with her.

In the light of these considerations, I tend to prefer option (b) and interpret Empedocles' prayer as a request to the Muse to escort the poetic chariot which he metaphorically mounts to expound his teachings. As I have illustrated in the chapter on Parmenides, the image of the chariot was traditionally employed by poets as a metaphor of their art[74]. Indeed, my reading of the passage is even more plausible if we notice that it actually contains an allusion to Parmenides' proem: there, Parmenides employs twice the verb *pempō* to indicate the escorting of his chariot by the mares and the daughters of the Sun[75]. In addition, when the goddess welcomes Parmenides, she tells him that he has come there under the aegis of *themis*. Significantly, as in the case of Parmenides, the fact that the Muse is asked to escort Empedocles' on his poetic chariot-journey implies the poet's active role in the poetic performance. Thus, Empedocles is not just a passive

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[72] E.g. Trépanier 2004, Inwood 2001, Wright 1981.
[73] E.g. *Od.* 4.586; 5.25; 11.626.
[74] Cf. Chapter 3, p. 86.
[75] Cf. DK 28 B1.1-2 and 8.

recipient of the Muse's inspiration, as involved by translating *pempō* as 'send', but rather possesses a certain degree of autonomy[76].

Such interpretation is further supported by another passage in which Empedocles invokes the Muse for assistance. The text runs as follows:

εἰ γὰρ ἐφημερίων ἕνεκέν τινος, ἄμβροτε Μοῦσα,
ἡμετέρας μελέτας <ἅδε τοι> διὰ φροντίδος ἐλθεῖν,
εὐχομένωι νῦν αὖτε παρίστασο, Καλλιόπεια,
ἀμφὶ θεῶν μακάρων ἀγαθὸν λόγον ἐμφαίνοντι[77].

For if, immortal Muse, for the sake of any ephemeral creature,
<it has pleased you> to let our concerns pass through your thought,
then stand now once again beside one who prays to you, Calliope,
as he reveals a good discourse about the blessed gods[78].

DK 31 B131[79]

In the passage, Empedocles appeals again to his Muse, here named as Calliope[80], to aid him in his poetic task. The way in which the invocation is formulated emphasizes, I argue, Empedocles' active role in poetic composition: Calliope is asked to stand beside him (*paristaso*) as he reveals (*emphainonti*) his discourse about the gods[81]. In Archaic poetry, when the verb *paristēmi* is employed with reference to divine agents, it indicates

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[76] It is worth noticing that the same considerations hold even if one construes lines 4-5 according to alternative (a). In that case, Empedocles would be asking the Muse to escort his poem (about the things which mortals can hear) towards the audience (for an eloquent poetic parallel, cf. *Od*. 6.251-322, where Nausicaa escorts Odysseus to Scheria on board of her chariot), thus implying that he is not just a passive spokesman of the Muse. Interestingly, the symbolism associated to a female figure escorting a chariot was exploited by Peisistratus, who, in order to legitimate his power, entered Athens on a chariot escorted by a woman dressed as Athena (cf. Hdt. 1.60).

[77] The text is the result of various scholarly emendations. For an analysis of the major issues, see Wright 1981, p. 159, Gallavotti 1975, pp. 161-164.

[78] Tr. after Inwood with modification (see Most 2007, p. 291).

[79] Diels assigned the fragment to the *Katharmoi*, because he identified the *tis* of line 1 with Pausanias and thereby interpreted the passage as a reference to *On Nature*. However, as persuasively argued by Wright and Obbink, the appeal to the Muse's past assistance should be read as an hypothetical event, deprived of any historical dimension specification, as traditionally happens in the *hymnoi klētikoi*, on which fragment B131 is modelled (cf. Wright 1981, p. 159; Obbink 1993, p. 59-61; on the *hymnoi klētikoi*, see further Page 1975 and Lloyd-Jones 1963, pp. 83-84). The attribution to *On Nature* is further supported by the fact that Hippolytus cites the fragment amid the discussion of the role of Love and Strife as cosmological principles (on this point, cf. Palmer 2013, p. 312, n. 4).

[80] The identification of Calliope with the Muse mentioned in B3 is corroborated by a passage from Bacchylides' fifth epinician which presents striking parallels with Empedocles' fragment. To mark the transition between two parts of the ode, Bacchylides metaphorically invites Calliope, the "white-armed", to stop her well-made chariot: λευκώλενε Καλλιόπα, στᾶσον εὐποίητον ἅρμα αὐτοῦ, "white-armed Calliope, stop the well-made chariot right here" (B. 5.176-178).

[81] The gods in question are most probably the basic constituent of the cosmos, namely the four roots and Love and Strife, to which Empedocles attributes divine features, cf. Gallavotti 1975, pp. 163-164; Wright *loc. cit.*; Obbink 1993, p. 59, n.19, Palmer *loc. cit*. On the divinity of the elements, see further below.

the gods' standing beside mortals so as to offer them help by action or speech[82]. The god's/goddess's assistance usually configures as a sort of alliance, in which human beings actively contribute to the development of events[83]. The same consideration holds in the case of poetic activity, as emerging from Pindar's third *Olympian*, in which *paristēmi* is employed to describe the Muse's intervention, in a way which closely resembles that of B131:

> Μοῖσα δ᾽ οὕτω ποι παρέ-
> στα μοι νεοσίγαλον εὑρόντι τρόπον
> Δωρίῳ φωνὰν ἐναρμόξαι πεδίλῳ
> ἀγλαόκωμον.
>
> The Muse thus stood beside me
> as I discovered a brilliant new way
> to fit my voice of glorious celebration to the Dorian measure[84].

<div align="right">Pi. O. 3.4-6</div>

Pindar stresses his active role in the composition of the ode in honour of Theron of Acragas, as his poetic achievement is presented as the product of a collaboration between him and the Muse[85]. In other words, by standing beside him, the Muse grants to Pindar her favour and help, so that *he* can find a new way of celebrating Theron through his song. Similarly, Empedocles invokes the Muse to receive her assistance while *he* expounds his account about the gods. Even in this case, then, Empedocles stresses that he is not just a passive intermediary between the divinity and human beings, but actively participates in the poetic process[86].

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[82] E.g.: *Il*. 10.279, 10.291, 18.70, 23.783; *Od*. 2.284, 3.222, 8.10, 13.301.

[83] The most eloquent examples are provided by Athena's frequent interventions to help Odysseus: e.g. *Od*. 16.455, 18.70, 24.368.

[84] Tr. Verity, with modifications.

[85] On this point, cf. De Sanctis 2007, p. 15.

[86] Empedocles is thus part of that gradual process of increasing autonomy from the Muse which characterized the poetic production at the end of the Archaic age, as emerging, for example, from the works by Pindar and Simonides. On the modifications to the relationship between poet and the Muse, see further: Accame 1964; Arrighetti 1983; Ledbetter 2003, pp. 62-77 (on Pindar). Another instance of Empedocles' active poetic role is provided by his use of the verb *exocheteuō* ('draw off') to indicate his transition from a part of his account to another (B35.2: λόγου λόγον ἐξοχετεύων). The image implies that Empedocles can direct as he wishes the stream of song which the gods had channelled through his mouth. On the pouring and channelling of water as conveying the idea of poetic autonomy, see further Nünlist 1998, p. 180.

It is worth noticing that, besides emphasizing Empedocles' active role as poet, fragment B131 contains allusions to his poetic and philosophical predecessors. First of all, the prominent role of Calliope could not but remind the audience of Hesiod, who, in the *Theogony*, describes the goddess as the greatest of all Muses, as she attends both poets and kings[87]. Indeed, exactly like Hesiod, even Empedocles declares his intention to provide an account concerning the gods[88]. But in addition to Hesiod, Empedocles' characterization of his poem (or part of it) as a *logos amphi theōn* entails a further allusion to Xenophanes and Parmenides, who both employ the preposition *amphi* with reference to the topics of their poetry. In fact, Xenophanes' fragment B34 contains the only other extant occurrence in Archaic poetry of the phrase *amphi theōn*, while in Parmenides' poem the deduction of the attributes of Being is described by the goddess as a *logos* and thought *amphis alētheiēs*[89]. Once again, then, through a stratified system of allusions, Empedocles indicates his poetic predecessors and rivals, with whom he competes to ultimately demonstrate his superiority.

As emerges from the the foregoing analysis, the invocations to the Muse in fragments B3 and B131 reveal Empedocles' self-confidence in his status as a poet, both by stressing his primacy over competitors and his special relationship with the Muse, which configures as an alliance to which he actively contributes. Still, what remains to determine is why Empedocles can be so sure about his outstanding abilities and the reliability of the Muse's assistance. In fact, since Hesiod, divine inspiration had been marked by unsolvable ambiguity, and, as shown above, even Empedocles appears to admit that the Muse can deceive. As I will argue in the next section, Empedocles' unique response to this question lies in his self-presentation as a god.

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[87] See Chapter 2, pp. 105-106.

[88] On the allusions to Hesiod contained in the passage, see further Most, who points out the unusual concentration of Hesiodic language in the lines (cf. Most 2007, pp. 291-292). Most also argues that the unnamed *tis* is, in fact, Hesiod, but see my considerations above. Gallavotti thinks that the allusion is not only to Hesiod, but also to Xenophanes and Parmenides (cf. 1975, p. 162-163).

[89] Cf. De Sanctis 14, n. 13; Wright 1981, p. 159.

4.3 – Empedocles' divine knowledge

Empedocles' alleged divine status has been the object of intense scholarly debate. The issue is further complicated by its being connected to the question regarding the existence of one or two poems. The main problem stems from Empedocles' apparently contradictory description as a god and a *daimōn* in fragments B112 and B115, usually attributed to the *Katharmoi*:

> ὦ φίλοι, οἳ μέγα ἄστυ κατὰ ξανθοῦ Ἀκράγαντος
> ναίετ᾽ ἀν᾽ ἄκρα πόλεος, ἀγαθῶν μελεδήμονες ἔργων,
> <ξείνων αἰδοῖοι λιμένες, κακότητος ἄπειροι,>
> χαίρετ᾽· ἐγὼ δ᾽ ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός
> πωλεῦμαι μετὰ πᾶσι τετιμένος, ὥσπερ ἔοικα,
> ταινίαις τε περίστεπτος στέφεσίν τε θαλείοις.

> O friends, who dwell in the great city of the yellow Acragas,
> up in the high parts of the city, concerned with good deeds,
> <respectful harbours for strangers, untried by evil,>[90]
> hail! I, in your eyes a deathless god, no longer mortal,
> go among all, honoured, just as I seem:
> wreathed with ribbons and festive garlands[91].

<div align="right">

DK 31 B112.1-5

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> τῶν[92] καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
> νείκεϊ μαινομένωι πίσυνος.

> I too am now one of these [i.e. *daimones*], an exile from the gods and a wanderer,
> trusting in mad strife[93].

<div align="right">

DK 31 B115.13-14

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According to ancient testimonies, both fragments have a proemial character: Diogenes Laertius tells us that B112 was the very opening of the *Katharmoi*[94], while Plutarch

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[90] The line is reported separately by Diodorus (13.38.2) as a description of the Acragantines, but inserted here by Sturz and later editors. In his reconstruction of the *Katharmoi*, Zuntz places the line later in the poem (cf. Zuntz 1971, pp. 187-189). For a discussion of the issue, see Wright 1981, pp. 265-266.

[91] Tr. Inwood.

[92] Zuntz argues in favour of Plutarch's reading (*On Exile*, 607c) τὴν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης and translates "this way I am myself now going" (cf. Zuntz 1971, pp. 198-199). For a criticism of this construal, see Wright 1981, p. 275. Gallavotti reads τῇ instead of τῶν and translates: "in this way/for this reason I am an exile [etc.]".

[93] Tr. Inwood.

[94] Cf. D. L. 8.54: Ὅτι δ᾽ ἦν Ἀκραγαντῖνος ἐκ Σικελίας, αὐτὸς ἐναρχόμενος τῶν Καθαρμῶν φησιν, "That he [sc. Empedocles] was a citizen of Acragas in Sicily he himself says at the beginning of the *Purifications*" (tr. Inwood).

ascribes B115 to the prefatory part of Empedocles' philosophy[95]. While in Diels' edition,

the attribution of B115 to the *Katharmoi* and his position after B112 were deemed

necessary to explain Empedocles' bold claim to divinity, such assumption has been

revised and criticized by later scholars[96]. In 1975, van der Ben proposed a reconstruction

of the proem of *On Nature* and considered B115 as the opening of the poem. Van der

Ben's argument in support of his hypothesis is mainly based on the following

considerations: a) according to ancient evidence, Diels' thematic division between *On

Nature* and the *Katharmoi* (i.e. natural philosophy versus religion) is unwarranted; b)

Simplicius and Hippolytus quote the passage in the course of their discussion of *On

Nature*; c) in B112, Empedocles is not claiming to be actually a god, but rather he is

describing, with a tinge of irony, the way in which people see and honour him[97]. Some

years later, Sedley pointed out the contradiction between Empedocles' description of

himself as an "immortal god, no longer mortal" (θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητός) in B112

and as a *daimōn*, banned from the gods because guilty of a blood crime perpetrated

under the influence of Strife[98]. In order to solve this apparent clash, Sedley resorted to

what might be called a "biographical/developmental" hypothesis, according to which

the fragments relate to two different moments of Empedocles' cycle of incarnations.

Thus, fragment B115, in which he claims to be a *daimōn*, would belong to *On Nature*,

chronologically anterior to the *Katharmoi* composed when he had already completed his

apotheosis[99]. An important contribution to the debate came from the discovery and

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[95] Cf. Plut. *On Exile*, 607c.6: Ἐμπεδοκλῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς φιλοσοφίας προαναφωνήσας, "Empedocles, making a proclamation as a prelude at the beginning of his philosophy [quotation of B115 follows]" (tr. Inwood with modification). On the meaning of προαναφωνέω in Plutarch's passage, see van der Ben 1975, pp. 16-20; Wright 1981, pp. 270-272; Trépanier 2004, pp. 11-12.

[96] Of course, I am here referring to scholars who argue for the existence of two poems. Noticeably, the proemial position and the relative order of the fragments (i.e. B115 after B112) has been maintained even by the proponents of the single-work hypothesis (cf. Inwood 2001 and Trépanier 2004).

[97] Cf. van der Ben 1975, pp. 16-26. For a criticism of van der Ben, see Panagiotou 1983, pp. 278-285. The attribution of B115 to the opening of *On Nature* had been already proposed by Karsten in his edition of the fragments.

[98] Cf. B115.3. On the textual problems of the line and the *daimōn*'s crime, see further Wright 1981, pp. 270-271; van der Ben 1975, pp. 130-131; Zuntz 1971, p. 196.

[99] Cf. Sedley 1989, pp. 275-276. For a criticism of Sedley's position, see Palmer 2013, pp. 310-311.

publication of the Strasbourg Papyrus, which provided evidence of how religious themes connected to Empedocles' demonology were mingled with cosmological themes and thus buttressed the idea that B115 could belong to *On Nature*[100].

By contrast, proponents of the single poem hypothesis do not consider B112 and B115 as presenting two contradictory claims. Inwood and Trépanier, for example, while acknowledging the ambiguity of Empedocles' self-declaration of divinity, take it as genuine and reconcile the apparent incompatibility by arguing that Empedocles asserts his divinity because he is confident about his next reincarnation as a divine being[101]. Indeed, even those who believe in the existence of two poems and assign both fragments to the *Katharmoi*, like Zuntz and Wright, explain Empedocles' claim to be a god as a manifestation of his certainty in his imminent (or already complete) apotheosis[102]. According to a more deflationary view, the contradiction between the fragments can be easily solved by interpreting B112 as not containing a claim to actual divinity. As mentioned above, van der Ben was among the first to advance doubts about Empedocles' self-proclaimed divinity, although he argued that only to support his attribution of B115 to *On Nature*. Similarly, in his edition of the fragments, Gallavotti reads B112 as simply asserting that Empedocles looks like a god[103]. More recently, Palmer has argued against the idea that Empedocles is actually claiming his divine status by stressing how it would have been impossible for him to become a god while still in his current incarnation[104].

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[100] On this point, see Sassi 2009, pp. 234-235; Gemelli Marciano 2002, pp. 106-107; Curd 2001, p. 31; Martin and Primavesi 1999, pp. 113-114. *Contra* Bollack 2001, p. 175 and O'Brien 2001.

[101] Cf. Inwood 2001, pp. 57-58 and 61; Trepanier 2004, p. 73-74 and 79-86. Stehle does not take position as regards the number of poems, but argues for actual divinity (cf. Stehle 2005, pp. 267-280).

[102] Cf. Zuntz 1971, pp. 189-191; Wright 1981, p. 266.

[103] Cf. Gallavotti 1975, pp. 266-267.

[104] Cf. Palmer 2013, pp. 311-312 and *passim*. As a consequence, Palmer argues that the god mentioned in fragment DK 31 B23.9-11 ("But know these things clearly, as you have heard the tale from a god (*para theou*)") is not Empedocles, but Calliope. That Empedocles is referring to the Muse had already been maintained, for example, by Wright (1981, p. 181) and Obbink (1994, pp. 63-64), but Palmer goes a step further, as he argues that in this and other fragments the speaker is Calliope herself (Palmer 2013, p. 312 and *passim*). Even though I cannot address extensively all the issues related to this point, I cannot agree with Palmer's interpretation for the following reasons: 1) as shown above, Empedocles repeatedly

As a matter of fact, it is difficult to solve definitively all the issues related to Empedocles' statements in B112 and B115. Indeed, the evidence in our possession is hardly decisive and any proposed solution must be inevitably based on some degree of speculation. In what follows, I will advance some considerations about the fragments which hold regardless of the solution adopted. In particular, I will focus on the role which Empedocles' declarations play in his strategy against his poetic and philosophical rivals. For, I argue, B112 and B115 were both conceived for providing an authoritative framework to Empedocles' poetry and thereby to convince the audience of its reliability, in a way similar to Hesiod's or Parmenides' self-presentations in the proems to their works. To start with B115, the fact of being a *daimōn* who underwent a cycle of incarnations renders Empedocles a direct witness of the continuous interchange of living beings generated by the mixing and separation of the elements which he illustrates in his poem[105]. In this regard, it is worth noticing that the description of the *daimōn*'s wandering in B115 alludes to the interactions between the four roots[106]. Physical doctrine and religious concerns are thus combined in an account about the functioning and ordering of the cosmos which Empedocles, as a *daimōn*, experienced in person.

emphasizes his active poetic role, and he explicitly tells us that *he* is going to reveal a discourse about the gods (cf. section 3.2); 2) even if we accept Palmer's idea that Empedocles is a *daimōn* and not a god, he still might have referred to himself as a *theos*, that is, a divine being. Indeed, Empedocles does not appear to draw a rigid distinction between *daimones* and *theoi*, as emerges from fragment B59, where he calls the divine roots *daimones* (on this point, see Rangos 2012, p. 327); 3) as I am going to argue, Empedocles' claims to divinity should be taken as genuine, especially considering their "advertising" function (see below). For the reading of *theos* as a reference to Empedocles himself, see Inwood (2001, p. 57 n. 127), Trépanier (2004, pp. 37-38, 49 and *passim*), and Edwards 1991, p. 288 n. 20.

[105] In fragment B117 Empedocles provides instances of his previous lives: "For I have already become a boy and a girl/ and a bush and a bird and a fish from the sea" (tr. Inwood). The nature of the *daimōn*'s knowledge of past lives is subject to debate. Wright argues that Empedocles does not actually remember his previous lives, but that he only inferred them (cf. Wright 1981, p. 276). However, as Inwood notices, it is more plausible to think that Empedocles remembered his previous incarnations, especially considering that the *daimōn*'s continuous awareness of his condition would render more effective his punishment and thus urge him on the path of expiation (cf. Inwood 2001, p. 59). On this point, see also Sassi 2009, p. 197, n. 66.

[106] Cf. B115.9-12: "For the strength of aither pursues them [i.e. *daimones*] into the sea,/and the sea spits [them] onto the surface of the earth and earth into the beams/of the blazing sun, and it throws [them] into the eddies of the air;/ and one after another receives [them], but all hate [them]." (tr. Inwood, modified). On this point, see Wright 1981, pp. 274-275; Trépanier 2004, pp. 32-33.

As regards Empedocles' claim to be a god, contrary to the deflationary reading of B112 proposed by some scholars (i.e. Empedocles is only describing how he is seen by people), I tend to take his profession of divinity as genuine. First, as noticed by Zuntz, if people had already considered Empedocles as a god, to tell them what they already believed would have been trivial and practically useless[107]. In fact, it is crucial to notice that Empedocles does not simply affirm that he is an immortal god, but specifies that he is "no longer mortal" (οὐκέτι θνητός)[108]. Since such a qualification could be properly understood only within the context of Empedocles' doctrine of the fallen *daimōn* and his redemption through a cycle of incarnations and purifications, it is hard to believe that Empedocles was just reporting the opinion of common men who, before listening to his teachings, could not have an idea of such a truth. Rather, I suggest, Empedocles' claim served precisely as a powerful introduction to his purificatory precepts and his doctrine of salvation. Indeed, the fact that Empedocles is a god, "no longer mortal" means that he has already completed the purificatory path owing to which he will not incarnate again in mortal forms[109]. Thus, in his own person, Empedocles provides his audience with a living example of how a pious and pure conduct can eventually lead to divinity.

As part of his advertising strategy, Empedocles is keen to present his teachings as important to the process of approximation to divinity. For, as eloquently illustrated by Empedocles' repeated addresses to Pausanias, the development of cognitive faculties and the consequent increase of knowledge attainable by means of his doctrine are closely related to the process of personal improvement. In fragment B110, for example, Empedocles invites Pausanias to thrust his teachings into his thinking organs

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[107] Cf. Zuntz 1971, p. 190.
[108] DK 31 B112.4.
[109]Cf. fragment DK 31 B113, in which Empedocles stresses his difference from other human beings, who are bound to incarnate multiple times: "But why do I press on these points, as though doing some great thing, if I am better than men who are destroyed many times (πολυφθερέων ἀνθρώπων)? (tr. Inwood)".

(*prapides*)[110] and to gaze on them with pure meditations *(katharai melētai)*, so that they will continually grow and improve over time. At the same time, Pausanias is warned against the negative influence of common men's blunt mediations which may hinder his progression towards wisdom[111]. Significantly, the fact that the attitude which Empedocles urges Pausanias to have towards his doctrine should be informed by the same purity which he ascribes to his poetic account serves to emphasize the importance of Empedocles' *logos* to the process of personal purification. The connection between increase of knowledge and improvement of personal condition is further stressed in fragment B132:

> ὄλβιος, ὃς θείων πραπίδων ἐκτήσατο πλοῦτον,
> δειλὸς δ᾽, ὧι σκοτόεσσα θεῶν πέρι δόξα μέμηλεν.
>
> Blessed is he who has gained the wealth of divine understanding,
> wretched he who cherishes a dark opinion about the gods[112].

<div align="right">DK 31 B132</div>

The couplet presents men's blessedness and wretchedness as related to knowledge. While the man who possesses divine understanding is blessed, the one who has an obscure opinion about the gods is bound to be wretched. Given the parallel structure of the verses, the phrase "divine understanding" acquires deeper significance when compared with the second line. Actually, the contrast between the two different states makes sense only if to have divine understanding implies the possession of knowledge

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[110] The term *prapides* indicates an organ whose functions include intellectual, emotional and volitional aspects. In Empedocles, it indicates a cognitive act whereby we can mentally embrace and visualize the object of apprehension (cf. fragment B129 discussed below). On *prapides*, see further Macris and Skarsouli 2012, pp. 363-368.

[111] Cf. DK 31 B110: "For if, thrusting them deep in your crowded thinking organs,/ you gaze on them in kindly fashion, with pure meditations,/ absolutely all these things will be with you throughout your life,/ and from these you will acquire many others; for these things themselves/ will expand to form each character, according to the growth of each./ But if you reach out for different things, such as/ the ten thousand wretched things which are among men and blunt their meditations,/ truly they will abandon you quickly, as time circles round,/ desiring to arrive at their own dear kind. For know that all have thought and a share of understanding" (tr. Inwood).

[112] Tr. Wright with modifications.

about the gods[113]. In the light of the divine status of the four roots and Love and Strife[114], knowledge about the gods encompasses the correct apprehension of the interactions of the constitutive elements of reality which generate the cosmos. Significantly, this understanding grants to the person who possesses it a kind of knowledge which traditionally was deemed to belong exclusively to the gods or to divine men, such as seers and prophets, as eloquently shown by the so-called "zoogonic formula" which Empedocles repeatedly employs to indicate the generation of living beings from the mixing and separation of the elements caused by Love and Strife: ἐκ τούτων γὰρ πάνθ᾽ ὅσα τ᾽ ἦν ὅσα τ᾽ ἔστι καὶ ἔσται […] ἐβλάστησε ("for out of these all that was, that is, and will be has blossomed")[115]. The formula is fashioned along the lines of traditional descriptions of divine knowledge, such as that of the Muses in the *Theogony* and of Chalcas in the *Iliad*[116]. Noticeably, knowledge of the past, present and future does not simply relate to events, as in the case of prophets, but rather to the generation and destruction of living beings according to the cosmic law of mixing and separation operated by Love and Strife[117]. Empedocles' account thus provides a comprehensive view of the universe in which the destiny of individuals finds its place and explication, and thereby contributes to the development and improvement of those who apprehend and follow it.

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[113] On this passage, see further Rangos 2012, pp. 330-331. Empedocles appears here to appropriate the rigid distinction between opinion and knowledge/truth which we found in Xenophanes and Parmenides. Indeed, B132 features an echo of Xenophanes' distinction between *doxa* and *saphēneia* concerning the gods in B34 (cf. Chapter 2, pp. 74-75)

[114] The roots are attributed names of traditional divinities in B6, B96 and B98. Similarly, Love: e.g in B71.4, B73.1, B95. Strife is nowhere called with divine names or referred to as a god, but some fragments appear to allude to Strife's divine status (e.g B128 and B122.3). On this point, see further Rangos 2012, pp. 319-321.

[115] DK 31 B21.13-14 (tr. Trépanier). The formula is also employed, with variants, at B23.5 and *ensemble* a (i) 8-a (ii) 2. It is actually debated whether the genitive plural demonstrative refers to the elements only, or also to Love and Strife. However, the issue does not directly affect my argumentation. For a discussion of the formula and related issues, see Trépanier 2003, p. 33-34.

[116] Cf. Hom. *Il*. 1.70; Hes. *Th*. 38. It is worth noticing that, while Hesiod sung only the past and the future (cf. *Th*. 32), Empedocles' poetry explicitly includes the present.

[117] Cf. DK 31 B17.7-8, 16-17; B20.3; B26.5-6.

The correlation between knowledge and divinity is further emphasized by the fact that Empedocles characterizes the mortal condition as essentially marked by epistemic limitedness. First, mortals are referred to as "ephemeral", a term which does not simply indicate men's short lifespan, but, more significantly, the fact that human knowledge is inevitably restricted to what men experience each day[118]. In addition, Empedocles repeatedly scorns human beings because they mistakenly take as complete the partial view of reality which they acquire during their brief lives[119]. By contrast, the distinctive mark of knowledge consists exactly in the capacity of transcending the boundaries of mortal life, as emerges from the description of the exceptional capacities of the unnamed man of fragment B129:

> ἦν δέ τις ἐν κείνοισιν ἀνὴρ περιώσια εἰδώς,
> ὃς δὴ μήκιστον πραπίδων ἐκτήσατο πλοῦτον,
> παντοίων τε μάλιστα σοφῶν <τ'> ἐπιήρανος ἔργων·
> ὁππότε γὰρ πάσηισιν ὀρέξαιτο πραπίδεσσιν,
> ῥεῖ' ὅ γε τῶν ὄντων πάντων λεύσσεσκεν ἕκαστον
> καί τε δέκ' ἀνθρώπων καί τ' εἴκοσιν αἰώνεσσιν.

> There was among them a man of exceptional knowledge,
> who indeed obtained the greatest wealth of understanding,
> master of all kinds of particularly wise deeds,
> for whenever he reached out with all his understanding,
> he easily saw each of all the things which are
> in ten or twenty human lifetimes[120].

<div align="center">DK 31 B129</div>

The fragment is preserved by Porphyry, Iamblichus and Digenes Laertius, who tell us that Empedocles wrote it as a praise of Pythagoras[121]. Diogenes says that he derived the information from Timaeus of Tauromenium, according to whom Empedocles had been a pupil of Pythagoras[122], and it is probable that even the accounts of Porphyry and

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[118] On this point, see further Sassi 2009, pp. 209-210.

[119] Cf. DK 31 B2; B59. An eloquent example of such an error is provided by mortals' beliefs concerning generation and destruction, which are considered as implying the existence of What-Is-Not (cf. DK 31 B11; B15).

[120] Tr. Inwood with modifications.

[121] See, respectively, Porph. *VP* 30, Iamb. *VP* 67, D.L. VIII 54.

[122] Cf. D. L. 8.54 (= *FgrH* 566 F 14 Jacoby).

Iamblichus ultimately rested on the authority of the Sicilian historian[123]. Since Diogenes adds that others took the lines as referring to Parmenides, we may infer that Empedocles did not explicitly name the man, and that the latter's identification with either Pythagoras or Parmenides was due to their influence on Empedocles' thought. In particular, the sage's ability to embrace ten or twenty generations of men with his understanding was easily taken as an allusion to Pythagoras' extensive knowledge and his capacity of remembering his previous lives. In fact, the text's ambiguity is such that, while it can accommodate both interpretations, it does not guarantee either of the two[124]. However, regardless of the identity of the mysterious *tis*, Empedocles' description of the man's cognitive abilities reveals an interesting aspect which has been generally overlooked. Empedocles says that the sage's act of understanding consists in an extension of his *prapides*, whereby he is able to mentally visualize the "things which are" (*onta*) in twenty generations of men. Noticeably, the phrase μήκιστον πραπίδων ἐκτήσατο πλοῦτον is the same as that employed in fragment 132, with the difference that there the *prapides* were qualified as "divine"[125]. This implies that, I argue, exceptional as the capacities of the mysterious man may have been, they were nonetheless inferior to those of a god or a man who has acquired divine understanding. For a divine mind can encompass and see the cosmos in its entire temporal development without limitations, exactly as Empedocles alleges to be able to do in his poetic account. Indeed, whoever the mysterious man is, Empedocles is, in fact, superior to him[126].

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[123] Cf. Macris and Skarsouli 2012, pp. 359-362.

[124] For a detailed overview of the textual elements which might have led to think that the fragment alludes to Parmenides, see Rocca Serra 1987, pp. 269-272.

[125] Cf. DK 31 B132.1.

[126] Van der Ben correctly observes that it would be hard to think that Empedocles could credit one of his predecessors of such exceptional mental capacities, given his belief in his superior understanding of the natural world (cf. van der Ben 1975, p. 182). Van der Ben's remark, however, is based on the assumption that B129 contains a description of the ideal man endowed with godlike knowledge, while I think that it portrays the capacities of someone who still does not possess divine understanding. Indeed, the superlative "greatest" which qualifies the mysterious man's understanding should be taken as indicating the maximum extension attainable by a man before becoming a divinity.

As emerges from the foregoing considerations, Empedocles' self-presentation as a divine being serves to ensure both the truth of his account of the cosmos and the efficacy of his purificatory teachings. In fact, Empedocles' exceptional epistemic status and belief in his own divinity also explain his confidence in the reliability and superiority of his poetry over that of his rivals. For, differently from his competitors' partial accounts, Empedocles can provide a *logos* which offers a comprehensive explanation and understanding of the reality in which men live. Significantly, however, Empedocles' claim to poetic and philosophical primacy over rivals does not involve a total rejection of their doctrines. Rather, Empedocles appropriates some of his predecessors' doctrines and integrates them in his own account. This is the case, for example, of Parmenides' rejection of absolute generation and destruction, which Empedocles accepts as a fundamental premise for his system and is presented in terms which closely resembles Parmenides' formulation[127]. Similarly, god's description in B134, which denies the divinity anthropomorphic physical traits and represent it as a "holy mind" (*phrēn hierē*) features Xenophanean echoes[128]. However, Empedocles' inclusion of Parmenides' and Xenophanes' ideas in his work does not prevent him from stressing their inherent limitations. As shown above, Empedocles takes Parmenides as polemic target for his rejection of change and movement which, *de facto*, rendered cosmology illusionary, while, in B39, he labels as foolishness the idea that the earth is infinitely extended endorsed by Xenophanes[129]. In fact, Empedocles' appropriation of his predecessors' theories represents a further way of demonstrating his superiority over them, as he shows that they told just a part of the truth and needed to be integrated in a wider and more satisfactory cosmological account. Indeed, as a divine being,

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[127] Cf. DK 31 B12; B8; see also B17.30-33.
[128] Cf. *supra*, Chapter 2, pp. 69-71.
[129] Cf. DK 21 B28: "This upper limit of the earth is seen here a tour feet/ pushing up against the air, but below goes on without limit" (tr. Lesher).

Empedocles possesses a comprehensive understanding of reality which allows him to transcend the limits of mortal knowledge which, despite their insights, even his illustrious predecessors could not overcome.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analysed different instances of Empedocles' competitive stance towards his poetic and philosophical competitors and evaluated them against the background of his self-professed divinity.

First, I considered the agonistic implications of the term *stolos* at B17.26 and argued that it not only conveys a polemic reference to Parmenides, but also to Homeric and Hesiodic epic. Next, I examined Empedocles' relation with the Muse as emerging from the invocations of fragments B3 and B131. On the one hand, both passages reveal that Empedocles is not just a passive recipient of divine inspiration, but rather actively contributes to the poetic process; on the other hand, the use of the epithet πολυμνήστη in B3 testifies Empedocles' conviction of the fact that the Muse granted her favour to him only and, at the same time, that she deceived his poetic predecessors.

Empedocles' confidence in his poetic authority and, consequently, in his superiority over rivals finds its ultimate justification in his alleged divine status. For Empedocles' divine understanding grants him a comprehensive knowledge of the universe which inevitably outdoes the partial accounts of his competitors. Indeed, by integrating the doctrines of his predecessors in his own work, Empedocles further emphasizes their inherent limitedness, as they acquire full significance only within the wider context of his cosmology. Thus, Empedocles envisages a way to defeat his adversaries which, differently from the tradition, does not consist in the simple

replacement of previous accounts with his own, but, in fact, in their circumscription

under a unified poetic *logos* which accounts for every aspect of the cosmic life.

Chapter 5

Epicharmus and the staging of competition

In this chapter, I evaluate Epicharmus' approach to philosophical and poetic competition by analysing the so-called "philosophical fragments", which reveal his interest and involvement in the intellectual debates of the 5th century BCE. Since there are some doubts concerning the authenticity of these fragments, before starting the discussion, I will provide a brief overview of the issue, along with some information about Epicharmus' life and works.

Little is known about Epicharmus' life, and the testimonies in our possession are far from being unanimous. What can be regarded as certain is that he exercised his activity as comic playwright in Syracuse during the reign of Gelon (491-478 BCE) and Hiero (478-467 BCE)[1]. On the basis of this information, and considering ancient reports on his longevity[2], Epicharmus' life has been dated between 528-438 BCE[3]. He probably was native of Sicily, of Syracuse itself or of Megara Hyblaea, but the question is subject to debate[4]. Later sources associate Epicharmus with Pythagoreanism, as he was said to have been a follower of Pythagoras, although not belonging to the inner circle of his disciples[5]. Indeed, Iamblichus says that Epicharmus' published Pythagorean teachings

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[1] *Marm. Par.* 71; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.14.64; Suid. φ 609.
[2] Diogenes Laertius (8.78) says that Epicharmus lived 90 years, while according [Ps.]-Lucian (*Macr.* 25) he died at the age of 97.
[3] Cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 1996, pp. ix-x. On Epicharmus' chronology, see further Pickard-Cambridge 1962, pp. 230-232.
[4] According to the *Suda* (ε 2766), other possible birthplaces of Epicharmus were the Sicanian city of Crostos, the island of Cos, and Samos (cf. also D.L. 8.78). The testimonies about Cos and Samos are discarded as later inventions aimed at buttressing Epicharmus' alleged medical expertise (Cos was the seat of a famous medical school), or his connection to Pythagoras. As to Crostos, the information derives from *On Famous Men* by Neanthes (cf. St. Byz. 382.13), who usually is considered an unreliable source of information. Baron observes that it is unclear from Stephanos' text whether Epicharmus was actually included in Neanthes' book (cf. Baron's commentary to fragment BNJ 84 F13). Schorn thinks that Epicharmus was included (cf. Schorn 2007, p. 144). On these points, see further Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 1996, pp. xi-xii; Pickard-Cambridge 1962, pp. 236-237.
[5] Cf. Plu. *Num.* 8.17; D.L. 8.78; and especially, Iambl. *VP* 266.143: "And Epicharmus became one of the disciples outside the school, but he was not from the inner circle of men" (tr. Horky).

under the guise of comedy in order to avoid Hieron's opposition[6]. Despite doubts concerning the nature and extent of Epicharmus' relation to Pythagoreanism[7], such a tradition is significant, as it reflects the tendency, present in the Hellenistic world, of depicting Epicharmus as a wise man, whose works reveal his active engagement with the intellectual context in which he operated[8].

As regards his dramatic production, Epicharmus appears to have been a prolific writer, at least according to later testimonies which ascribe to him a number of comedies ranging from thirty-six to fifty-two[9]. Although detailed information about the content and plot of the comedies is lacking, the titles of Epicharmus' works in our possession suggest a thematic division in two main groups, i.e. comedies on mythical subjects and comedies about everyday life[10]. A reference to the judges of dramatic contests in one of the extant fragments[11] suggests that Epicharmus' comedies might have been performed in the context of dramatic competitions, on the model of those held in Athens during the City Dionysia[12]. Epicharmus' work gained a far-reaching reputation, and he was soon regarded as an authority in comedy. In fact, Epicharmus was credited, along with his rival Phormis, with the invention of comedy by Aristotle, as they first provided their works with plots which replaced previous improvisation[13].

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[6] Cf. Iambl. *VP* 266: "When he [sc. Epicharmus] arrived in Syracuse, he abstained from philosophizing openly because of Hieron's despotism, but he put the thoughts of the Pythagoreans in metre, and under the guise of foolery, published the secret teachings of Pythagoras" (tr. Horky).

[7] Pickard-Cambridge (1962, p. 235) and Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (1996, p. xiii) say that Epicharmus' relation to Pythagoras is chronologically possible, but the fragments do not contain any clear reference to Pythagorean doctrines. Horky has recently argued that Epicharmus was one of the so-called "mathematical" Pythagoreans, who made use of the principles of mathematics in order to provide demonstrations in their enquiries about the world (cf. Horky 2013, pp. 131-137; on mathematical Pythagoreans, see *ibidem*, pp. 3-35).

[8] An eloquent indication of Epicharmus' fame is provided by the inscription engraved on his statue in Syracuse, which celebrates his superior wisdom: "If the great shining sun surpasses to some degree/in some measure the stars, and the sea is mightier than the rivers,/ I say that to the same extent Epicharmus is superior in wisdom, whom [his] fatherland crowned, this of the Syracusans.".

[9] Cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 1996, pp. xiv-xv.

[10] Cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 1996, pp. xv-xvi. For a reconstruction of the content of Epicharmus' comedies, see Pickard-Cambridge 1962, pp. 255-276.

[11] Fragment F 316 Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén.

[12] On this point, cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 1996, p. xiv, with references; Pickard-Cambridge 1962, pp. 284-285. On the presence of dramatic competitions in Sicily, see further Wilson 2007, pp. 351-366.

[13] Cf. Arist. *Po.* 1448a30, 1449b5 (for later testimonies, see Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 1996, pp. 4-6).

In addition to his comic production, Epicharmus was considered the author of a series of works which, according to the testimony of Diogenes' Laertius, dealt with natural philosophy, medicine, and gnomic wisdom[14]. Diogenes' information that these writings contained acrostics indicating Epicharmus' authorship proves their spuriousness, since the practice of including acrostics in literary works is of Hellenistic character. The inauthenticity of these works makes it plausible to think that Diogenes refers to the Pseudoepicharmean corpus, whose existence was already known at the end of the 4th century BCE, as testified from a passage by Athenaeus in which it is reported that Aristoxenus of Tarentum and Philochorus of Athens (both operating between the 4th and 3rd century BCE) declared the spuriousness of the *Politeia*, the *Canon* and the *Maxims*, which circulated under the name of Epicharmus[15]. As in the case of the stories about Epicharmus' relation to Pythagoreanism mentioned above, Pseudoepicharmean writings provide an important piece of evidence regarding the playwright's reputation as a wise man[16]. Indeed, their very existence is a further indication of the fact that

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Related to Epicharmus' invention of comedy is the debated issue about his influence on Attic comedy: for an overview and discussion of the different positions, see Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 1996, pp. xviii-xix; Cassio 1985, pp. 39-43; Pickard-Cambridge 1962, pp. 285-288.

[14] Cf. D.L. 8.78: "He [sc. Epicharmus] has left memoirs containing his physical, ethical and medical doctrines, and he has made marginal notes in most of the memoirs, which clearly show that they were written by him" (tr. Hicks, with modifications).

[15] Cf. Ath. 14.648d: "The authors of the poems attributed to Epicharmus are familiar with the [word] *hēmina*, and the following is said in the work entitled *Cheiron* [...]. Well-known individuals produced these Pseudepichrmean texts and according to Aristoxenus in Book VIII of the *Civic Laws*, the pipe-player Chrysogonus wrote the one entitled *Politeia*. Philochorus in his *On Prophecy*, on the other hand, claims that Axiopistus, whose family was from either Locris or Sycion, is the author of the *Canon* and the *Maxims*" (tr. Olson 2011, with modifications). The work *Cheiron* is thought to have been about medicine, since in myth the centaur Cheiron was famous for his healing art. Kaibel argues for the existence of an independent poem *On Nature*, but this hypothesis is considered as implausible (cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 1996, pp. xxxv-xxxvi; Pickard-Cambridge 1962, p. 240).

[16] Significant in this respect is the portrait of Epicharmus emerging from the programmatic statement contained in the introduction to the *Maxims* of Axiopostus, which has partially survived in a papyrus dated between 280-240 B.C.E. The emphasis on Epicharmus' witty maxims and pieces of advice is reminiscent of the traditional depiction of wise men, in particular the Seven Sages. The text is as follows (*P. Hibeh* 1 = F [356] Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén): "Within this book are many and manifold advices for you to use towards a friend or foe, while speaking in the courts, or the assembly, towards the rogue or the gentleman, towards the stranger, towards the quarrelsome, the drunkard and the vulgar or any other plagues that you can find - for them too there is a sting within my book. Within it too are maxims wise; obey them, and you will be a cleverer and a better man for all events. You need no lengthy speech, only a single one of these proverbs; bring round to your subject whichever of them is apt […] I composed this book of rules to make the world exclaim 'Epicharmus was a wise man, who uttered many witty sayings of many kinds in single verses: himself he let us test his skill in brevity of speech as well'" (tr. Page). On the

intellectual and philosophical speculation played a prominent role in Epicharmus' comedies[17].

With regard to Epicharmus' philosophical contribution, five[18] fragments reported by Diogenes Laertius are of particular interest, as they provide an example of how the discussion of philosophical issues could have been integrated in comic dialogue. However, as anticipated above, the authenticity of these "philosophical" fragments is controversial. The major doubts come from the fact that Diogenes quotes the fragment from the treatise *To Amyntas* by Alcimus, a fourth-century Sicilian historian author of *Sikelika*[19], who wrote his work with the explicit intention to demonstrate that Plato plagiarized Epicharmus' philosophical ideas. This led many scholars to consider the fragments as forgeries by Alcimus himself, which he intentionally composed to strengthen his charges against Plato, or as derived from Pseudoepicharmean writings[20]. A detailed analysis of the problem is beyond the scope of the present work, but, for the sake of the following discussion, let it suffice to say that, although the question cannot be settled once and for all, many scholars have advanced persuasive arguments in favour of the fragments' authenticity, which can be thus summarized: 1) at closer inspection, the fragments do not show clear parallels to Plato's philosophy, which would be strange if the fragments had been deliberately falsified by Alcimus[21]; 2) differently

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tradition of Epicharmus as a wise man, see further Battezzato 2008, pp. 8-9.

[17] On this point, see Álvarez Salas 2007a, p. 125; Cassio 1985, p. 43; Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 1996, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

[18] Diogenes Laertius actually reports four passages from Alcimus, but the first one was divided in two by Diels in his edition of the fragments, namely DK 23 B1 and B2.

[19] This according to a shared scholarly consensus. By contrast, the further identification of Alcimus with the famous rhetorician pupil of Stilpo is debated. Cassio argues that Alcimus probably was a member of the intellectual circle which gathered around Dionysus II, political adversary of Dion and Plato, who promoted a policy aimed at the exaltation of Sicilian patriotism (cf. Cassio 1985, p. 45). The addressee of Alcimus' work, Amyntas, was probably Amyntas of Heracleia, a mathematician pupil of Plato, while Jacoby thought that he could have been the Amyntas son of Perdicca III of Macedonia and nephew of Philip. On Alcimus and his work, see further Álvarez Salas 2007c, pp. 27-28; Pickard-Cambridge 1962, p. 247.

[20] A recent example of this interpretative trend is provided by the edition of Epicharmus' fragments by Kassel and Austin in *Poetae Comici Greci*, in which the fragments are assigned to the *Pseudepicharmeia*. For an overview and discussion of the scholarly debate, see Álvarez Salas 2007c, p. 28 n. 20.

[21] Cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012, p. 89; Menn 2010, pp. 66-67 (specifically for fragment B2); Álvarez Salas 2007, p. 28; Pickard-Cambridge 1962, p. 247.

from the *Pseudepicharmeia*, the fragments are written in dialogic form[22]; 3) they display a parodic intent[23]; 4) they are written in correct Doric dialect, without artificial or false forms[24]; 5) they do not contain the references to later Pythagoreanism which characterized the *Pseudepicharmeia*[25].

Working on the hypothesis that the fragments preserved by Alcimus are genuine, in what follows, I will examine Epicharmus' allusions to contemporary philosophical speculation contained therein (section 5.1). Then, I will consider Epicharmus' parodic use of philosophy and evaluate it against the background of the development of rhetoric in 5th century Sicily (section 5.2).

5.1 – Epicharmus' philosophical fragments: paradoxes and parodies

Epicharmus' philosophical fragments contain parodic allusions to contemporary speculation which reveal an original and critical approach to the intellectual debate of his time. In this section, I will evaluate Epicharmus' representation of philosophical ideas starting from the analysis of fragment B2 on the so-called 'Growing Argument', which features Pythagorean and Eleatic echoes, and had lasting influence on later philosophy. Next, I will consider fragment B1, B4 and B5 which hint at Xenophanes' theological views and Heraclitus' conception of wisdom, devoting particular attention to Epicharmus' use of the term φύσις against the background of Presocratic speculation.

Epicharmus' fragment B2 stages a dialogue between two people, one of whom tries to demonstrate the non-persistence of human identity by means of an argument based on an analogy between numbers and natural objects. The text runs as follows:

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[22] Cf. Pickard-Cambridge *loc. cit.*; Álvarez Salas 2007, p. 32; Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén *loc. cit.*
[23] Cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén *loc. cit.*; Pickard-Cambridge *loc. cit.*.
[24] Cf. Álvarez Salas 2007c, pp. 29-30 and *passim*.
[25] Cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén *loc. cit.*; Álvarez Salas 2007c, p. 29.

(A)—αἰ πὸτ ἀριθμόν τις περισσόν, αἰ δὲ λῆις, πὸτ ἄρτιον,
ποτθέμειν λῆι ψᾶφον ἢ καὶ τᾶν ὑπαρχουσᾶν λαβεῖν,
ἦ δοκεῖ κά τοί γ᾽ <ἔθ᾽> ωὑτὸς εἶμεν; (B)—οὐκ ἐμίν γά κα.
(A)—οὐδὲ μὰν οὐδ᾽ αἰ ποτὶ μέτρον παχυαῖον ποτθέμειν
λῆι τις ἕτερον μᾶκος ἢ τοῦ πρόσθ᾽ ἐόντος ἀποταμεῖν,
ἔτι χ᾽ ὑπάρχοι κῆνο τὸ μέτρον; (B)—οὐ γάρ. (A)—ὦδε νῦν ὄρη
καὶ τὸς ἀνθρώπους· ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὔξεθ᾽, ὁ δέ γα μὰν φθίνει,
ἐν μεταλλαγᾶι δὲ πάντες ἐντὶ πάντα τὸν χρόνον.
ὃ δὲ μεταλλάσσει κατὰ φύσιν κοὔποκ᾽ ἐν ταὐτῶι μένει,
ἕτερον εἴη κα τόδ᾽ ἤδη τοῦ παρεξεστακότος,
καὶ τὺ δὴ κἀγὼ χθὲς ἄλλοι καὶ νὺν ἄλλοι τελέθομες,
καῦθις ἄλλοι κοὔποχ᾽ αὐτοὶ κὰτ τὸν ... λόγον.

(A)— If one wanted to add a pebble to an odd number, or, if you like, to an even
number or also to take away one of those there, do you think that it would stay the
same? (B)— Not I. (A)— Nor if you wanted to add to a cubit length another length,
or cut it off from what was there would the length remain. (B)— Certainly not.
(A)— Now look also at men in the same way. One grows, another dwindles
and all are in the process of changing all the time.
What changes by nature and never stays in the same state would be now something
differently from what has undergone the change. Also you and I were different
yesterday, and today we turned out to be different, and again different [tomorrow],
and never the same according to this …. argument.

DK 23 B2[26]

The analogy upon which the argument is grounded rests on the assumption of

Pythagorean derivation that number is an essential property of material objects, and

thereby an object can be individuated and identified through the specification of its

components in numerical terms[27]. Starting from these premises, since human beings are

in a constant state of change, that is, they grow and dwindle continuously, one cannot

say that a person is the same as he was yesterday, nor that he will remain the same

tomorrow. Striking and paradoxical as it may seem, in antiquity Epicharmus' dialogue

was regarded as the first explicit formulation of the so-called "Growing Argument"

(*auxomenos logos*), which became the object of an intense debate in Hellenistic

philosophy, especially between Stoics and Academics[28]. In addition, Menn has recently

argued that Epicharmus' Growing argument was a matter of concern for Plato as well,

who, in the *Pheado* (96c3-97b3), uses a similar argumentation to demonstrate that the

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[26] Text and translation after Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén.
[27] On this point, see Horky 2013, pp. 134-136, Sedley 1982, pp. 256-257.
[28] Cf. Plut. *Comm. Not.* 1083a; Anon. *in Pl. Tht.* 71.5-26. On the Growing Argument in Hellenistic
philosophy, see Sedley 1982, pp. 256-257 and *passim*; Sorabji 2006, pp. 38-39.

equation of growth with addition, as in Anaxagoras' philosophy, fails to account for the persistence of personal identity[29]. Broadly speaking, Epicharmus' dialogue appears to reflect the broader interest in growth and generation which characterized Presocratic natural enquiry. In fact, in the *Theaetetus*, Plato credits Epicharmus with a fluxist ontology directly opposed to Parmenides' unique and unchangeable Being, and associates him with other wise men who endorsed a similar position, namely Protagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles and Homer[30]. Indeed, the text itself reveals Epicharmus' acquaintance with Eleatic ontology, as indicated by the phrase ἐν ταὐτῶι μένει, which recalls Parmenides' B8.29: ταὐτόν τ᾽ ἐν ταὐτῶι τε μένον καθ᾽ ἑαυτό τε κεῖται ("remaining the same and in the same state, it lies by itself")[31].

Epicharmus' interest in contemporary philosophical debates is further revealed by fragment B1, which contains an argument against the generation of gods:

> (A)— ἀλλ᾽ ἀεί τοι θεοὶ παρῆσαν χὐπέλιπον οὐ πώποκα,
> τάδε δ᾽ ἀεὶ πάρεσθ᾽ ὁμοῖα διά τε τῶν αὐτῶν ἀεί.
> (B)—ἀλλὰ λέγεται μὰν Χάος πρᾶτον γενέσθαι τῶν θεῶν.
> (A)—πῶς δέ κ᾽; ἀμήχανον γ᾽ ἀπό τινος μηδ᾽ ἐς ὅ τι πρᾶτον μόλοι[32].

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[29] Cf. Menn 2010, pp. 39-50. Menn also notices that a similar argument was later employed by the author of one of the *Dissoi Logoi* (DK 90 5.13-15). On the connection between Epicharmus' Growing Argument and the passage of the *Phaedo* mentioned above, see also Álvarez Salas 2007c, pp. 42-44.

[30] Cf. Pl. *Tht*. 152e1-9. Plato's inclusion of Epicharmus among the fluxists is probably derived from the *Synagōgē* by Hippias of Elis, cf. Álvarez Salas 2009b, pp. 227-241. On this tradition, see also Horky 2013, p. 136 n. 41. On the role of Hippias' work in Plato's and Aristotle's reconstruction of Presocratic philosophy, see further Mansfeld 1990, pp. 22-96.

[31] Tr. Coxon. On this point, see also Horky *loc. cit*. Notice also that in fragment B8.6-10 Parmenides appears to equate growth with generation (cf. McKirahan 2008, pp. 193-194): τίνα γὰρ γένναν διζήσεαι αὐτοῦ;/ πῆι πόθεν αὐξηθέν; οὐδ᾽ ἐκ μὴ ἐόντος ἐάσσω/φάσθαι σ᾽ οὐδὲ νοεῖν […] τί δ᾽ ἄν μιν καὶ χρέος ὦρσεν/ ὕστερον ἢ πρόσθεν, τοῦ μηδενὸς ἀρξάμενον, φῦν; "For what generation of it will you look for? How and whence grown? I shall not let you say or think from What-Is-Not […] and then what necessity in fact could have urged it to begin and spring up later or before from What-Is-Not?" (tr. Coxon, with modifications). This might be behind Epicharmus' idea that accretion entails the generation of a new individual. Similarly, Empedocles speaks of growth and destruction in terms of accretion and diminution (e.g. DK 31 B26.2 ; cf. Horky 2013, p. 140).

[32] The line is corrupted and has been variously emended by editors. Here I follow Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén's edition, as it is, I think, the most adherent to manuscripts. The first issue regards the phrase πῶς δέ κ᾽; ἀμήχανον, which is reported by all manuscripts, but is usually emended for metrical reasons (to avoid a dactyl in the first tetrameter). Proposed corrections include: 1) πῶς δέ; ἀμάχανον (Lorenz), with ἀμήχανον replaced by the Doric form of the adjective; 2) πῶς δὲ κα; μὴ ἔχον (Diels, Kassel-Austin). However, such emendations are, in fact, not necessary when one considers that 1) Epicharmus frequently employs the dactyl in that particular position (cf. Álvarez Salas 2007c, p. 34 n. 35); 2) given the presence of other terms borrowed by Ionic dialect in the fragment (see below), the form ἀμήχανον can be accepted. The other problem concerns μηδ᾽ ἐς, Diels' emendation of μηδὲς/ μηδὲν reported by manuscripts. Some

(B)—οὐκ ἄρ᾽ ἔμολε πρᾶτον οὐδέν; (A)—οὐδὲ μὰ Δία δεύτερον   5
τῶνδέ γ᾽ ὧν ἁμὲς νῦν ὧδε †λέγω μέλλει τάδ᾽ εἶναι†·

(A)— But the gods were always and never failed to be,
and these things are always alike and in the same way always.
(B)— But Chaos is said to be the first-born of the gods.
(A)—And how? Where it could come from or go to would be inconceivable.
(B)— Then did nothing come first? (A)— No, by Zeus, nor second
at least none of the things of which † we are now talking about.

<div align="center">DK 23 B1[33]</div>

Speaker A undermines the popular belief about the birth of gods held by his interlocutor,
first by claiming that gods always existed in the same state, and then by arguing against
the idea that Chaos came as first in the succession of divine generations, as told by
Hesiod in the *Theogony*[34]. The notion that the gods are everlasting had been already
maintained by Pherecydes of Syros and endorsed by Xenophanes in the context of his
criticism of anthropomorphic conceptions of the divine[35]. Xenophanes' influence is
further recognizable in the doctrine of divine unchangeability, which was one of the
attributes of the greatest god[36]. Noticeably, such views are supported by the employment
of Eleatic argumentation, as shown by the recourse to *reductio* at line 5, which echoes
Parmenides' demonstration that What-Is is ungenerated[37]. In fact, the passage as a whole
can be seen as an allusion to Ionic philosophical speculation, as indicated by the
presence of terms borrowed from the Ionic dialect which deviate from the everyday
Syracusan language usually spoken by Epicharmus' characters. For instance, the Ionic
form παρῆσαν replaces the Doric παρῆν in fragment, while ἀμήχανος at line 4 to

editors have proposed alternative emendations such as εἶμεν (Hermann) or ενθὲν (Kaibel), which
however, I consider too intrusive. Incidentally, given the corruption of μηδὲς/ μηδὲν, an acceptable
emendation would be, I think, ἠδ᾽ ἐς (cf. Carrière 1979, p. 205) which would avoid a μηδέ without
correlative.

[33] Text and translation after Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén.

[34] Cf. Hes. *Th*. 116.

[35] Cf. Pherecydes, fragment DK 7 B1: "Zeus and Chronos and Chthonie were from all eternity"; on
Xenophanes, cf. Chapter 2, p. 65.

[36] Cf. DK 21 B26; on this point, see Chapter 2, pp. 68-69.

[37] On this point, see also Álvarez Salas 2007c, p.35; Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012, p. 91. While the
impossibility of telling from what Chaos would come recalls Parmenides' rejection of generation *ex
nihilo*, the claim that it would be inconceivable towards what Chaos would go should be taken, I think, as
an allusion to the Principle of Sufficient Reason: if Chaos came first, there would be no goal/reason
which could explain why it came to be. Compare Parmenides' B8.9-10.

indicate impossibility recalls Eleatic usages, as shown by a parallel passage in Empedocles' fragment B12, which contains a rejection of generation from nothing modelled on Parmenidean arguments[38].

The recourse to philosophical argumentation was probably meant to produce a parodic effect, especially since it actively contributed to the comic development of the plot. For example, Plutarch tells us that Epicharmus used the Growing Argument to prove that a debtor who borrowed money yesterday does not owe it any more, since he is no longer the same individual; or that a man invited for dinner yesterday can be sent away today because, having become another person, in fact came without invitation[39]. The comic intent of philosophical allusions is further suggested by two other fragments quoted by Alcimus, namely B4 and B5, in which scientific-like observation on animal behaviour serves to demonstrate, respectively, that animals possess *sophia* and that, like humans, they are attracted by the members of their own species. The text of B4 runs as follows:

> Εὔμαιε, τὸ σοφόν ἐστιν οὐ καθ᾽ ἓν μόνον,
> ἀλλ᾽ ὅσσαπερ ζῆι, πάντα καὶ γνώμαν ἔχει.
> καὶ γὰρ τὸ θῆλυ τῶν ἀλεκτορίδων γένος,
> αἰ λῆις καταμαθεῖν, ἀτενὲς οὐ τίκτει τέκνα
> ζῶντ᾽, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπώιζει καὶ ποιεῖ ψυχὰν ἔχειν.
> τὸ δὲ σοφὸν ἁ φύσις τόδ᾽ οἶδεν ὡς ἔχει
> μόνα· πεπαίδευται γὰρ αὐταύτας ὕπο.

> Eumaeus, wisdom is not confined to one kind alone,
> but everything that lives also has understanding.
> For if you will study intently the hen among poultry,
> she does not bring forth the chicks alive,
> but sits clucking on the eggs and wakens life in them.
> As for this wisdom of hers, only nature knows how it has it:
> for the hen has learnt it from herself[40].

<div align="right">DK 23 B4</div>

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[38] Cf. DK 31 B12: "For it is impossible that there should be coming to be from what is not (ἔκ τε γὰρ οὐδάμ᾽ ἐόντος ἀμήχανόν ἐστι γενέσθαι), and that what is should be destroyed is unaccomplishable and unheard of; for it will always be there, wherever one may push it on every occasion" (tr. Inwood). On the language of Epicharmus' fragment, cf. Álvarez Salas 2007c, pp. 33-34.

[39] Cf. Plut. *De sera* 559b. On this point, see further below.

[40] Tr. Santoro with modifications.

The idea that wisdom is shared by all animals appears to be a parodic distortion of Heraclitus' doctrine about the uniqueness of *sophia*, which he states in fragments DK 22 B32 in terms echoed by Epicharmus: "One thing, the only wise thing, is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus" (ἓν τὸ σοφὸν μοῦνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα)[41]. Indeed, Epicharmus' choice of the hen, an animal proverbially renowned for its limited intellectual capacities, as an instance of wisdom starkly contrasts with Heraclitus' divine principle which rules the cosmos[42]. The wisdom possessed by hens and, broadly speaking, all living beings appears to be a purely natural instinct, as emphasized by the fact that they have learned it by themselves. Epicharmus' appeal to nature (*phusis*) to explain hens' instinct has been the object of scholarly debate, especially as regards the meaning of the term φύσις. On the one hand, some have taken the term as indicating 'Nature', that is, the personified order of things distinct from things themselves, and therefore have cast doubts on the authenticity of the fragment, pointing out that such conception of nature was first proposed in Sophistic circles only at the end of the 5th century BCE[43]. On the other hand, it has been argued that Epicharmus' use of φύσις is consistent with the common meaning that the term has in Presocratic speculation, namely that of 'individual nature', or 'genuine structure/real constitution' of a thing, which determines its characteristics/behaviour[44]. According to this reading, then, hatching is integral part of the nature of the hen or, in other words, an essential characteristic of what it is to be a hen. This interpretation is, I argue, to be preferred, especially in the light of Epicharmus' fragment B10: "nature itself of humans:

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[41] DK 22 B32, tr. Robinson.

[42] DK 22 B32. See also DK 22 B41: "The wise is a single thing (or, with different punctuation "one thing, the wise thing [is]"): knowing the plan which steers all things through all things". While these fragments have raised many interpretative issues which I cannot address extensively here, scholars agree in considering them as an expression of Heraclitus' belief in the existence of only *one* kind of wisdom, which appears to consist in the understanding of the cosmic order (for a discussion of the fragments, see Robinson 1987, pp. 102; 107-108; Kahn 1979, pp. 17-172; 267-268; Kirk 1954, pp. 386-397; Marcovich 1967, pp. 444-448).

[43] On this point, see Pickard-Cambridge 1962, p. 254 n. 1; Álvarez Salas 2007c, p. 60.

[44] Cf. Kahn 1979, p. 99; Kirk 1954, pp. 228-231; Álvarez Salas *loc. cit.*

puffed-up wineskins (αὖτα φύσις ἀνθρώπων ἀσκοὶ πεφυσαμένοι)[45]". Noticeably, the fragment is modelled on the definition-like sentences typical of Archaic wisdom, such as the sayings attributed to the Seven Sages and Pythagorean *akousmata*[46]. The use of φύσις in such a context indicates that in Epicharmus the term indeed refers to the individual nature of a thing, as further emphasized by the use of αὖτα, which hints at the essential and basic constitution of the thing whose definition is provided[47].

A further indication that Epicharmus employs the term φύσις in the sense of 'individual nature/constitution' comes from fragment B5, in which he took animals as an example to illustrate that like is attracted by like. The text runs as follows:

> θαυμαστὸν οὐδὲν ἀμὲ ταῦθ᾽ οὕτω λέγειν
> καὶ ἀνδάνειν αὐτοῖσιν αὐτοὺς καὶ δοκεῖν
> καλῶς πεφύκειν· καὶ γὰρ ἁ κύων κυνί
> κάλλιστον εἶμεν φαίνεται, καὶ βοῦς βοΐ,
> ὄνος δ(ὲ) ὄνωι κάλλιστον, ὗς δέ θην ὑί.
>
> No wonder that we say these things so
> and that we are pleasing ourselves and that we seem to ourselves
> to be beautiful: for also dog seems most beautiful to dog,
> and ox to ox, and donkey most beautiful to donkey, and pig to pig

DK 23 B5[48]

In order to describe men's belief in their own beauty, Epicharmus uses the phrase δοκεῖν καλῶς πεφύκειν. In this context, the perfect πεφύκειν, from φύω, bears, I argue, the same "technical" connotation of φύσις of the previous fragments[49]. For the point of the fragment is exactly that animals find attractive the members of their own species, namely individuals with a particular nature and specific characteristics. Indeed, it is because of such particular characteristics/conformation that animals find their fellows

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[45] DK 23 B10 (= F 166 K.-A.). Tr. Horky 2013.
[46] Cf. Horky 2013, p. 135 n. 39; see also Chapter 3, p. 112 n. 132.
[47] It is beyond of the scope of my work to evaluate the philosophical implications of Epicharmus' "definition" of human being. An interesting attempt can be found in Álvarez Salas 2007b, pp. 121-129. It is worth noticing that the phrase αὖτα φύσις is employed by Philolaus (F 6 Huffman), cf. Horky 2013, p. 135 n. 39.
[48] Text and translation after Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén.
[49] Xenophanes, DK 21 B32: ἥν τ᾽ Ἶριν καλέουσι, νέφος καὶ τοῦτο πέφυκε,/ πορφύρεον καὶ φοινίκεον καὶ χλωρὸν ἰδέσθαι; "And she whom they call Iris, this too is by nature a cloud/ purple, red and greenish-yellow to behold" (tr. Lesher).

"naturally" beautiful. It is worth noticing that Epicharmus' use of animals in the fragment alludes to Xenophanes' B15, in which anthropomorphic conceptions of the divine are ridiculed by drawing a comparison with oxen, horses and lions, which, if they had hands, would depicts gods with their own physical features. As in Epicharmus, Xenophanes' criticism is based upon the idea that like is attracted to like, as implied by fragment B16, in which it is observed that ethnic groups attribute to the divinity their own physical traits. Indeed, Xenophanes' sarcastic remark is rendered even more pointed by Epicharmus, as he replaces the nobler lions and horses mentioned by Xenophanes with more rustic and vulgar animals, which hardly would be taken as examples of beauty[50].

As emerges from the foregoing discussion, by means of a clever system of allusions, Epicharmus managed to create striking parodies of contemporary philosophical doctrines, which he skilfully integrated in the plots of his comedies. However, as shown by the case of the Growing Argument, Epicharmus did not limit himself to make use of already existent doctrines, but also formulated original arguments which had a lasting influence on later philosophical debate. This fact makes one wonder whether Epicharmus' treatment of philosophical ideas has a function which goes beyond mere parody. In fact, in a series of studies devoted to Epicharmus' relation to Presocratic wisdom, Álvarez Salas argues that the playwright's use of parody served to attack and criticize contemporary philosophers, especially Xenophanes, who appeared to be one of his favourite targets, and Parmenides, whose theory of Being was opposed by the fluxist theory hinted at in the Growing Argument[51]. Although Salas' interpretation has much to be commended, especially for drawing the attention to Epicharmus' active involvement in the intellectual debate of his time, some

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[50] Cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012, p. 95 and Álvarez Salas 2007b, pp. 129-135.
[51] On Epicharmus' relation to Xenophanes, see Álvarez Salas 2007b; on the Growing argument as a criticism of Parmenides' ontology, see Álvarez Salas 2007c pp. 39-41.

considerations suggest another reading of his use of philosophical arguments, which reveals, I argue, an original stance on philosophical and poetic competition.

First of all, while a parodic intent in the fragments cannot be denied given their integration in the comic plot, it is hard to prove, as Salas aims to do, that they must be read as a criticism of the philosophical doctrines contained therein. As regards Epicharmus' polemic against Xenophanes, for example, Salas bases his interpretation on the following sentence in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (Γ 1010a5-7), which, however, is desperately ambiguous: "For this reason they [sc. natural philosophers] speak plausibly, but do not say the truth (to speak in this way is more fitting than the way in which Epicharmus spoke with regard to Xenophanes)" (διὸ εἰκότως μὲν λέγουσιν, οὐκ ἀληθῆ δὲ λέγουσιν (οὕτω γὰρ ἁρμόττει μᾶλλον εἰπεῖν ἢ ὥσπερ Ἐπίχαρμος εἰς Ξενοφάνην)). To solve the ambiguity of the phrase, Salas relies on the commentary by Alexander of Aphrodisias, who affirms that Epicharmus harshly insulted Xenophanes and ridiculed him for his "ignorance of the things that are" (*agnōsia tōn ontōn*). However, as noted by Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén, we have no evidence that Alexander's testimony was based on actual knowledge of Epicharmus' passage alluded to by Aristotle and his reading might just be a gloss on Aristotle's words[52]. Actually, personal insult does not seem to have been a characteristic of Epicharmus' style[53], and the phrase "ignorance of the things that are" sounds more like a gloss on Aristotle's text than a paraphrase of Epicharmus' actual words. As argued by Lesher, Aristotle's remark probably means that Epicharmus affirmed that what Xenophanes said was true, but not plausible[54]. In fact, a curious comment like this could make better sense of Aristotle's reference to Epicharmus, especially considering that he used the reverse formulation to qualify his predecessors' theories. But even when one considers the parody of Xenophanean

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[52] Cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012, p. 95 n. 74.
[53] Cf. Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén *loc. cit.*
[54] Cf. Lesher 1992, p. 201 n. 16.

positions, such as in fragment B5, Epicharmus' purported criticism is not as evident as it might seem. Salas argues for Epicharmus' parodic and critical intent by emphasizing the gap between Xenophanes' serious theological objection and Epicharmus' downgrade of the argument to the "vulgar" level of aesthetic attraction[55]. However, the distance between the two poets is dramatically reduced when we think that even Xenophanes' fragment B15 on animals can hardly be considered as a proper argument against anthropomorphism and should be rather seen as an example of traditional mockery, such as that typical of iambic poetry[56]. But even if one were to accept Xenophanes' satire as an argument, as illustrated above, it would still appeal to aesthetic considerations: for humans' representations of the divine are ultimately based on their belief concerning beauty. In fact, even Salas appears to concede that the idea of parody does not necessarily entail criticism. For, I would say, if this were the case, one should think the same for the Growing Argument which, by contrast, Salas interprets as a serious objection to Parmenides' ontology and the first coherent theorization of a fluxist ontology[57]. Indeed, given the ridiculous consequences of the recourse to the argument on the part of the quack-philosopher, we could be entitled to think of Epicharmus' passage as a parody of the very philosophical doctrine about perennial change expounded in those lines.

In fact, at closer inspection, Epicharmus' B2 neither appears to provide a general theory of flux nor a proper argument against Parmenidean ontology. For it should be noticed that the non-persistence of men's identity is due to the fact that human beings belong to the class of things which change by nature (κατὰ φύσιν) and never stay in the same state (κοὔποκ᾿ ἐν ταὐτῶι μένει). It is because of this property that the parallel with numbers and measurable objects actually holds. Indeed, since, as I have argued above,

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[55] Álvarez Salas 2007b, p. 132.
[56] On this point, see Chapter 2, pp. 64-65.
[57] Cf. Álvarez Salas 2009b, p. 258

in Epicharmus the term φύσις indicates an individual's particular nature/characteristic, the argument is not based on the assumption that everything undergoes a perennial state of change, as one would expect by a fluxist ontology, but only on the fact that there are specific classes of things which, because of their constitution, are in a constant process of alteration[58]. As regards the supposed criticism of Parmenides, it should be noticed that, although apparently contradicting Parmenides' philosophy, in fact, the Growing Argument does not disprove the doctrine of What-Is, since, according to Parmenides, change is logically impossible. Actually, as shown by Sedley, the Growing Argument might be used as a way to demonstrate the concepts of change and growth are philosophically incoherent, since for a statement of the type "X has changed" to have sense, the same X should have, for example, a property a at a certain time t1 and not at a successive time t2. But the Growing Argument proves exactly that X is not the same at any time of the process[59]. Quite strikingly, then, Epicharmus' argument might even be used to demonstrate the absurdity of the notion of change and thereby to respond to the critics of Parmenidean ontology, in a way not too dissimilar to that later adopted by Zeno in his paradoxes against motion. For from the assumption that things alter, it follows the paradoxical denial of the persistence of personal identity. This does not mean, however, that I consider Epicharmus as a supporter of Eleaticism. In fact, I am inclined to think that, rather than attacking or promoting specific philosophical theories, Epicharmus was more interested in exploring the competitive potential of philosophically inspired argumentation. In order to better understand the latter claim, I now turn to consider Epicharmus' philosophical fragments within the context of early rhetorical argumentation.

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[58] Of course, such a statement could be easily read as (or even turned into) an endorsement of a general theory of flux, like Plato did in the *Theaetetus*. It is worth remembering that in the same passage, Plato claims that Homer is a fluxist because he said that all things were born from Ocean (cf. Pl. *Tht*. 152e1-9).

[59] On this point, cf. Sedley 1982, pp. 257-258.

5.2 – Epicharmus and the beginnings of rhetoric

I begin my analysis of Epicharmus' relation to rhetoric by considering the testimony about the Growing Argument contained in an anonymous papyrus commentary on the *Theaetetus*, according to which Epicharmus created a scene in which the Argument was used in a judicial setting. The text runs as follows:

> κα[ὶ ἐκω]μῴδησεν αὐτὸ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀπαιτουμένου συμβολὰς καὶ [ἀ]ρνουμένου τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἶναι διὰ τὸ τὰ μὲν προσγεγενῆσθαι, τὰ δὲ ἀπεληλυθέναι, ἐπεὶ δὲ ὁ ἀπαιτῶν ἐτ[ύ]πτησεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐνεκαλεῖτο, πάλιν κ[ἀ]κείνου [φά]σκοντος [ἄλλ]ο μὲ[ν] ε[ἶ]ναι τὸν τ[ετυ]πτηκότα, ἕτερο[ν δὲ] τὸν ἐγκαλούμενον.

> He [sc. Epicharmus] made a comic scene out of this [sc. the Growing Argument] about a man who is asked to pay his debts and says that he is not the same person, because something has been added and something else taken away; then, when the creditor has beaten him and has been taken into court because of that, in turn he too replies that the one who has beaten is one thing and the one who has been taken to court another.

Anon. *in Pl. Tht.* 71.26-40[60]

The scene described by the anonymous commentator confirms Plutarch's testimony about the plot of Epicharmus' comedy on the Growing Argument[61]: character A (presumably the main speaker of fragments B2) owes money to character B, but refuses to pay by arguing that he is no longer the same person who contracted the debt. Thanks to the commentary we are now told the additional information that, after A's refusal, B beats him and thereby is taken to the tribunal. There, if you allow me the joke, B pays A back in his own coin, since he defends himself by arguing that he is no longer the person who beat A, and thus cannot be punished. Such a reversal probably provided an effective finale for the comedy, in a way similar to Aristophanes' *Clouds*, in which Pheidippides turns against his father the philosophical arguments which the old man had obliged him to learn to avoid paying his debts[62]. The importance of the anonymous

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[60] Text by Kassel-Austin, who follow the edition of Bastianini and Sedley; tr. after Willi, with modifications. On the text, see further Battezzato 2008, pp. 13-16.

[61] Cf. above.

[62] Cf. Ar. *Nu*. 1409ff.

commentary, however, goes beyond the fact that it provides us with more details about the comedy's plot and the role that the Growing Argument played in its development and conclusion. Most interestingly, we come to know that Epicharmus portrayed a situation in which the Growing Argument was used in a judicial setting. In fact, the argument is conceived as a means of fooling one's interlocutor and eventually avoiding prosecution in court, whether for insolvency or physical assault. In other words, Epicharmus represents the Growing Argument as a rhetorical instrument to achieve victory in a trial.

Epicharmus' portrayal of the rhetorical potential of the Growing Argument acquires further significance when we consider that the he must have been a direct witness of the increasing importance of rhetoric, which, according to later testimonies, was born in Syracuse through the efforts of Corax and Tisias[63], in the wake of the numerous lawsuits for the restitution of the properties confiscated during the tyranny of Thrasybulus, whose expulsion from the city in 465 BCE had led to the establishment of democracy[64]. In fact, the presence of rhetorical figures in some of Epicharmus' extant fragments reveals that he was well acquainted with the devices of the new art, which, as suggested by the fact that he used them for parodic purposes, must have been already familiar to his public as well[65]. According to later testimonies, especially by Plato and

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[63] Even though we know relatively little about Corax and Tisias and many of the stories circulating about them are probably inventions deriving from their image as *prōtoi heuretai* of rhetoric, the tradition about them offers valuable information on the early stages of rhetoric. Actually, there are doubts about Corax' historicity: for example, Cole has argued that 'Corax' was not the name of a real person, but only Tisias' nickname (cf. Cole 1991; Kennedy 1994, pp. 34-35 and Gencarella 2007).

[64] Cf. Cic. *Brut*. 46. Cicero says that this information was contained in the *Synagōgē Technōn* of Aristotle (cf. Wilcox 1943, p. 1; Kennedy 1963, p. 60 and Cole 1991, p. 68). According to another tradition, rhetoric was born as a means to speak persuasively in the newly-born democratic assembly, but scholars tend to consider it as a later modification of the tradition due to the primary role and importance which political speech assumed in the following centuries, especially under the influence of Aristotle and Isocrates (see Hinks 1940, p. 67 and Cole 1991, p. 70 and 73). The examples cited by Plato and Aristotle (see below) are a further indication that Corax and Tisias dealt with judicial oratory. On the change of regime in Syracuse, see Musti 2006, pp. 108-109.

[65] On this point, see further Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012, p. 90 and 1996, pp. xxv-xxvi. Willi has recently argued that the Growing Argument constitutes a criticism of Pythagorean rhetoric. In particular, Epicharmus would be targeting Pythagoras' alleged abilities as orator (Willi 2012, pp. 61-63; abridgement of Willi 2008, pp. 170-175). Due to the scantiness of reliable evidence about Pythagoras, however, Willi's interpretation remains inevitably speculative, as he himself admits, and, in fact, there are valid reasons to

Aristotle, Corax' and Tisias' most notable and enduring contribution to rhetoric was their study of arguments from probability/likelihood (*eikos*). Both Plato and Aristotle provide an example of *eikos* argumentation associated with Corax' and Tisias' art about a case of robbery in which a feeble and a strong man are involved. Plato's account runs as follows:

> [...] ἐάν τις ἀσθενὴς καὶ ἀνδρικὸς ἰσχυρὸν καὶ δειλὸν συγκόψας, ἱμάτιον ἤ τι ἄλλο ἀφελόμενος, εἰς δικαστήριον ἄγηται, δεῖ δὴ τἀληθὲς μηδέτερον λέγειν, ἀλλὰ τὸν μὲν δειλὸν μὴ ὑπὸ μόνου φάναι τοῦ ἀνδρικοῦ συγκεκόφθαι, τὸν δὲ τοῦτο μὲν ἐλέγχειν ὡς μόνω ἤστην, ἐκείνω δὲ καταχρήσασθαι τῷ «Πῶς δ᾽ ἂν ἐγὼ τοιόσδε τοιῷδε ἐπεχείρησα;» ὁ δ᾽ οὐκ ἐρεῖ δὴ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ κάκην, ἀλλά τι ἄλλο ψεύδεσθαι ἐπιχειρῶν τάχ᾽ ἂν ἔλεγχόν πῃ παραδοίη τῷ ἀντιδίκῳ.

> [...] if someone feeble and courageous, having thrashed a strong and coward man and robbed him of his cloth or something else, is taken to the court, none of the two ought to tell the truth, but the coward should not say that he has been trashed by the brave only. This one, on the other hand, should prove that they were alone and use that well known argument "How could I, such as I am, have attacked a man such as this?". The other will not confess his cravenness, but attempting to say other lies, perhaps he will give his opponent an opportunity to refute him in some way.

<div align="right">Pl. <i>Phdr.</i> 273b4-c4</div>

The case is quite straightforward: a feeble man assaults a strong one and robs him. Once in court, while the robbed declares that he was not assaulted by the feeble man only, because nobody would believe the contrary, the latter should indeed prove that they were alone and use an argument from probability by stating that it is not probable/likely that a weak man like him could have beaten someone stronger than him. At this point, Plato tells us that the plaintiff, rather than confessing his own cowardice, will probably resort to other lies which the defendant could easily disprove. It is worth noticing that Plato's presentation of the case is heavily biased against rhetoric, as emerges from the repeated emphasis put on the lies which the two men use in their favour. Indeed, the point of the whole passage is to illustrate that in tribunal people do not care about truth, but only about what is persuasive, and, so Plato remarks, probability/likelihood is most

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consider the idea that Epicharmus meant to attack Pythagorean oratory as improbable (Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén 2012, pp. 92-93). An interest in rhetoric on the part of Epicharmus is supposed by Demand, who identifies a Gorgianic influence in some of the fragments (cf. Demand 1971; against this view, Willi 2008 p. 166 n.14).

effective in this respect[66]. Aristotle's account of the the same paradigmatic case, which he ascribes to Corax, provides us with additional information, as it includes an *eikos* argument which could be employed by a strong man charged with the assault of a feeble man. In that case, the strong man can argue that it is improbable that he committed the crime, since he would have been the obvious suspect[67]. Aristotle assimilates this example of reverse *eikos* argument, i.e. something is argued to be unlikely in virtue if its probability, to Sophistic eristic argumentation, as it constitutes an eloquent instance of making the weaker argument the stronger, which was one of the distinctive traits of the Sophists' rhetoric[68]. A similar example of reverse *eikos* argument is contained in Antiphon's *First Tetralogy*, which stages a fictional case of murder in which the lack of definitive evidence compels both the accuser and the defendant to argue from probability. While the former argues that the defendant is the most probable culprit given his well known grudge which he bore to the victim, the latter says that, in virtue of this very fact, it is improbable that he committed the murder since he knew that he would have been easily suspected[69].

In the light of the foregoing examples, it is worth noticing that the situation portrayed by Epicharmus in his comedy about the Growing Argument features interesting similarities with the earliest examples of rhetorical argumentation. Like *eikos* arguments, the Growing Argument proves to be easily adaptable to different

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[66] Cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 272c-e. On Plato's account, cf. Gagarin 2014, in which it is argued that, in actual judicial practice, factual evidence was deemed stronger than arguments from probability.

[67] Cf. Arist. *Rh.* II 1402a18-20: [...] ἄν τε γὰρ μὴ ἔνοχος ᾖ τῇ αἰτίᾳ, οἷον ἀσθενὴς ὢν αἰκίας φεύγει (οὐ γὰρ εἰκός), κἂν ἔνοχος ᾖ, οἷον ἰσχυρὸς ὤν (οὐ γὰρ εἰκός, ὅτι εἰκὸς ἔμελλε δόξειν); "[...] for [in Corax's *Art* it is illustrated that it is possible to argue from probability] if a man is not liable to the accusation, for example a feeble man accused of assault (for it is not probable), and even if he is liable, for example a strong man (for it is not probable, since it would have seemed probable)". Note that Aristotle considers the second *eikos* argument fallacious, since, in order to refute an enthymeme from probability the defendant must state something that is more usually probable than what has been said by the accuser and not to produce a particular instance to show that the conclusion is not necessarily true.

[68] According to Aristotle, Protagoras was a specialist in this kind of argumentation (cf. *Rh.* II 1402a23). On the common perception of the Sophists' style of arguing, cf. Aristophanes' dialogue between the Stronger and the Weaker *logos* in the *Clouds* (Ar. *Nu.* 889-1104) and the accusation against Socrates (Pl. *Ap.* 19b4-c1). See also what Cicero says in the *Brutus* (Cic. *Brut.* 30).

[69] On Antiphon's use of *eikos* argument, see Gagarin 2014, pp. 17-19.

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circumstances and can also be turned against opponents which first employed it to support their case. But analogies go further than that, especially if we consider the role played by the appeal to φύσις in the Growing Argument. In order to illustrate this point, I want to draw the attention to Plato's account of Tisias' argument from probability. When the feeble man argues that it is improbable that he assaulted the strong man he says (*Phdr.* 273c1): "How could I, such as I am, have attacked a man such as this?" (Πῶς δ᾽ ἂν ἐγὼ τοιόσδε τοιῷδε ἐπεχείρησα;). Noticeably, through the use of the term *toiosde*, the speaker refers to an individual characteristic of his which, in his intentions, should tell us something about his behaviour and, consequently, about the actual state of affairs of the case in which he is involved. Similarly, in Antiphon's *First Tetralogy*, when the defendant lists his merits as a citizens and his constant respect for the gods and the laws, he says: "Being such as this (τοιούτου δὲ ὄντος μου), you must not deem me guilty of anything sinful or dishonourable"[70]. In both cases, the argument is based on the assumption that a person's actions depend on his specific characteristics. Indeed, the persuasiveness of *eikos* arguments lies in the fact that they seem to establish a deterministic relation between one's constitution/character and his actual behaviour. But such relation is, in fact, only probabilistic[71].

If we now turn to consider Epicharmus' Growing Argument, we can notice that it basically follows a similar pattern, since it is used to draw conclusions based on the way in which an individual is. However, differently from *eikos* arguments, the force of the Growing Argument derives from the fact that it is presented as built on a "natural law", namely that a member of the class of things which continuously change because of their nature cannot preserve their identity over time. In other words, human beings *qua*

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[70] 2.2.12. For a similar argument see also Gorgias' *Apology of Palamedes* (DK B11a).

[71] With regard to this point, it is worth noticing that, in commenting on Tisias' *eikos* argument, Plato eloquently remarks that probability owes its effectiveness to its "similarity to truth" (δι᾽ ὁμοιότητα τοῦ ἀληθοῦς; Pl. *Phdr.* 273d).

human beings cannot stay ever the same and thereby anything that follows from this property is necessarily determined, including the fact that one cannot be asked to repay a debt because he is no longer the person who took it. Thus, when compared with the argument from probability, the recourse to philosophy as a rhetorical device appears to bring a considerable advantage to the person who employs them. For, broadly speaking, even in cases in which decisive evidence is lacking, the appeal to philosophical doctrines, given their universal validity, could help to win the debate. Hypothetically, for example, in a case of homicide like that described in Antiphon's *First Tetralogy*, the accused could argue that he cannot be the murderer because, even if he committed the crime, he is no longer the same person.

However, although the philosophical approach seems to provide the strongest arguments in a contest of speeches, it is worth stressing that, as implied from Epicharmus' representation of the Growing Argument, in fact, it does not. For, beside the fact that the Growing Argument could be easily turned against itself, the comic consequences deriving from the attempt to use it as a means of argumentation imply that there is also the possibility that philosophy might not be taken seriously if employed in tribunal. Indeed, the parodic effect of Epicharmus' scenes featuring philosophical allusions stems from the inevitable clash between philosophical speculation and "lay" common sense. But even if philosophy were to be accepted as a proper means of argumentation in everyday life situations, philosophically inspired arguments have another, fatal, weak point – namely, that their thesis might turn out to be false. In fact, the very existence of competing philosophical theories indicates that philosophical arguments do not necessarily provide a definitive means to success, but actually leave open the possibility for other contests. In this regard, Epicharmus' allusions to different philosophical doctrines should be taken, I argue, as a way of emphasising that there are

no privileged theories, but rather that the value of philosophical ideas depends on their potential effectiveness in contests of speeches.

Thus, in Epicharmus' hands, philosophy becomes just one polemical instrument among others to defeat adversaries in verbal disputes. Instead of entering the philosophical contest, Epicharmus brings philosophy outside its purely theoretical dimension and transfers it in everyday life, with all the bizarre consequences to which this may lead. As noted by scholars, through such representation of philosophy, Epicharmus created the prototype of the stylized quack-philosopher who became a recurrent character in later comedy[72]. But, even more significantly, Epicharmus' parodies of philosophy constitute one of the first critical appraisals of the role and place of philosophy in the *polis*, which soon would become a major concern to later intellectuals.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have evaluated Epicharmus' take on philosophical competition by focusing on his so-called philosophical fragments, which contain allusions to contemporary philosophical debate. In particular, I have considered Epicharmus' references to Xenophanes' theological doctrines and Eleatic ontology, whose terminology and pattern of argumentations he skilfully appropriated for parodic purposes. However, as emerged from the study of fragment B2 on the Growing Argument, which was inspired by Pythagorean speculation, Epicharmus was not just an imitator of existing philosophical doctrines, but actually gave his original intellectual

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[72] The most eloquent example is provided by Aristophanes' *Clouds*. Cf. Pickard-Cambridge 1962, p. 251; Álvarez Salas 2007c, p. 35.

contribution by elaborating a powerful argument against the permanence of personal identity which was destined to have great influence on later philosophy.

Although the integration of philosophical allusions in the plot of his comedies involves a pointed parody of philosophers on the part of Epicharmus, I have contended that such a parody should not be taken as a direct criticism of the doctrines at which he hints. Eloquent from this point of view is the case of the Growing Argument: while it has been taken as an attack on Parmenides' ontology, I have shown that it does not pose a challenge to the Eleatic doctrine of What-Is and that, in fact, it might even be used against its critics. Actually, more than in theoretically competing with philosophers, I have argued that Epicharmus was interested in the potential polemic usages of philosophical argumentation. Considering the details of the plot of the comedy about the Growing Argument, I have maintained that this particular way of looking at philosophy was a reflection of the increasing importance of rhetoric and the consequent search for the best arguments to employ in order to win verbal disputes. In particular, the appeal to φύσις, when compared with that to *eikos* in arguments from probability, appeared to provide an effective means of victory in contests of speeches. However, Epicharmus' parodic representation of the consequences of the use of the Growing Argument implies that, in fact, philosophically inspired arguments, although employable as means of persuasion, do not guarantee final success.

Still, the fact that Epicharmus did not enter the philosophical contest directly does not mean that he was not involved in competition. Actually, Epicharmus competed with philosophers, but he played outside the boundaries of philosophical debate itself. For, as mentioned above, Epicharmus did not aim to criticize rival philosophical theories and then replace them with his own. Rather, by making of philosophy a rhetorical instrument to compete in trivial situations, he deflated the claims to

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superiority of philosophers and, generally speaking, of other wisdom practitioners, by putting them on the same level with other participants in the wider *agōn* of the *polis*. Significantly, through such representation of philosophy Epicharmus created effective comic scenes whereby he made his audience laugh, a matter of primary importance for him, as he competed with other playwrights to gain the favour of the public and eventually be crowned victor in dramatic competitions. For Epicharmus, philosophy was then a game whose rules could be mimicked in order to achieve success in other games. In fact, I think, Epicharmus was well aware that he and every other poet, philosopher or wisdom practitioner was involved in a public contest, in which everything could be used to beat adversaries. But, differently from some of his competitors, he recognized that the game could not, in fact, be ended and that victory was as ephemeral as a laugh.

Final remarks

The foregoing study of early Greek philosophical poetry has been conducted in consideration of the competitive context in which poetry was produced and performed in the Archaic and Early Classical ages. In particular, I have examined the works of Xenophanes, Parmenides, Empedocles and Epicharmus in order to evaluate their approaches to poetic agonism. In effect, for these philosopher-poets the strategy to beat their adversaries and thereby prove their superiority involved an original reinterpretation of the very terms of competition.

As emerges from my analysis, although they all shared a marked competitive stance towards other poets and wisdom practitioners, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Empedocles and Epicharmus held different views on the nature of agonism itself, in particular as regards the possibility of putting a stop to it once and for all. While Xenophanes and Epicharmus seem to agree in considering competition as an ineliminable aspect of humans' intellectual enterprise, Parmenides and Empedocles believed that competition could be ended and, in fact, they presented their poems as definitive accounts of reality superior to any others. It is worth noting that, with the exception of Epicharmus, who deserves a separate discussion, for philosopher-poets the question of the end of competition was closely related to the problem of poetic authority, which ultimately stemmed from the epistemological issue concerning humans' capacity to attain knowledge. For these figures, competition could only be brought to a close if a poet were able to demonstrate that he had come to possess the truth.

The origins of the epistemological question are traceable to the Homeric poems, in which the truth value of narration depends on the poet's capacity to relate events by reproducing the actual order in which they took place. This requires, as a necessary

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condition, that the poet know the exact course of events. However, given the archaic visual model of knowledge, a poet can only claim to know what he has seen and that to which he has been perceptually present[1]. Thus, the poet is epistemically incapable of narrating the spatio-temporally remote events which constitute the object of his song without divine aid. This situation is vividly portrayed in the invocation to the Muses preceding the Catalogue of the Ships in the *Iliad*, in which the poet's ignorance is contrasted with the goddesses' omniscience, which derives from their having been direct witnesses of the events[2]. Given this rigid dichotomy between divine and mortal knowledge, the only way for the poet to fulfil his task is to ask the Muses for their assistance in providing him with the information that he lacks. Thus, despite the epistemic gap between gods and humans, the inspired poet can have access to that knowledge from which other mortals are excluded and thereby communicate it through his poetry.

As shown in chapter 3, the apparently straightforward relation between poet and inspiring divinity of the Homeric poems is problematized by Hesiod in the proem of the *Theogony*. For the Muses' ability to tell both false things and truths leaves the poet in a status of unsolvable uncertainty as regards the content of divine inspiration. We have seen that, in order to escape this impasse, Hesiod seeks to guarantee the reliability of his account by presenting himself as a poetic authority invested by the Muses. In this way, Hesiod also proves his superiority over competitors, since, in virtue of his divine investiture, he is able to reveal universal truths which no other poet can know and which, de facto, exclude any other poetic account. However, Hesiod's solution is far from being satisfactory, since the epistemic limitations inherent to the mortal condition

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[1] Cf. Brunschwig 2000, pp. 76-77.
[2] Cf. *Il*. 2.484-486: "Tell me now, Muses who have your homes on Olympus, for you are goddesses, and are present, and know everything, while we hear only rumour and know nothing" (tr. Verity). The same idea is behind Odysseus' praise of Demodocus (*Od*. 8.487-491), cf. *supra*, Chapter 3, pp. 92-93.

still prevent him to determine whether what he has been revealed by the Muses is true or false.

Xenophanes appropriates the traditional pessimism concerning men's epistemic possibilities, but, by rejecting the idea of divine inspiration, he undermines any claim to authority based on this form of communication between human and divine. By rendering the epistemic gap between gods and mortals unbridgeable without exceptions, Xenophanes denies human beings the possibility to acquire truth. However, this does not condemn men to absolute uncertainty and helplessness, since they can still build a stable system of opinions grounded on the objects of experience which god makes accessible to them and whose reliability is guaranteed by the immutable nature of the divine mind. In such a scenario, enquiry acquires a crucial role, because every object which men encounter in their experience can be critically evaluated and employed to improve their set of opinions about the world. Indeed, since men are involved in a constant process of discovery, the opinions which they form are subject to critical evaluation, which inevitably leads to continuous confrontation and competition. In fact, men can present accounts which are proven *better* than others, whether on the basis of experience or their appropriateness/usefulness, but still they cannot provide the *best* and most definitive account. The same holds for Xenophanes' theological and ethical views, which, as it emerges from his professions of wisdom, he considered better than others (for example with respect to the welfare of the *polis*), but which nonetheless did not amount to clear and certain truth. According to Xenophanes, then, poetic authority can only derive from the capacity of providing an account which explains the result of experience better than others, but which nonetheless remains subject to continuous revision and improvement.

When we turn to Parmenides and Empedocles, we can notice that they share with Hesiod the project of composing "universal" poems, conceived as closed and complete systems meant to exclude and replace rival ones. Significantly, undertaking such a poetic enterprise led them to find a solution to the issues raised by the Muses' declaration in the proem of the *Theogony*. In chapter 3, I argued that Parmenides solved the problem of poetic ambiguity by redefining truth in terms of logical deduction. In this way, Parmenides also justified his claim to authority and superiority over competitors. With regard to this point, we have seen that Parmenides' proem stands as a statement of authority, since it constantly emphasizes the philosopher-poet's special status, eventually sanctioned by the goddess' favourable reception and her promise to reveal a truth undisclosed to other mortals. However, in contrast to Hesiod, the guarantee of the truth of divine revelation does not derive from Parmenides' having been chosen by the goddess, but rather from the fact that the account of What-Is expounded in the poem is the result of logical deduction. Hence, human beings can be assured of the reliability of what they learn from the divinity because they can verify it by relying on independent logical criteria. In this way, the epistemic gap between mortals and the divine is eventually eliminated, since, by means of deduction, men can have access to that universal truth which previously had been reserved for the gods. Even more significant, the acquisition of truth on the part of Parmenides renders his account of reality superior to any other and thereby excises *a priori* any possibility of competition.

Similar to Parmenides, Empedocles too presents his account of cosmos as definitive, especially by showing that it can integrate the doctrines of his predecessors into a unique and coherent whole. However, instead of redefining the very notion of truth, Empedocles offers a solution to the problem of poetic reliability more in line with Archaic tradition. For Empedocles' poetic authority derives from his superhuman status,

both as a *daimōn* and a god: as a *daimōn*, he has been a first-hand witness of the process of mixing and separating of the elements in the development of the cosmos, while as a god, he lays claim to a comprehensive view of the universe and of the laws which regulate the cycle of its generation and destruction. Empedocles thus appropriates the Homeric idea that the capacity of telling the truth is based on direct experience, but instead of resorting to divine inspiration to obviate the problem posed by humans' epistemic limitations, he grounds his authority on his own divinity. Noticeably, being a (literally) divine poet, Empedocles rules out the possibility that his account could be challenged by those of other poets or philosophers who, due to their mortal condition, possess only a partial view of reality.

As anticipated above, Epicharmus' position as regards poetic and philosophical agonism shares with Xenophanes' the idea that the competition cannot be stopped. Regrettably, the scanty evidence in our possession prevents us from knowing whether Epicharmus' view stemmed from a particular epistemological conception[3]. As argued in chapter 5, what can be said with reasonable confidence is that in his comedies Epicharmus represented competition as an ineliminable aspect of social and intellectual interactions. People are involved in verbal disputes which they try to win and thereby gain some profit. In this widespread game, philosophical argumentation is regarded as an instrument for victory which can be twisted and adapted to one's needs, but which does not guarantee success and, in fact, can generate potentially infinite occasions for contest. In this respect, Epicharmus marks his distance especially from Parmenides,

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[3] Some scholars have identified echoes of Xenophanes' epistemological position (in particular that expressed in B34) in Epicharmus' fragment B13, whose authenticity, however, is dubious: νᾶφε καὶ μέμνασ᾽ ἀπιστεῖν· ἄρθρα ταῦτα τᾶν φρενῶν, "Be sober and remember to be incredulous: these are the limbs of wit". In fact, regardless of its authenticity, the absence of any context makes it difficult to determine the exact import of the sentence. Salas rightly observes that it is hard to see an influence of Xenophanes in the fragment, but his attempt to interpret the phrase as an enunciation of the methodological principle of scientific enquiry is, I think, far-fetched. On these issues, see Álvarez Salas 2007b, pp. 119-120.

since philosophical argumentation, instead of representing the means to put an end to competition, actually keeps it alive.

To conclude, we may note that the different approaches to competition developed by philosopher-poets were appropriated and reinterpreted in later philosophical enquiry. On the one hand, while the proliferation of alternative philosophical accounts of reality proved that Parmenides' and Empedocles' project to put a stop to the competition was illusionary, Parmenides' idea that logical argumentation is decisive in humans' quest for truth had a lasting influence on successive philosophical speculation. On the other hand, Xenophanes' and Epicharmus' views on competition as an ineliminable aspect of human condition anticipated the increasing importance of dialectical exchange of ideas, which marked the flourishing of Classical philosophy. Thus, even though the practice of philosophical poetry was soon abandoned in favour of other forms of intellectual debate, its legacy was destined to continue long after its end.

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