ANAIS DE FILOSOFIA CLÁSSICA

Parmenides and Heraclitus revisited *Palintropic Metaphysics, Polymathy and Multiple Experience*

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ARTICLE

ABSTRACT: Some scholars have supposed an influence of Heraclitus' philosophy in Parmenides' *Poem*, based on the correlations between their fragments in terms of lexicon, images, word-plays, and expression modes. This relationship has been analyzed through certain textual and historical evidences of uneven and undetermined value, and the focus of its comparison has been mainly the interpretation of both thinkers as essential parts of a tradition, the philosophical one, that was founded after their time, and that insisted in opposing them, and a prior, and shared tradition, the poetical one, that both appropriated as a means to convey a radically new message.
The comparative study of fragments 5, 6, and 7 of Parmenides' *Poem* and some of Heraclitus' fragments reveals that a great part of the criticisms the Eleatic allegedly addressed to the Ephesian are traces of poetical tradition, through whose diverse appropriation both thinkers show similar epistemological and ontological conceptions (Nehamas, 2002), among which one can recognize a relationship of tension and partial rejection of the intellectual and discursive phenomenon of ἱστορίη. By using the word παλίντροπος, Parmenides does not criticize the doctrinal nucleus of Heraclitus' ontology nor he characterizes negatively the goddess' forbidden path, but instead he shapes a spatial metaphor of Being, and of the method to arrive to its knowledge. At the same time, παλίντροπος operates as an image of the *Poem* within the poem, a sort of mirror that reflects its content and configuration.
KEY-WORDS: Parmenides; Heraclitus; Ontology; Polymathy; Palintropy.

RESUMEN: Algunos estudiosos han supuesto una influencia de la filosofía de Heráclito en el *Poema* de Parménides; prueba de ella serían los paralelismos que guardan sus fragmentos en el léxico, las imágenes, los juegos de palabras y los modos de expresión. La relación entre ambos pensadores se ha querido ver a través de ciertas evidencias textuales e históricas de desigual valía, y el interés de su comparación ha recaído sobre todo en interpretarlos como partes esenciales de una tradición que se fundó después de ellos (la filosófica), que insistió en contraponerlos, y de una tradición anterior compartida (la poética), de la que ambos se apropiaron para comunicar un mensaje radicalmente nuevo.
El estudio comparativo de los fragmentos 5, 6 y 7 del *Poema* de Parménides con algunos fragmentos de Heráclito revela que muchas de las supuestas críticas del Eleata al Efesio son rastros de tradición poética, en cuya apropiación diversa ambos pensadores manifiestan concepciones epistemológicas y ontológicas semejantes (Nehamas 2002), entre las cuales puede reconocerse una relación tensa, de rechazo parcial, con el fenómeno intelectual y discursivo de la ἱστορίη. La palabra παλίντροπος no es una crítica al núcleo doctrinal de la ontología de Heráclito, ni tampoco una caracterización negativa del camino prohibido de la diosa, sino una metáfora espacial del ser y del método que hay que seguir para conocerlo, a la vez que una imagen del Poema dentro del Poema, una suerte de espejo de lo que ocurre en él y de la forma misma en que está configurado.
PALABRAS-CLAVE: Parménides; Heráclito; Ontologia; Polimatia; Palintropia.

For Enrique Hülsz Piccone †

Introduction

The idea that Heraclitus' and Parmenides' thought are situated at opposite sides of Pre-Socratic philosophy can be traced back at least to Plato, who mentions Parmenides in *Theaetetus* (152e) as the only one who disagrees with the idea that 'nothing ever is, but is always becoming'. Further into the same dialogue (179e-181a), Socrates confronts the doxographical category of ῥέοντες[1], whose highest exponent is Heraclitus, to that of the τοῦ ὅλου στασιῶται, championed by Parmenides. In the *Cratylus* (440a-d), Socrates contrasts the assertions of οἱ περὶ Ἡράκλειτόν to the presupposition of stability of both the object and the cognitive subject as the condition of knowledge as such. Finally, in *Metaphysics* (1005b23), Aristotle seems to attribute to Heraclitus something very similar to what Parmenides says in B6.8-9.[2]

As we know, external testimonies do not yield many conclusions on the dating of the two thinkers. According to Diogenes Laërtius, both are strictly contemporary.[3] If we trust the convoluted chronology that can be deduced from Plato's *Parmenides*, it becomes a possibility that Parmenides was, at least, 25 years younger than Heraclitus.[4] This

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[1] See O. Álvarez Salas, 2009, ch. II.

[2] See Mondolfo, 1961, p. 405. On Platonic and Aristotelian testimonies about this pre-Socratic dichotomy, see R. Prier, p. 90-91.

[3] Diogenes states the same for both Heraclitus and Parmenides (9.1 y 9.23), based on the Χρονικά by Apollodorus of Athens who declared them contemporaries, probably under the supposition that they were both Xenophanes' disciples (cf. Stokes, 1971, p. 110). Also on this chronology, see C. Osborne, 2006, p. 230-237, who considers them contemporary and most likely unknown to one another.

[4] The evidence on the Platonic *Parmenides* shows that during the fourth century the Eleatic was considered younger than what is stated on Apollodorus' chronology (cf. Stokes, 1971, p. 110). Following Burnet (1930⁴, p. 169-170), Kirk and Raven (1983², p. 240) propose the years 515-510 B.C. as an approximate birth date for Parmenides.

possibility has become a relative consensus among the majority of scholars, who are convinced that the interpretation of the *Poem* should be preceded by the knowledge of Heraclitus' book and implies a critical standing towards it. We know even less about the possible dates of composition of their works, and any proposal to this respect is doomed to be merely a conjecture.[5]

Status quaestionis

The possibility that a criticism to Heraclitus might be traced in the fragments of Parmenides' *Poem* was proposed for the first time on a note on the entry for "Parmenides" by K. Steinhart in the *Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Wissenschaft und Künste*.[6] The German philologist characterizes the verses 8 and 9 of fragment B6 as controversial against the famous sentence attributed to Heraclitus εἶμεν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶμεν (DK22 B49a), and links Parmenides' fr. B4.2-3 to Heraclitus' fr. B91b.

But it is Jacob Bernays who is commonly considered the modern πρῶτος εὑρετής of the Parmenides vs. Heraclitus controversy, since he pointed out in a footnote[7] of an article published in the *Rheinisches Museum* (1850, p. 114-115, n. 2) a parallelism that no one, modern or contemporary, had noticed before:[8] the phrase πάντων δὲ παλίντροπός

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[5] See Stokes, 1971, p. 111; Hermann, 2009, p. 262-263. Zeller (1892, p. 623, n. 2) fixed 478 as the *terminus post quem* for the composition of Heraclitus' book which, according to him, must have been the date of Hermodorus exile, as mentioned by Heraclitus in B121. Diels (1897, p. 71-72) refined the chronology by proposing the decade between 500 and 490 as a plausible date for the mentioned exile, and speculated that Hermodorous might have settled at Elea and had then become acquainted with the Eleatic school; thus, Parmenides might have known the book of the Ephesian around the year 480.

[6] Third section, 1839. See Hermann, 2009, p. 263. Steinhart criticizes S. Karsten's (1835, p. 155) interpretation that Parmenides' comment was addressed to the Atomists.

[7] Graham (2002, p. 27, n. 3) calls it 'one of the most influential footnotes ever written in the field of classical philology'. According to Bernays, the phrase from the Hippocratic treatise *De victu* (1.5) πάντα ταῦτα καὶ οὐ ταῦτὰ (DK C1) would echo another phrase, possibly by Heraclitus, that would be, at the same time, the one challenged by Parmenides: εἶναι καὶ μὴ εἶναι ταὐτὸν καὶ οὐ ταὐτὸν.

[8] Cf. Hermann, 2009, p. 263.

ἐστι κέλευθος (B6.9) should be understood as a reference to Heraclitus, specifically, to fr. B51, that Bernays had read through the quote of Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* (369b1), and *De Tranquillitate Animi* (473f), παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη κόσμου.[9]

Even though a long list of scholars have contributed with their analysis and reflection to this discussion after Bernays, the alleged controversy of Parmenides against Heraclitus has not been conclusively refuted nor it has reached unanimity.[10] Graham provides the latest defense of the Bernays–Diels theory and, even though there has been a revival of the opposite exegetic viewpoint recently (Nehamas[11], Osborne[12], Palmer[13], and Hermann[14]), there are some problematic

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[9] Nowadays, none of the editors consider that the genitive κόσμου is Heraclitus'. See n. 38 *infra*.

[10] This controversy has oscillated between those who support that there is evidence of criticism addressed to the Ephesian in Parmenides' *Poem* (Steinhart, Bernays, Diels, Patin, Loew, Vlastos, Mondolfo, Tarán, Guthrie, García Calvo, Curd, Cerri, and Graham), and those who deny it, whether completely or partially (Zeller, Reinhardt, Verdenius, Gigon, Jaeger, Gadamer, Untersteiner, Mansfeld, Stokes, Conche, Nehamas, Palmer, and Hermann). Untersteiner (1958, p. CXII–CXVII), for example, bases his proposal on Gadamer's assertion that the Parmenidean criticism is not addressed to any thinker in particular, but against the 'Hintergrund des großartigen jonischen Physiologia im ganzen'. Nehamas considers that Parmenides is targeting 'the Ionian view that the present world has arisen out of a single and undifferentiated principle from which, in its multiplicity and change, it is radically different' (p. 49). Mansfeld (1964) concludes that the similarities between both thinkers are perfectly understandable without assuming that Parmenides was actually addressing Heraclitus. If Parmenides knew Heraclitus' book, then he must have simply seen in it 'die modernste Formulierung der archaischen Bestimmung des Menschen' (p. 41).

[11] Nehamas' study (2002) is the one I consider the closest to my own proposal, since it states that 'both thinkers wrote in parallel and not in reaction to one another' (p. 46); that their 'views often overlap' (p. 46); that they 'share not only some epistemological views but also an ontological picture' (p. 47); and that, in spite of the differences, they are both 'philosophically harmonious' (p. 49), in a way that it is possible to say that 'Parmenides and Heraclitus have a common project and structurally similar views (…)' (p. 53).

[12] Osborne (2006, p. 234-236) concludes that 'on at least some occasions it is more fruitful to take Heraclitus to be alluding to Parmenides than the other way around (…)' (236)

[13] Palmer (2009) deems the parallelisms Graham points out as 'too superficial to be understood as allusions' (p. 342, n. 29), and considers they are probably the result of a shared tradition. He states that the mortals referred by the goddess must be identified as 'the general run of humanity' (p. 343), and that the criticism addressed to them stems from the 'traditional archaic contrast between human frailty and divine power' (p. 343). For Palmer, defending the Parmenides vs. Heraclitus controversy leads inevitably to a 'reductive misrepresentation' of both philosophers' thought.

[14] Hermann (2009) proposes Xeniades of Corinth as the possible target of Parmenides' attack based on a series of testimonies of Sextus Empiricus where this author's theses are linked to Xenophanes'. This proposal opens the possibility of thinking of a Parmenidean critical standing against the Colophonian poet.

points in his argumentation that have not been yet discussed.

After ruling out the possibility of Parmenides being the one who influenced Heraclitus[15], and that the similarities between them could be traced back to a common source, Graham concludes that Heraclitus influenced Parmenides. An important number of literary connections support this: Graham finds eight cases of parallelism concerning 14 fragments by Heraclitus (B10, B28a, B30, B32, B34, B41, B51, B64, B71, B88, B91a and b, B103 and B107), and eight passages by Parmenides, from six different fragments (B1.31-32, B4.1, B4.2-4, B5, B6.3-9, B8.5, B8.21 and B12.3). Graham analyzes each of them and concludes that they all reveal a connection to Heraclitus not only in their vocabulary and images, but also in the word-plays and tropes, in a way that it is reasonable and credible to infer that 'Parmenides had Heraclitus' text in front of him' (p. 37).

Graham's argument, however, takes for granted that Parmenides misunderstood Heraclitus' thought[16]; in this case, he would be one among the ἀξύνετοι unable to understand Heraclitus' λόγος. How is it possible then that Parmenides was capable of adapting Heraclitus' vocabulary, images, tropes, and word-plays in such an inventive and productive way if the core of his philosophy went entirely unnoticed to him? Textual parallelisms, that are often believed to be complex and creative allusions[17], would imply a deep understanding of the Ephesian's

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[15] K. Reinhardt (1916) maintained this thesis, based, chronology-wise, on a passage from Plato's *Sophist* (242d) where Empedocles and Heraclitus appear to be contemporaries (p. 155-156), and on fr. B121 which, he considers, assumes the complete democratization of Ephesus that, according to him and following Zeller, should have happened after the year 478 (p. 157). Reinhardt attempted to demonstrate that, due to the profound difference between Heraclitus' philosophy and the Milesian cosmology, his thought is an answer to the philosophical problems posed by Parmenides.

[16] 'Parmenides has, I would maintain, misunderstood Heraclitus' theory: Heraclitus uses paradox to point us to a deeper unity and coherence, rather than embracing a contradiction at the heart of reality' (p. 42).

[17] Graham, p. 37: 'Parmenides not only anticipated the argument and thought of Heraclitus, but he divined the very expressions he would use, down to specific vocabulary, the imagery, the word-plays, and even the characteristic tropes'. In a later study (2006, p. 149-151), Graham proposed that Heraclitus' syntactical chiasmi constitute a sort of *sphragís* of his thought that Parmenides consciously imitates (for example, in B4.1).

modes of expression, which is completely at odds with the fact that the Eleatic misunderstood Heraclitus' philosophical message. Furthermore, Graham (p. 34) says that, to compare Parmenides' use of vocabulary and expressions, 'the relevant comparison class, however, is not poets but philosophers'. How can this statement hold up when even defining a group of 'philosophers' as conforming an intellectual class at Parmenides' time is problematic, due to the '*complexité de la cartographie des activités intellectuelles*' (p. 46) during the V and IV centuries B.C.? (Lloyd, 2002, p. 46).

In the following, I will discuss two of the parallelisms analyzed by Graham to show, in the first case, that there was no need to resort to Heraclitus in order to choose one particular image, since the poetic background provided it, and in the second case, that each philosopher uses a different philosophical language, and thus the lexical correspondences and the vocabulary echoes must be treated cautiously, since they are rooted in deep linguistic and terminological divergences whose interpretation also calls for an explanation.

Pace Graham: ἀπέσβεσται

Graham (p. 35) argues that the verb ἀπέσβεσται, used by Parmenides in B8.21 to describe the 'extinction' of γένεσις is a catachresis that evokes the participle ἀποσβεννύμενον referred to Heraclitus' everliving cosmic fire on B30. Considering, for Parmenides, the most common Homeric use of the verb σβέννυμι, the *putting out* of fire,[18] it seems to be true that 'there is no apparent reason to choose this particular image' (p. 35). Nevertheless, the verb σβέννυμι and its compounds, in accordance with their multivocal semantic and poetic

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[18] Literally, the indefatigable fire that consumes with its *unextinguishable* flame the vessels (*Il.* 16.123: ἀσβέστη φλόξ); metaphorically, the *extinction* of Achilles' rage (*Il.* 9.678 σβέσσαι χόλον) or the *putting out* of men's bellicose impulse (*Il.* 16.621: σβέσσαι μένος).

use in the *corpus*, are also used for liquids drying up[19], meaning 'to run dry' in the passive voice, for example, in Hesiod (*Erga*, 590), describing the cessation of lactation of goats (γάλα τ' αἰγῶν σβεννυμενάων)[20]. Aeschylus is particularly fond of this poetic image; he makes Clytemnestra ask herself: (Ag. 958) 'there is the sea, and who shall drain it?' (ἔστιν θάλασσα – τίς δέ νιν κατασβέσει),[21] and at the beginning of a choral *stanza* (Pr. 532) the 'inextinguishable current of father Ocean' is mentioned (παρ' Ὠκεανοῦ πατρὸς ἄσβεστον πόρον). The synesthetic image of the burning extinction of a waterbody does not seem to be foreign to Greek poetic tradition. As we know, the noun γένεσις always refers to Ocean in Homer (*Il*. 14.201, 14.246 y 14.302), so this is certainly the meaning and mandatorily the traditional reference of the γένεσις in Parmenides. Thus, more than being a sophisticated literary allusion to Heraclitus' *kósmos* that would allegedly be activated through the use of a common expression for the epic and poetic diction, 'the extinction of genesis' serves the purpose to radically contest the Homeric––and later, Milesian––idea that there is an endless beginning and source of all things:[22] the water body par excellence, the ultimate and inextinguishable source, is not actually the genesis of anything, and because of that, it is drained and its gestation power is withered as a dry ocean's.

 οὐδέ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν

This verse (Parm. B8.5), that appears to be a reformulation of the Heraclitean ἀλλ' ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται (B30), is perhaps the

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[19] On this 'liquid' or 'aquatic' use of the verb σβέννυμι and its Indo-European background, see J. Puhvel, 1981, p. 283, from which I quote Aeschylus' passages.

[20] West, 1978, p. 307 refers to Arist. *HA* 587b28 and to Hp. *Aer* 4. as parallel passages to this.

[21] Cf. T. A. Sinclair, 1932, p. 62.

[22] On the Parmenidean 'claim against the idea that one thing can really be generated out of another', cf. Nehamas, 2002, p. 56.

clearest of all parallelisms. Leaving aside the many aspects that could be commented on this intertextual couple, I would like to emphasize that what Heraclitus asserts that 'ever was and is and will be' is κόσμος, whereas what Parmenides denies 'it never was nor will be' is τὸ ἐόν. We have here, thus, two statements that are symmetrically opposite on two different subjects that, paradoxically, are related in the theoretical and philosophical content they reveal, since both are ontological statements,[23] and express the ambition to establish a radical principle, completely different from the appearances shown to humanity. Parmenides' νῦν ἔστιν, predicate of ἐόν, is not very far from Heraclitus' λόγος ἐών ἀεί, at the opening of his book (B1). In B30, κόσμος, an expression of the λόγος that is metaphorically represented by fire, clarifies how ἐών ἀεί should be interpreted, that is, as complementary to the concepts of past, present, and future. 'Being always' is, for Heraclitus, having been, being, and being afterwards. For Parmenides, on the other hand, 'being now' cannot have been or be afterwards. Being can only be understood by excluding the notions of past and future[24]. However, both thinkers' main concern is 'Being', even though each attributes it to different concepts (κόσμος, λόγος, ἐόν), and has a different understanding of it.

A shallow analysis of the main terms of Heraclitus' ontology (κόσμος, φύσις and λόγος) and of those constituting Parmenides' ontological and epistemological vocabulary (τὸ ἐόν, ἀλήθεια, and δόξα) necessarily leads to the conclusion that each uses a different

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[23] See Nehamas, 2002, p. 49: '(…) instead of expressing a disagreement, affirmation and denial here make the same point! (…) And now the similarities between Parmenides and Heraclitus acquire a new urgency: they become ontological'.

[24] On the contradiction between the semantics of the verb be and the verbal tenses, see A. Bernabé, 2019, p. 82-85.

philosophical language.[25] If the Heraclitean κόσμος and φύσις do not seem to have continuity in Parmenides, why should isolated words, such as δοκίμως, σκιδνάμενον, ἀπέσβεσται, etcetera, that are traceable to a literary tradition, be considered echoes of Heraclitus?

These problems give way to the reevaluation of the alleged theoretical and doctrinal rivalry between both thinkers, and to embark *more heracliteo* on the search of the philosophical resonances and dissonances expressed by the terminological divergences and convergences. There are some cases where the philosophical theory might overlap, at least, in general terms, while the vocabulary is dissonant (λόγος - ἐόν), whereas in other cases, it differs diverging (πολυμαθία and πολύπειρος ὁδός). It is also possible that a terminological overlap is not a sign of philosophical opposition (παλίντροπος), but instead points to a deep theoretical agreement, as I will show through the analysis of some expressions from Parmenides' fragments B6 and B7.

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[25] κόσμος appears twice in the *Poem* (fragments B4.3 and B8.52) or perhaps thrice (see García Calvo [1981, 2001³, p. 208]: διὰ κόσμον in B8.60); from these instances we can draw the conclusion that κόσμος does not belong to Parmenides' ontological vocabulary. In Heraclitus (B1, B112, and B123), the noun φύσις seems to make reference to a dynamic constitution that, at the same time, is made of the multiplicity of its parts, and contradicts it; φύσις is a principle of unity and rationality, and, in that sense, it is a complementary concept of, and a solidary concept with the Heraclitean ontological λόγος and κόσμος (see Hülsz, 2011, p. 180–185). On the contrary, the only three occasions where φύσις appears in Parmenides' *Poem* (B10.1, B10.5 y B16.3) occur in the speech on the mortal's opinions (the astronomical [B10] and the physiological [B16]), where its meaning is narrower, almost Homeric, and clearly detached from the Eleatic's ontological vocabulary. In regard to the Parmenidean vocabulary, neither the epistemological concepts of ἀλήθεια and δόξα, nor the ontological concept of τὸ ἐόν are Heraclitean. Not mentioning ἀλήθεια even once, Heraclitus barely uses the plural neutral adjective ἀληθέα (fr. B112) in a vague and general sense. Even though the case of λόγος is more complex, there is not any overlap here either; Heraclitus' fragments on λόγος reveal that it oscillates in a continuous dialectical play between *reason* in an ontological sense (i.e., foundation) and *reason* in a linguistic sense, that is, rational language. But in none of these cases the Heraclitean λόγος seems to mean 'reason that thinks' or the ability of thought (from the point of view of the subject), as it seems to be used in Parm. B. 7, but it rather means epistemic object of knowledge and universal principle of intelligibility (Hülsz, 2011, p. 242).

The bicephalous creatures and the human condition.
Brief comment on Parmenides B6.5–7

Who are these bicephalous creatures Parmenides criticizes? Who is this race that lacks judgment (ἄκριτα φῦλα) and owns a wandering mind (πλακτὸν νόον), which many scholars have identified with Heraclitus and/or his followers, with the Ionian φυσικοί[26], with the Pythagoreans[27], or human beings in general[28]?[29] Since Homeric epic, there are ways to describe human beings (or gods) that either find themselves in a situation that confronts them with two possible ways of acting, or are wandering and unable to determine their whereabouts and destination.[30] Odysseus' wandering epitomizes both, a motif and subject that is doubtlessly the precedent of Parmenides' verses.[31] At the poetic level, the wandering of this lineage devoid of judgment is linked to Odysseus' παλίντροπος νόστος, full of obstacles, detours, and

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[26] Gadamer, 1952; Untersteiner, 1958; Nehamas, 2002.

[27] Raven, 1948; Mondolfo, 1961.

[28] Fränkel, 1962; Guthrie (1965, p. 23-24, not excluding Heraclitus among them), Meijer, 1997, and O'Brien, 1987, p. 217- 218, n. 3.

[29] It is worth mentioning N. Galgano's (2017) interpretation, for whom the vocabulary in B6 is a reference to a 'failure in psychological activity' (p. 54).

[30] Among the pertinent Homeric passages are those where the adverb δίχα is used, referred in almost all of the cases to the θυμός: *Il*. 20.32, *Il*. 21.386, *Od*. 16.73 and *Od*. 19.524, *Od*. 22.333.

[31] On the connection between the *Odyssey* and Parmenides' *Poem*, see Havelock (1958) and Mourelatos (1970, p. 16-25), who suggests that the wandering mortals and the two-headed creatures bear a resemblance to Odysseus' fellow travelers who, when arriving to Ithaca, free the winds of Aeolus and return, in a palintropical movement, to the starting point of their journey (*Od*. 10.46 and sbsq., p. 24). More recently, Montiglio (2005, p. 147-150) has dedicated some pages to the subject of wandering in Parmenides and arrived to the conclusion that 'the way of wandering is the way of all mortals (…)' (p. 149).

needless returns, and to its distinct quality, the πολυτροπία[32]. For some, the theory that Parmenides' attack is addressed to mortals in general, that is, to human race, is not entirely convincing;[33] however, it is at least admissible to think that when using the term βροτοί, Parmenides refers to all men,[34] whose distinctive quality is their wandering.[35]

The use of a generalizing vocabulary in fragment B6 is not coincidental. The noun βροτός tends to describe, since the epic genre, a common condition to all men; in Homer, the noun φῦλα is used as a generic term for human race (φῦλα ἀνθρώπων *Il.* 14.361) or gods (*Il.* 15.54). Parmenides' innovation consists in calling this race ἄκριτα, that immediately refers, in a proleptic way, to the κρῖναι in B7 and the κρίσις in B8: these two-headed creatures lack the capacity to discern, are unable to acknowledge the κρίσις between 'it is' and 'it is not'. Thus, Parmenides introduces his own vocabulary to characterize the human and Odyssean wandering in epistemic and ontological terms.

The ἀμηχανίη and the ἄκριτα quality of mortals as described by Parmenides is reminiscent of the *Odyssey*'s passage (19.560–561) where Penelope calls dreams ἀμήχανοι and ἀκριτόμυθοι. Pindar, possible recipient and re-creator of the Eleatic's poetry,[36] denies humankind as

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[32] On Odysseus' πολυτροπία as a metapoetic reference to the hero's capacity to turn his narrations and identity in many directions, see A. Bergren (2008 Chapter 4), and G. Nagy (2013, p. 248). It is interesting to note that πολύτροπος can mean ambiguously "much wandering" and "wily" (P. Pucci, 1982, p. 39) and in this sense it is importantly related to the poetic image of the road. One of the many terms Parmenides uses for the road (along with ὁδός, ἀμαξιτός, πάτος and κέλευθος) is ἀταρπός (B2.6), a noun that has the same etymological root as τρόπος (παλίν-τροπος and πολύ-τροπος).

[33] Cf. Diels (1897, p. 69) and Bredlow (2000, p. 59), who refer to Euripides (*Alc.* 533): χωρὶς τὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ μὴ νομίζεται.

[34] Meijer (1997, p. 225–226) considers that βροτοὶ is the marked term, compared to the wider ἄνθρωπος. Parmenides uses the noun ἄνθρωπος four times (B1.26, B16.2, B16.3 y B19.3); βροτός and βροτεῖος in five verses (B1.30, B6.3, B8.39, B8.51, B8.61). There is not a noticeable difference in the use of both terms, although four of the five uses of βροτός are related to epistemic vocabulary (βροτῶν δόξας, βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν, δόξας... βροτείας, βροτῶν γνώμη). On this subject, see also Galgano, 2017, p. 67, n. 9.

[35] Which defines, in addition, their own sensorial condition in physiological terms (πολυπλάγκτων, B16).

[36] Cf. D'Alessio, 1995.

liable to err and incapable of telling (ἀμάχανον) what lies in front of them (*Ol.* 7.24-26). According to Pindar, then, ἀμαχανία defines human condition.[37]

The adjective πλακτόν, on the other hand, establishes a direct connection to the μελέων πολυπλάγκτων of B16, a portrait of humankind in general (ἀνθρώποισιν καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί). It echoes as well a verse in the *Odyssey* (15.343) where wandering is considered an inherent condition to mortals (πλαγκτοσύνης δ' οὐκ ἔστι κακώτερον ἄλλο βροτοῖσιν). The adjective πολύπλαγκτος, modifying Odysseus (*Od.* 17.511) also describes men in general (*Od.* 20.195): πολυπλάγκτους ἀνθρώπους.

Parmenides' vocabulary leaves no room for doubt: the goddess alludes to the entire humanity, but its wandering takes on an ontological and epistemological meaning. Nevertheless, supporting this interpretation does not cancel the possibility that, within his criticism, he might have included specific poets, philosophers or wise men; Milesian, Pythagorean or Heraclitean, although proving it reliably is impossible.

Παλίντροπος: transmission, meaning, and interpretation

The adjective παλίντροπος, on verse B6.9, is a pre-Socratic *dis legomenon* whose presence alone in both philosophers' work has been taken as an intimation of their connection, even though the occurrence of παλίντροπος on Heraclitus' fragment 51 is not completely certain

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[37] There are many passages where Pindar focuses on the relationship between the ἀμάχανον and the βροτοί (see *N.* 7.97; *Paean* 4 52d.26), or between these two and poetry (*P.* 9.92; *Paean* 9, 52f51-53, 52k3). On the interpretation of the ἀμηχανίη used in Parmenides in a specialized psychological sense, cf. N. Galgano, 2017, p. 50.

(παλίντονος is a possible variant).[38]

The ninth verse of Parmenides' fragment B6 was transmitted exclusively through Simplicius (*Physica* 117.13), who quotes B6.3-9. According to Calogero (1932, p. 42, n. 40) Simplicius believed the Parmenidean verse was addressed to Heraclitus.[39] Although the adjective παλίντροπος is only used by Parmenides and Heraclitus within the *corpus praesocraticum*, this does not mean that the Eleatic uses it as an allusion to the Ephesian.

We find the most ancient precedent in Homer (*Il.* 16.95), who makes Achilles order Patroclus πάλιν τρωπᾶσθαι,[40] 'to return again'[41] to the place where they are speaking at that moment, a command he would not obey, and that would ultimately cause his death. A *scholium* to verse 1.379 of the *Odyssey* glosses the adjective παλίντιτα as παλίντροπα in the Homeric expression παλίντιτα ἔργα (acts of vengeance or vindictive actions). In addition, a gloss to *Odyssey* 1.394 paraphrasing Telemachus' uttering, ἀλλ' ἤτοι βασιλῆες, mentions the ἔργα παλίντροπα that Zeus would have to give as a retribution and punishment to the actions of the suitors. These 'reversible actions' are later glossed as ἐναντία. Notice that these *scholia* link the adjective to

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[38] Παλίντροπος comes from Hippolytus, commonly considered the best source, and from two different passages from Plutarch (*De tranq. an.* 473f, in all of the manuscripts excepting D; *De an. procr. in Tim.* 1026b), while παλίντονος appears in Porphyry (*De antr. Nymph.* 29) and in the manuscript D of *De tranq. an.* 473f. Wilamowitz (*apud* Marcovich, 1967 p. 125) considered that παλίντονος was a *lectio facilior* and Diels and Kahn followed him, accepting παλίντροπος. Kirk (1954, p. 210-215), Kirk and Raven (1983, p. 192), and Marcovich prefer παλίντονος. Kahn (1979, p. 195-196) arguments it is a misquotation due to the habitual use of the expression παλίντονα τόξα in Homer. On the contrary, Marcovich believes Hippolytus relies on a Stoic source (p. 125). The fact that παλίντονος is *facilior* is not enough to remove it from the text, since its Homeric use could be precisely an argument to favor the Heraclitean use (see Guthrie, 1962, p. 439-40, n. 3).

[39] On Simplicius' passage and his quotation of Parm., cf. Raven (1948, p. 25-26), who deems these verses should be read as alluding to the Pythagorean dualism.

[40] The *scholia* to this passage explain that the verbal form τρωπᾶσθαι is equivalent to τροπάασθαι, that some know this binomial as a compound verb παλιντροπάασθαι, and that there is a διάλυσις of adverb and verb in the Homeric form. The same *scholium* quotes a verse from the *Iliad* (1.59) where the verb παλιμπλαγχθέντας is used.

[41] See *Il.* 16.87, ἰέναι πάλιν and, in Parmenides' B5, πάλιν ἵξομαι αὖθις.

the legal notions of punishment, vengeance, and retribution.

Aeschylus uses the adjective παλίντροπος exclusively in choral contexts, to refer to the evasive, elusive glance with which certain divinities neglect or abandon an issue or petition. [42] Pindar (*Ol.* 2.37) uses a related adjective, παλιντράπελος (registered to appear only in this passage, in *scholia*, and in late lexicons) to modify the noun πῆμα. It represents thus human chance as an alternating phenomenon, bringing sometimes happiness, and others, evil and disgrace (καὶ πῆμ' ἄγει (sc. Μοῖρ') / παλιντράπελον ἄλλῳ χρόνῳ). Bacchylides in *Epinicion* 11 uses this adjective in the mythical narration about Proetus' daughters and the contradictory thought that Hera, enraged, planted in their minds (παλίντροπον νόημα, v. 51). It stands out that the adjective is here applied to an important noun in Parmenides' vocabulary, νόημα, and that it characterizes it as negative. The binomial παλίντροπον νόημα expresses something akin to the πλακτὸν νόον the goddess mentions. Finally, a passage from Sophocles' *Philoctetes* seems so close to Parmenides' diction that one could speculate this is an echo or even a Sophoclean allusion to the Eleatic.[43] Odysseus tells Neoptolemus:

> Οὐκ ἂν φράσειας ἥντιν' αὖ παλίντροπος
> κέλευθον ἕρπεις ὧδε σὺν σπουδῇ ταχύς; (1222-23)

> 'I'd be obliged if you would tell me why you've come back along this path; and why in such a hurry too!'
>
> (Transl. O. Taplin).

In summary, the adjective could express, in the poetic context,

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[42] In *The Suppliants* (174–175), the chorus imagines Zeus' gaze avoiding their prayers: νῦν ἔχων παλίντροπον/ ὄψιν ἐν λιταῖσιν; this action is identical to the one performed by the god in *Il.*13.3, when he turns his shining eyes away from the battle field (τρέπεν ὄσσε φαεινὼ), leaving the exhausted Trojans near the enemies' vessels. In *Agamemnon* (777), it is said Justice can stand by some men, but abandon others with 'evasive eyes' (παλιντρόποις ὄμμασι).

[43] It is possible that Parmenides has had an influence on certain aspects of *Oedipus Rex* (vid. Champlin, 1969, p. 337–345).

the kinetic meaning of 'returning to a starting point' (Homer) or 'walking a path over' (Sofocles); the legal meaning of punishment or retribution (*scholia* to Homer); the notion of the instability of human affairs (Pindar); the ocular-kinetic meaning of avoiding the vision of a certain object or person (Aeschylus); and finally, the cognitive and epistemic notion of having a contradictory, stagnant mind that regresses and retraces its steps (Bacchylides).[44]

Undoubtedly, all of these meanings are helpful to understand Parmenides' verse without having to resort to Heraclitus, claiming they both belonged to the intellectual class of philosophers. Let us remember that, in Heraclitus' fragment, the adjective παλίντροπος qualifies ἁρμονίη, a term alluding the union or unity of the parts of a whole. The harmony of contraries is παλίντροπος possibly in the same sense the Homeric *scholia* interpreted it: in order to work harmoniously, the coming together of opposites requires each of its parts, as Anaximander would say (B1), to do justice to each other, to reward one another according to the assessment of time. Harmony is παλίντροπος, since it makes the contraries that compose it alternate in compensation: day-night / Winter-Summer / immortals-mortals.[45]

The meaning of παλίντροπος in Parmenides' *Poem* seems closer to its meaning in the *Iliad* (πάλιν τρωπᾶσθαι) and in *Philoctetes* (αὖ παλίντροπος κέλευθον). If Parmenides read the phrase παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη in the copy of Heraclitus' book that was supposedly right in front of him as he wrote the passage, and if he criticized it through a sophisticated lexical allusion, this criticism would have overlooked the fact that the παλιντροπία was attached to harmony, in other words, that the contradiction and opposition took place in unity and to its benefit, for the assembly of its varied parts. The allusion turns out to be useless

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[44] This might be the closest case where the adjective means 'contrary', as Galgano proposes, 2017, p.53 and p.69, n. 19.

[45] Kahn (1979, p. 199-200) considers that the τρόπος in παλίντροπος is an allusion to the πυρὸς τροπαί of B31 so that, with this adjective, Heraclitus 'forges the link between his doctrine of opposites and his cosmology'.

in terms of its criticism, because it would not refer back to the adequate text that would prove the alleged Parmenidean controversy, since it could only be accepted if we suppose Parmenides did not see that contraries – not contradiction or contradicting –[46] resolve into unity for Heraclitus, and not into mutual exclusion.

Most of the interpretations of B6.9 take for granted that the backward turning path mentioned by the goddess is a critical characterization of the Ephesian's theory of contraries, because they take the particle δὲ as linking two censorship clauses (οἷς… νενόμισται, / … δὲ… [οἷς] ἐστι κέλευθος). Nonetheless, if we read δὲ as strongly adversative,[47] the last phrase will not belong to the description of the contradictory path of the bicephalous creatures anymore, but will be instead a conclusion that disputes what is stated above by expressing an opposition to the division of two contrary paths presented in B6.3-4: 'I've held you back (εἴργω) (or begun with- ἄρξω) from one way, and then from (or with) the other… but in reality the route is circular'. In B5, the only other Parmenidean fragment where the adverb πάλιν is used, the goddess declares the cyclic and circular nature of her path, and that the beginning and the goal are indistinct, in the same way the contour of a circle is indistinguishable from its circumference.

Through the adjective παλίντροπος, the goddess describes how mortal wanderers tread the same circular path as if it had different goals. But (δὲ), in the apparent disjunction of alternatives, there is actually only one path, only one goal, and the idea of unity that underlies the two opposing options is, without a doubt, a Heraclitean subject.

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[46] Cf. M. Conche 1996, p. 106: 'En 6. 8-9, l'unité des opposés est l'unité des contradictoires. Ce n'est pas celle qu'a théorisée Héraclite'.

[47] See Hermann, 2009, p. 275 and Denniston, 1954², p. 165-166. Thus in Parm. B7.5: κρῖναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον. R. Cherubin (2004, p. 5) is the only translation that I know of that interprets the particle δὲ as adversative, and translates it as 'but'.

The bicephalous mortals, the crossroads,
and the circular path of the goddess

The great majority of the occurrences of the adjective δίκρανος in the *corpus* are in late texts, lexicographers, and *scholia*, so that the Parmenidean use is not only the first proved, but also the only one in all of the archaic literature.[48] Hesychius' entry for this word is such an accurate explanation of its meaning in the *Poem* that we could even suspect the lexicographer was thinking precisely of Parmenides' verse: [49]

<δικράνους>· τὰς τριόδους· δεῖ δὲ νοεῖν <δικράνους> τὰς ἀπὸ μιᾶς ἀρχῆς ἐπὶ δύο ἐκνευούσας, οἶον δύο τέλη ἐχούσας

(Delta 1830.1, K. Latte)

'bicephalous': the junction of three paths (the crossroads); we must consider it bicephalous, because, from a single beginning it then forks, as if it has two goals.[50]

The tie between bichephalousness and the image of the three-path junction is eye-opening. If the path reaches a crossroads, the initial path now incorporates the two paths into which it is forked; thus, it cannot be considered one path, but three, that allegedly reach two different goals. If the traveler that reaches this intersection of three paths was a bicephalous creature, she could see each of the forking paths with a different face.

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[48] The meaning 'pitchfork' appears in a condensed metaphor in Aristophanes' *Peace* (v. 637, τήνδε μὲν δικροῖς ἐώθουν τὴν θεὸν κεκράγμασιν). A text that could be an important testimony of the ancient reception of the image of the bicephalous creatures is the comic poet Cratinus (fr. 161 KA): κρανία δισσὰ φορεῖν, ὀφθαλμοὶ δ' οὐκ ἀριθματοί (see A. Capra & Martinelli-Tempesta 2011). I thank Sergi Grau for drawing my attention to this.

[49] Untersteiner refers to this text, 1958, p. 134-135.

[50] I thank Jaume Pòrtulas for his comments on this text.

Δίκρανοι =
τρίοδος
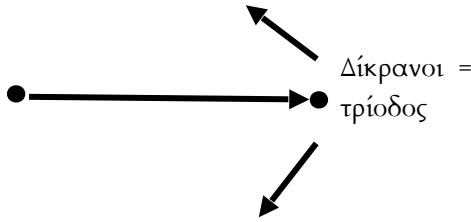
The question is if that fork really leads to two different goals. If we consider the *backward turning path* of B6.9 as an answer to this question, and that, moreover, the path is circular, as stated on B5, Parmenides' verses would draw the figure of two semi-circles, whose goal would be one and the same.[51]

Δίκρανοι = τρίοδος
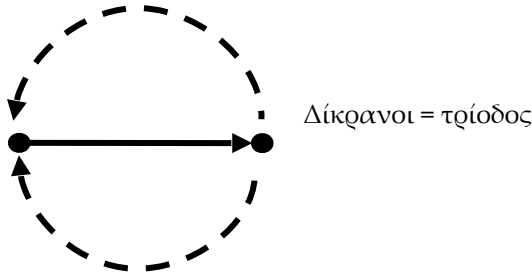
If, following this chain of ideas, we think of Heraclitus' fragments B60 and B103 ('the path up and down is one and the same' and 'the beginning and end on a circle are common'),[52] the Parmenidean reference to the bicephalous wanderer turns out to be surprisingly Heraclitean: Parmenides scolds two-headed creatures for being unable to realize they are only going round and round, and that, at the end of

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[51] The double path running in opposite directions reminds us of boustrophedon. Recently, it has been proposed that some verses of the *Poem* could be read in boustrophedon (see Année 2012, p. 31, 73 and subsq., and 163, n. 5); for example, the verse B8.2, where the anastrophe of the preposition ἐπί suggests a bidirectional composition.

[52] ξυνὸν γὰρ ἀρχὴ καὶ πέρας ἐπὶ κύκλου. On the context of the quotation from B103, see. *infra*, p. 62. Note that here the use of ξυνὸν is very close to the use in Parm. B5. On this subject, see Osborne, 2006, p. 234-235, who, incidentally, ends up suggesting 'that Heraclitus' observation is a deliberate criticism of Parmenides' circular reasoning'.

their journey, they will inevitably reach the starting point, doomed to make the exact same incorrect decision at the ontological κρίσις. Hence, the παλίντροπος κέλευθος is not a negative description of the Heraclitean upward and downward way, but rather a characterization, from the goddess' perspective, of the unity and sameness of the three paths that mortals are unable to see and understand. The criticism, thus, concurs with that uttered against the particular understanding of Heraclitus' πολλοί.[53]

Heraclitus' polypeiros, Parmenides' polymathés

There are ties between each of these thinkers' philosophy that are not limited to lexical coincidences, some of which, as I demonstrated, are not conclusive, and indicate certain general philosophical agreements within more specific dissents, that are not always conveyed through a word in common. That is the case of the adjective πολύπειρος:

> μηδέ σ' ἔθος πολύπειρον ὁδὸν κατὰ τήνδε βιάσθω,
> νωμᾶν ἄσκοπον ὄμμα καὶ ἠχήεσσαν ἀκουήν
> καὶ γλῶσσαν, κρῖναι δὲ λόγωι πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον
> ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα. (B7.3-6)

> (…) and don't let habit force you to cast aimless eye,
> reverberating ear and tongue along this way
> where many things are experienced, but judge
> through reason the much-contesting argument
> spoken by me.
>
> (Tr. A. Nehamas)

Verse number three was transmitted to us through two sources. Sextus Empiricus quotes it in two occasions (*Adv. Math.* 7.111 and

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[53] Cf. Heraclitus, B2, B17, B29, and B104.

7.114) and believes the fragment to be critical of the senses and a praise to the power of reason. The *multiple experience* is composed by sight, hearing, and tongue, that together constitute the ἔθος the goddess condemns. The other source, Diogenes Laërtius (9.22), takes the same stance and introduces the quote from B7.3-6 opposing the senses to the λόγος (to which he refers with the *terminus technicus* κριτήριον). [54]

The ἀπὸ κοινοῦ position of the adjective πολύπειρον stands out in these verses, where it can be read as agreeing with ὁδὸν or ἔθος.[55] In theory, it would seem more natural to opt for the agreement with ἔθος, not only because it is semantically close to πεῖρα and ἐμπειρία, but also because the trochaic caesura that divides the verse goes right after the adjective; but the compositional device of ἀπὸ κοινοῦ can also be found in other fragments by the Eleatic,[56] and, incidentally, it is widely used by Heraclitus from the beginning of his book, with the famous ἀεί Aristotle criticized (*Rhet.* 1407b). The sole idea of a πολυπειρία, a multiple experience, an expansion of the processes of experience, is reminiscent of Heraclitus' thought. The Ephesian shows that an extensive quest is needed if we want to find something that is truly valuable (B22): for Heraclitus, the δίζησις is a tenacious excavation where the effective extractions are minimal. The satisfaction that stems from the searching process and not from the result can be read as a

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[54] See Kurfess, 2012, p. 29: '(…) they (sc. Diogenes and Sextus) appear to be relying on the same (probably Stoic) source for the interpretation they record'.

[55] Practically all of Parmenides' translators have chosen to understand the adjective with ἔθος. Coxon (1986) and Nehamas (2002) are, as far as I know, the only exception, since the first one translates 'empirical way', and the second, 'this way where many things are experienced' (p. 59). Nehamas considers 'much-experienced' a bad translation, because the adjective expresses a clearly negative sense (n. 50), see n. 65 *infra*. See Kurfess (2012, p. 46, n. 74), who mentions the possibility of reading it with ὁδόν, and considers it 'a deliberate syntactical ambiguity'.

[56] In B8.53 (μορφὰς γὰρ κατέθεντο δύο γνώμας ὀνομάζειν·), the numeral δύο can be interpreted as agreeing with μορφὰς or with γνώμας (Coxon, 1986: 'For they resolved to name two Forms' / R. Cherubin, 2005, p. 2: 'mortals laid down two judgments or opinions to name forms or appearances'). In B1.10, the syntagm εἰς φάος can be read with πέμπειν in B1.8 or with προλιποῦσαι in B1.9; and in B4.1, the noun νόῳ can be read with λεῦσσε, with λεῦσσε and παρεόντα, with ἀπεόντα and παρέοντα, or only with παρεόντα. On the constructions of ἀπὸ κοινοῦ, see Des Places, 1962, p. 1-12.

metaphor of the criticized πολυμαθία in fragments DK 40 and 129. On the contrary, those who, after digging intently, have finally found the gold have been able to channel their multiple experience to a gratifying result, so that their searching process is no longer only a πολυμαθία, but something like a πολυπειρία.

Although Heraclitus does not use the adjective πολύπειρος, in a passage from Plato's *Laws* (819a3-a6) πολυμαθία and πολυπειρία come together, and he uses them as equivalent and complementary terms.[57] The πολυμαθία Heraclitus criticizes in Xenophanes and Pythagoras (B40 and B129), and the πολυπειρία Parmenides' goddess condemns could be two aspects of the same intellectual activity: ἱστορίη[58]. Parmenides and Heraclitus are against the knowledge of ἱστορίη because, for both, the creation and encouragement of a variety of experiences, standpoints, and knowledges is not enough. Just as, according to Heraclitus, one must dig *a lot* in order to find gold, it is also necessary to contrast the truth to the δόξαι that, in Parmenides, are of an undoubtedly polymathic nature. [59] The πολυμαθίη Heraclitus disapproves of is conceived by Parmenides as a necessary phase of the goddess' teaching (the δόξαι), while the πολυπειρία that Parmenides condemns is, for Heraclitus, a necessary condition to hear the λόγος.

Heraclitus' proem speaks about those who:

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[57] See also *Laws* 811a5.

[58] The relationship between πολυμαθία and ἱστορία is guaranteed by Heraclitus' B129. The relationship between πολυπειρία and ἱστορία can be inferred through the mention to the senses immediately after the binomial πολύπειρον ὁδὸν. Moreover, the knowledge faculties presented in Parm. B7 describe very well the historical Herodotean method based on sight and audition (e.g., *Histories* 2.99.1), that a scholar described as 'a thoroughgoing empiricism' (Lloyd, 1975, p. 163-64).

[59] See Plut. *Adv. Col.* 1114b10-c2: καὶ γὰρ περὶ γῆς εἴρηκε **πολλὰ** καὶ περὶ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης καὶ ἄστρων καὶ γένεσιν ἀνθρώπων ἀφήγηται· καὶ **οὐδὲν ἄρρητον** (…). Strabo (2.2.2), based on Posidonius, attributes geographical knowledge to Parmenides. Later sources have come to saddle Parmenides with knowledge of what we would call mythical history (Suetonius in *Mélanges Miller* = DK28 B24).

ἀπείροισιν ἐοίκασιν, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτεων ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγεῦμαι (…) (B1)

(…) they are alike the inexperienced experiencing words and deeds such as I explain (…)

(Tr. Graham)

The paradox of an inexperienced experience assumes that, in order to understand the λόγος, one has to have an expert and competent experience. Heraclitus uses a series of examples drawn from concrete experiences (the bow, the lyre, the upward and downward paths, the rivers, dream, wakefulness, etc.) as models that embody the encounter between human beings and the world. Knowledge arises from the inductive elucidation of an existent connection between these varied particular experiences that involve the participation of the senses.[60] Parmenides' goddess, conversely, separates her pupil from the ὁδός πολύπειρος, the realm of senses. This Heraclitean proclivity to nourish and expand experience would also explain his approval of the testimony given by the senses, as he expresses in some fragments:

ὅσων ὄψις ἀκοὴ μάθησις, ταῦτα ἐγὼ προτιμέω. (B55)

The things of which there is sight, hearing, experience, I prefer.

(Tr. Graham)

Here, Heraclitus praises emphatically[61] the empirical acquisition of knowledge. His accolade to the sensorial faculties is clearly opposed to the goddess's words in B7.[62] Nonetheless, this does not mean that the

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60 See Graham, 2009, p. 84–85.

61 The pronoun ἐγὼ, used only in this fragment, in B1, and in its reflexive form in B101 (ἐδιζησάμην ἐμεωυτόν), must be read as a strong affirmation.

62 Mondolfo (1961, p. 412) had already proposed, following Kranz (1916, p 1175) and Albertelli (1939, p. 142), that B7.3 was a criticism to Heraclitus' B55.

senses always collaborate in the construction of an authentic experience, since

ἀξύνετοι ἀκούσαντες κωφοῖσιν ἐοίκασι· (B34)

Having heard without comprehension they are like deaf (…)
(Tr. Graham)

The deaf here, reminiscent of the men who are unable to understand the λόγος before, and even after having heard it for the first time (B1), are similar to the ones the goddess criticizes in B6.7. So, the only authentic listening would be nourished by a πολυπειρία, capable of experiencing and understanding the facts and words Heraclitus describes.

Palintropic metaphysics

The role of πολυμαθία in Parmenides' epistemic plan can be explained through the diagram of the παλίντροπος κέλευθος. Let us consider that fr. B6 as well as the entire poem represent the crossroads of ontology and polymathy. The junction of paths is the κρίσις between 'it is' and 'it is not'. If the traveler decides to take the correct path ('it is'), she could head for the metaphysical revelation of being. Only after receiving the core of the Parmenidean ontology she would be capable of walking towards the πολυμαθία (the cosmogonic, cosmologic, astronomic, theogonic, embryologic discourses). But if an uncritical decision at the crossroads leads the traveller to the forbidden path, she would be trapped in a fraction of reality,[63] in the circular labyrinth of mortal opinion. The difference between the two cases would be that

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[63] See Nehamas, 2002, p. 59: 'They (sc. the senses) tell us that the world around us, the changing world we perceive, is all there is (…)'. The goddess wants to prevent her pupil from the mistake of 'thinking that what you see along this way of inquiry is all there is (…)'.

Παλίντροπος κέλευθος
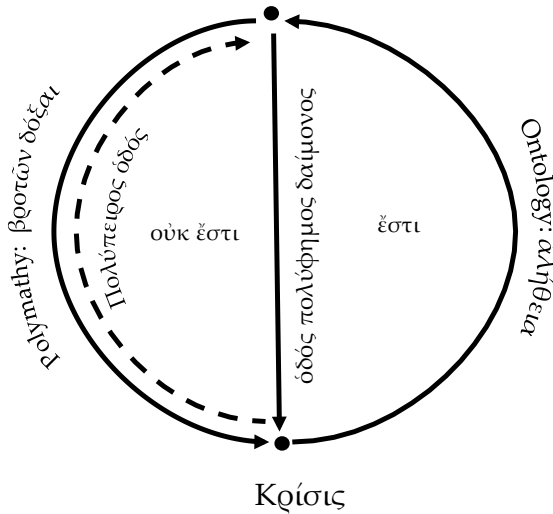
only the first traveller, after knowing the ἀλήθεια, is able to locate the πολυμαθία in the place that is gnoseologically and ontologically allotted to it: the simple opinion.

Parmenides' philosophical κρίσις separates the goddess' explanation into two opposite poles (ἀλήθεια and δόξαι). Some scholars have pointed out that Parmenides' *Poem* shares Heraclitus' crucial philosophical thesis of the unity of contraries.[64] However, we would have to distinguish, in order to accept this, two different forms of unity of

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[64] See Burkert, 1969, p. 15-16; Furley 1973, p. 5. Primavesi (2013, p. 74) describes the passage from δόξα to ἀλήθεια as that from 'l'illusion d'une alternance à la reconnaissance de l'unité'. See Bredlow 2000, p. 215-216; Curd 1998, p. 121-122; Popper, 1998, p. 207, n. 21. Against the assimilation of the Parmenidean Being into the unity of opposites, see Kahn, (1970, p. 119) and Mourelatos (2008, p. 362), who thinks that conceiving the unity through opposition, the great contribution of Heraclitus, is precisely what Parmenides prevents with the κρίσις.

contraries, as S. Austin (2010) proposes: an 'upward model', according to which the opposites are one and their unity is visible and expressed in and through the opposites themselves – the day and night that, according to Heraclitus, were unknown to Hesiod –, and a 'downward model', where the unity of opposites lies beyond the flow of contraries and aside from it – Parmenides' Being. Only one of the poles is championed as truthful and genuine, which would prompt us to believe, as it is commonly thought, that Parmenides was allergic to the Heraclitean idea of unity in opposition. Nonetheless, the conditioning of one pole (the δόξαι) to the other makes the opposition the starting point of this κρίσις, even if this is later overcome. In more anachronistic terms, the Heraclitean *coincidentia* is immanent to opposites, whereas the Parmenidean transcends them.

A road with many boundaries?

I maintain that the adjective πολύπειρον in fr. 7.3, 'much experienced',[65] whether in grammatical agreement with ἔθος (neuter nominative) or with ὁδὸν (feminine accusative), was potentially indistinguishable of some forms of the adjective πολυπείρων ('of multiple boundaries'),[66] which could have played a role in the aural creation of the ambiguity of this verse,[67] related to the effect of the ἀπὸ κοινοῦ position. More specifically, the feminine accusative form πολυπείρονα with the elided final short alpha would be aurally

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[65] This adjective is used in Ar. *Lys.*1109 in a pejorative sense, 'very sneaky'.

[66] The adjective πολυπείρων is used in *h. Cer.* 296 (πολυπείρονα λαὸν), and in Orph. A.33 it appears, meaningfully, in the binomial πολυπείρονας οἴμους.

[67] On aural semantics of pre-Socratic texts, see Gianvittorio, 2010, p. 59.68, who provides solid arguments to support that purposeful ambiguity defines the language of archaic wise men.

indiscernible from πολύπειρον for the audience.[68]

μηδέ σ' ἔθος πολυπείρον' ὁδὸν κατὰ τήνδε βιάσθω

and don't let habit force you along this way with many boundaries

The paronymy of the composed adjective between πεῖρα ('experience') and πεῖραρ/πεῖρας ('limit') would thus create a pendular meaning, oscillating between the multiplicity of experiences and that of boundaries. The meaning of 'limit' has already been a concern for Porphyry (*Quaestionum Homericarum ad Iliadem pertinentem* Ξ 200 and sbsq.): Homer calls Earth ἄπειρον in many occasions (*Od.* 1.97-98, *Il.* 20.58, etc.), but also speaks of the πείρατα γαίης (*Il.* 14.200). How could the Earth be finite and endless at the same time? (πεπερασμένην ἅμα δ' ἀπείρονα).

The answer to this problem is that ἄπειρον means, among other things, 'finite' (πεπερασμένον) but 'unintelligible' for human beings. After offering many other possible meanings —and, after quoting Heraclitus' fr. 103 DK, by the way–[69] Porphyry suggests that the circle can be described as infinite (ἄπειρον ἐκάλουν τὸν κύκλον), and that the privative alpha could also express abundance, so that an infinite circle is also a 'much bounded' one (οὕτω καὶ ἄπειρος κύκλος ὁ

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[68] There was no preferred form in the 'original recitation' of the *Poem*. There may have existed old editions of Parmenides that transmitted πολυπείρον', a reading that nowadays is not supported by any manuscript. The fact that πολύπειρον is *facilior* in relation to πολυπείρον' could have had a role in its survival, in terms of its lexical incidence. But we are not required to even believe that all of the written tradition of which we do have sources guarantees the reading πολύπειρον in the 'original'. It is noteworthy that all of Sextus' manuscripts (*Adv. Math.*, 7.111, 7.114) repeat in B7.5 a πολύπειρον that is located two verses before; this adjective is even found outside the quotation *in extenso* of 7.111, in the paraphrasis of 7.114. Diogenes (9.22), on the contrary, quotes πολύδηριν —ἅπαξ λεγόμενον, *lectio difficilior* and agreed upon unanimously by modern editors. Is it a simple substitution of a rare word with a more common one? Of course, we cannot know for sure, but it is at least plausible that the duplication of the adjective πολύπειρον indicates that the copyist still had in mind the ambiguity of this adjective, so that, when finding an adjective in πολυ- some lines afterwards, he repeated it unconsciously.

[69] See *supra* n. 52.

πολυπείρων· 14.200.41-49).

The goddess insists on the idea that Being is contained within limits (B8.26-27, B8.30-32, B8.42 and B8.49) that are reduced in the end to a single and ultimate limit, beyond which, nothing exists. The phrase πολυπείρονα ὁδόν would then reflect the two-headed mortals' perception of the παλίντροπος κέλευθος. While the goddess presents it as a circular path (cf. B5), the circumference is lined by a series of goals for those who have a *wandering thought*. When mortals reach out for these, they overlook the πεῖρας πύματον that holds being and keeps it still: the affirmation of its identity towards itself.

The πολυπείρον' reading does not only suggest a subtle critical reinterpretation of Anaximander's ἄπειρον,[70] but it would also evoke a similar idea to the one expressed in Heraclitus' fr. B45. The path that leads to the limits of the soul is boundless, because the soul itself is limitless (ἄπειρον) (Kahn, p. 128). This idea of a path without a final boundary, that is, a final goal, because its final destination is impossible to reach, is very similar to the one expressed by Parmenides' πολυπείρονα ὁδόν. Given that the concept of limit itself implies an ending and a goal, stating that a path has multiple limits is equivalent to say that it is impossible to find only one limit to it, and, therefore, that it is somehow unlimited. The Heraclitean πᾶσα ὁδός that never reaches the πείρατα of the soul is like the road with many boundaries that Parmenides criticizes.

Conclusions

Both Heraclitus' and Parmenides' thought share ἱστορίη, in the broader sense of the term, through πολυπειρία and πολυμαθία, respectively. The Heraclitean πολυπειρίη must result in the affirmation of the unity of contraries; the Parmenidean πολυμαθίη, in spite of

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[70] On the connection between Anaximander's ἄπειρον and the Parmenidean thesis, see Mourelatos (2008, p. 363).

being a necessary part of the παλίντροπος κέλευθος, must admit its own deficiency, its inevitable dependence on the δόξα, and its impossibility of becoming a truth.

Even though Heraclitus' and Parmenides' philosophies deep down agree in the proposal of an unchanging entity – that, besides, receives different names, λόγος and ἐόν –, they diverge in the way they incorporate plurality and multiplicity, as well as in their judgment of the potential value of the accumulation of knowledge in relation to their fundamental ontological principle.

Parmenides built his ontological doctrine in a palintropic manner; the method of his thought is configured like a path with many different phases that gradually leads the audience from one place to another, but in each part of the journey makes the traveler retrace her steps, analyze again the path she is treading in the light of the lessons drawn from walking previous paths.[71] After arriving to the house of the goddess, and once she has exposed the plan of her teaching, the first goal is ontology, but this is not the final goal. Ontology leads to polymathy. Since this is a destination that can only be reached after receiving the teachings on Being, the goddess' polymathy is ontologically oriented, precisely because it took the right path in the critical crossroads, establishing thus its ontological and gnoseological status. The πολύπειρος ὁδός of B7 is, conversely, that road that was forbidden precisely because who took it made the incorrect decision at the *krísis*. Going over this path without having walked the trail of Being before creates a knowledge that is not ontologically nor epistemologically supported. It is, thus, an uncritical *doxa*, a polymathy that lacks ontology and keeps the mortals that dwell in its maze-like spiral trapped forever.

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[71] See Nehamas, 2002, p. 59: 'When he sets out on the way of the Doxa, the young man *must keep in mind the goddess's argument*: Being never changes at all, and therefore the changing things of the Doxa are other than Being-δοκοῦντα'. R. Cherubin (2004) underlines how the goddess' speech on Being is composed 'in the terms in which she does, only once those terms (or the sort of conception that employs them) have already appeared in the narrative of the journey' (p. 27).

The ΠΟΛΥΠΕΙΡΟΝ ὁδὸν could characterize Heraclitus' thought, whose main concern appears in the proem, in the description of men as seemingly inexpert in spite of their experience. Only through the accumulation of multiple experiences, based on what can be perceived through vision, audition, and apprehension (B55) it is possible to constitute an experienced *ethos* able to bring about the intelligent comprehension of that multiple experience, that is nothing more than recognizing what is common, unique, constant, unchanging, and fixed within the universal flow of things.

Like the path of the bicephalous mortals of B6, the structure of the poem presents a palintropic organization, as the declaration in B5 shows. This could be a general meta-reflection on divine discourse, and could have occurred many times (πάλιν) throughout the poem as a *leitmotif*.[72] Fragment B6 would be, in this sense, an image of the *Poem* within the poem, a sort of mirror where its structure and parts are reflected. The proem is the initial path that leads the reader to a crossroads, the ἀλήθεια on one side, the δόξαι on the other. The παλίντροπος κέλευθος is the *Poem* itself, an internal characterization of the three parts that constitute it, and that form together a circular and unique path that nevertheless has an order, a direction, and a defined and rigorous itinerary. If its natural order and correct direction are not followed, one risks getting trapped in a labyrinthine loop, locked away from the metaphysical revelation of Being. The proem leads to the ἀλήθεια that, in turn, leads to the *dóxai*, that, successively, lead back to the proem, to the repeated and repeatable experience of going over the many-voiced way of the goddess, and hence, of starting over, again and again, the ontological revelation.

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[72] The hypothesis of the use of *leitmotifs* in the *Poem*, that would require a separate study, could be supported through the frequent repetitions, often with variations, in Empedocles' fragments: *e.g.* DK26.5-12 – DK17.7-12, B75-B95, etc. On repetition as a composition device, see Bollack, 1969, p. 322-323).

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