

# Plutarch and Parmenides

*Jackson P. Hershbell*

**A**LTHOUGH PLUTARCH is not a major source for interpretation of Parmenides' poem, he preserves several fragments: B1.29–30; B8.4; B13, B14 and B15, the last two of which would otherwise be lost.<sup>1</sup> He also makes observations on Parmenides' style and thought, and relates one biographical incident.<sup>2</sup> Scholars of Plutarch and Parmenides are divided, however, on at least two problems: (1) What was the extent of Plutarch's knowledge of Parmenides, e.g. did he possess a copy of the complete poem, or was he working with second-hand sources such as compendia?<sup>3</sup> (2) How reliable and worthwhile is his interpretation of Parmenides?

Among those denying Plutarch extensive knowledge of Parmenides are Fairbanks, Ziegler and Tarán. According to Ziegler, Plutarch gave more attention to Parmenides than to Xenophanes, "aber doch nicht eingehender studiert."<sup>4</sup> Tarán also remarks, "Plutarch's knowledge of Parmenides' text does not appear to have been extensive."<sup>5</sup> H. Martin Jr and R. Westman, however, take a positive view. According to Martin, "Plutarch must have known Parmenides well, though he interpreted him anachronistically from a Platonic viewpoint."<sup>6</sup> On Martin's latter point there seems to be no scholarly disagreement, though Westman's remark that Plutarch's conception of the relationship between *Ἀλήθεια* and *Δόξα* in Parmenides' poem "war für einen, der in

<sup>1</sup> The list of quotations in W. C. Helmbold and E. N. O'Neil, *Plutarch's Quotations* (Baltimore 1959) 53–54, is incomplete: B1.29–30 at 1114D–E and B8.4 at 1114c are not included.

<sup>2</sup> The *Adv. Colot.* has extended discussion of Parmenides' philosophy, and the biographical note is at 1126B. Remarks on Parmenides' style are at *Quomodo adul.* 16c–D, *De rect.rat. aud.* 45A–B, and *De Pyth.or.* 402F.

<sup>3</sup> Discussing the doxography on the moon in *De fac.orb.lun.* 929A–F which includes Parmenides, A. Fairbanks wrote: "it is quite possible that Plutarch was using some Stoic compendium which quoted freely from the earlier philosophers." See "On Plutarch's Quotations from the Early Greek Philosophers," *TAPA* 28 (1897) 82.

<sup>4</sup> K. Ziegler, "Plutarchos 2," *RE* 21 (1951) 920.

<sup>5</sup> L. Tarán, *Parmenides* (Princeton 1965) 88.

<sup>6</sup> H. Martin Jr, "Amatorius, 756E–F: Plutarch's Citation of Parmenides and Hesiod," *AJP* 90 (1969) 199 n.36.

Platons Welt erzogen war, die einzig mögliche,"<sup>7</sup> is perhaps exaggerated in view of the evidence. For Plato's own thought seems influenced by that of Parmenides, and the relationship between the two parts of Parmenides' poem is still not clear. In any case, a review of the problems of Plutarch *vis-à-vis* Parmenides is in order and important not only for a better understanding of Plutarch's methodology and thought but also for a re-examination of some problems in connection with Parmenides' poem, especially the "Way of *Doxa*."<sup>8</sup>

Only one discussion of Plutarch and Parmenides is extensive, R. Westman's *Plutarch gegen Kolotes*. The *Adversus Colotem* contains, of course, the greater part of Plutarch's account of Parmenides, but there are references and quotations in other works of the *Moralia*. Westman's treatment is limited to *Adversus Colotem*, and there is also need to consider subsequent scholarship, notably Martin's discussion of Plutarch's interpretation of Parmenides' B13 at *Amatorius* 756E-F. In sum, a reasonably complete treatment of Plutarch on Parmenides is lacking, and the present study attempts to provide this.

Before examining Plutarch's text and interpretation of Parmenides, his biographical report and general comments on the poem need to be considered, especially since light may be shed on the problem of Plutarch's sources.

Near the end of *Adversus Colotem* where Plutarch discusses the political activity of the philosophers attacked by Colotes, he mentions that Parmenides ordered his own city with excellent laws (*νόμοις ἀρίστοις* 1126B) and that each year the citizens make the magistrates take an oath to abide by these laws. A similar report is given at Strabo 6.1.1 and Diogenes Laertius 9.23.<sup>9</sup> Strabo's account is brief and vague: . . . 'Ελέαν . . . , ἐξ ἧς Παρμενίδης καὶ Ζήνων ἐγένοντο ἄνδρες Πυθαγόρειοι. δοκεῖ δέ μοι καὶ δι' ἐκείνους καὶ ἔτι πρότερον εὐνομηθῆναι. Westman's remark, "es klingt fast wie eine Polemik gegen die Ansicht,

<sup>7</sup> R. Westman, *Plutarch gegen Kolotes* (= *Acta Philos. Fenn.* 7, 1955) 235.

<sup>8</sup> The "Way of *Doxa*" begins at B8.50. 'Seeming' or 'appearance' are conventional translations of *δόξα*, but 'guesswork' is perhaps closer to Parmenides' meaning. Thus K. von Fritz translates *δόκος* in Xenophanes in his "NOYΣ, NOEIN and their Derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy (excluding Anaxagoras), Part I. From the Beginnings to Parmenides," *CP* 40 (1945) 230 n.39. Von Fritz correctly remarks that Diels' translation of *δόκος* as 'Wahn' "falsely implies that the opinions of mortals are always wrong while Xenophanes says merely that they are always uncertain." Parmenides seems to have had a similar view of *δόξα*. *Doxa* is unreliable and deceptive, but nowhere is it declared absolutely false by Parmenides' goddess.

<sup>9</sup> H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*<sup>8</sup> I (Berlin 1956) A1 and A12.

Parmenides habe der Stadt Gesetze gegeben,"<sup>10</sup> may be correct, but there is no evidence that it is polemical. On the contrary, Strabo's comment *δοκεῖ δέ μοι* suggests he lacked detailed information on Parmenides' activity in Elea's political history. Diogenes' later report is more explicit than Strabo's: Parmenides gave laws to the citizens of Elea. He further remarks that his source for this is Speusippus' *Περὶ φιλοσόφων*. Burnet referred Strabo's report and that of Plutarch (or at least so Untersteiner interpreted Burnet) to Timaeus of Tauromenion.<sup>11</sup> In view of Plutarch's familiarity with Speusippus and Diogenes' reference to the latter's work, it is more likely that Plutarch's report was taken from Speusippus than from Timaeus.<sup>12</sup> In any case, Westman is probably correct in noting that the report seems like a typical *ὑπόμνημα* of Plutarch.<sup>13</sup>

Besides the previous biographical note, Plutarch makes three observations on Parmenides' poem: *Quomodo adul.* 16c–d; *De rect. rat. aud.*

<sup>10</sup> Westman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 242.

<sup>11</sup> Untersteiner wrote, *Parmenide: Testimonianze e frammenti* (Florence 1958) 40: "secondo il Burnet, pp. 171 nota 2, 311, le notizie raccolte in questo passo da Strabone e da Plutarcho risalirebbero a Timeo, ma forse si può pensare ad Antioco di Siracusa, citato subito dopo da Strabone nel nostro passo." Burnet's note, however, is unclear. After quoting Diogenes, Plutarch and Strabo *seriatim*, he remarks: "we can hardly doubt that this too comes from Timaios." Does Burnet mean that the report of all three, or only of Plutarch and Strabo, or of Strabo alone is derived from Timaeus? If Diogenes is included, Burnet's view is suspect, since Diogenes refers to Speusippus as his source (see Diog. Laert. 9.23 = A1.218D–K). Or does Burnet mean the report *also* comes from Timaeus as well as Speusippus, to whom he refers in his text (where Timaeus is not mentioned)?

<sup>12</sup> See R. M. Jones, *The Platonism of Plutarch* (Diss. Chicago 1916) 16. According to Jones, there are "numerous allusions to Speusippus and to the successors of Xenocrates." See also the references to Speusippus in Helmbold and O'Neil (*supra* n.1). Plutarch knew the work of Timaeus of Tauromenion (see Helmbold and O'Neil 72), but there is no good reason for attributing his report to Timaeus, especially since Diogenes mentions Speusippus as his source, and Plutarch knew the work of Plato's successors. The most convincing reason for regarding Speusippus as Plutarch's source is that the report is used in similar contexts. So, according to P. Lang, *De Speusippi Academici scriptis* (Diss. Bonn 1911, repr. Hildesheim 1965) 41–42, referred to by Westman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 242, Speusippus used Parmenides as an example that a philosopher can also be a lawgiver. In *Adv. Colot.* 1125c f, Plutarch argues that it is the Epicureans who abolish laws and withdraw from politics. Hence Colotes wrongly accuses philosophers of doing what the Epicureans really do. Contrary to Colotes, philosophers such as Democritus, Parmenides and Empedocles engaged in legislation (1126a f) and did not make it impossible to live. For a cautious assessment of the report on Parmenides, see W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy II* (Cambridge 1965) 2 n.3.

<sup>13</sup> Westman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 242. For Plutarch's use of *ὑπομνήματα* ('notebooks') see 464f and H. Martin Jr, "Plutarch's Citation of Empedocles at *Amatorius* 756d," *GRBS* 10 (1969) 70 n.32.

45A–B; and *De Pyth.or.* 402F.<sup>14</sup> Plutarch's remarks are not detailed, Parmenides being grouped with other ancient authors. Moreover, Plutarch has probably been influenced by Platonic and Aristotelian views of poetry. Despite these considerations, the references suggest Plutarch's familiarity with Parmenides' poem, if not in its entirety, at least not from excerpts or second-hand sources. An examination of the passages is in order.

In *Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat*, a copy of a lecture by Plutarch (see 15B), an ambivalent attitude is manifested toward poetry: in the *τέρπον* of poetry, the moral *χρήσιμον* must be sought (14F). After stating this, Plutarch observes that poets often lie intentionally in order to please (16A f). In fact, falsehood combined with plausibility (*πιθανότης*) is striking and prized *μᾶλλον τῆς ἀμύθου καὶ ἀπλάστου περιμέτρον καὶ λέξιν κατασκευῆς* (16C). All poetic compositions have myth and falsehood. Thus the verses of Empedocles and Parmenides, the *Theriaca* of Nicander and the maxims of Theognis are only compositions borrowing from poetry *ὥσπερ ὄχημα τὸ μέτρον καὶ τὸν ὄγκον, ἵνα τὸ πεζὸν διαφύγῃ* (16C–D). Commenting on this passage, Untersteiner remarks: “la condanna dei tardi critici, che non ebbero mai in mano le opere di Senofane, Parmenide, Empedocle, risale probabilmente ad Aristotele.”<sup>15</sup> Untersteiner's observation on Aristotle's influence may be correct, but the implication that Plutarch never had a copy of Parmenides' poem is suspect. On the contrary, Parmenides is grouped with other ancient authors whom Plutarch apparently knew well. For example, according to the so-called Lamprias Catalogue, Plutarch wrote on Nicander's *Theriaca* (no.120), and Stephanus Byzantius numbers Plutarch among those *ὑπομνηματίσαντες αὐτόν* (*scil.* Nicander).<sup>16</sup> An extensive work on Empedocles is also listed in the Catalogue, and judging from the number of quotations in the *Moralia*, Plutarch's familiarity with Empedocles is fairly extensive.<sup>17</sup> Plutarch probably had no special interest in Theognis (in eight passages he quotes alto-

<sup>14</sup> *De Pyth.or.* 402F is not cited in Helmbold and O'Neil (*supra* n.1).

<sup>15</sup> Untersteiner, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.11) 43, n. on A15. See also H. Diels, *Parmenides Lehrgedicht* (Berlin 1897) 4–5. For possible Aristotelian influence on Plutarch, see *Poet.* 1447b17. Aristotle is thinking specifically of Empedocles, but his observation also seems appropriate to Parmenides' poem.

<sup>16</sup> See Ziegler, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 699 and 878. The Catalogue is known for carelessness and incompleteness (see Ziegler 696–702). See also “Nicander” in Helmbold and O'Neil, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) 52.

<sup>17</sup> See my “Plutarch as a Source for Empedocles Re-examined,” *AJP* 92 (1971) 156–84.

gether five verses),<sup>18</sup> but this does not prove lack of firsthand acquaintance with Theognis' work. In sum, Plutarch's observation regarding Parmenides' "Way of Truth" (B2–B8.50) seems accurate, and at least one modern commentator, J. E. Raven, has supported it: "With the exception of the allegory of the proem . . . his (Parmenides') subject-matter is of the most prosaic order. His diction, moreover, besides being far from poetical, is often exceedingly obscure."<sup>19</sup>

In another pedagogical writing, *De recta ratione audiendi* (45A–B), a copy of a lecture sent to his student Nicandrus, Plutarch mentions Parmenides with authors whom he apparently knew well: μέμψαιτο δ' ἄν τις Ἀρχιλόχου μὲν τὴν ὑπόθεσιν, Παρμενίδου δὲ τὴν στιχοποιίαν, Φωκυλίδου δὲ τὴν εὐτέλειαν, Εὐριπίδου δὲ τὴν λαλίαν, Σοφοκλέους δὲ τὴν ἀνωμαλίαν. According to Ziegler, for example, Plutarch knew Archilochus: "hat er ihn doch gut gekannt und mehr als zwanzigmal zitiert, so dass wir nicht weniger als 12 Fragmente ihm allein verdanken."<sup>20</sup> Plutarch apparently had no great interest in Phocylides, but knew something of his work. He quotes him only twice, but the term εὐτέλεια seems especially descriptive of the gnomic, commonplace character of the extant fragments.<sup>21</sup> No doubt Plutarch was familiar with Sophocles and Euripides, and probably wrote on the latter (*Περὶ Εὐριπίδου*, Lamprias Catalogue no.224).<sup>22</sup>

The reference in *De recta ratione audiendi* is no conclusive evidence Plutarch had a copy of Parmenides' poem, but in view of the context with its mention of authors whom Plutarch knew well, Phocylides being a possible exception, there is little reason to accuse Plutarch of making a judgement not based on firsthand acquaintance with the poem. Although the disparagement of Parmenides' versification (στι-

<sup>18</sup> See Ziegler, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 916. See also H. Schläpfer, *Plutarch und die klassischen Dichter* (Zurich 1950) 28. Schläpfer writes: ". . . zu seiner Zeit war Theognis wie verschollen . . . und so erwähnt ihn auch Plutarch nur selten, wobei alle Zitate Stellen entnommen sind, die dem Altertum geläufig waren." Schläpfer's observation does not prove that Plutarch had no access to Theognis' works.

<sup>19</sup> G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge 1957) 265.

<sup>20</sup> Ziegler, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 916.

<sup>21</sup> See Ziegler's assessment, p.916. See also W. Kroll, "Phokylides," *RE* 20 (1941) 503–10. Schläpfer's remark on Plutarch and Phocylides, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.18) 27 n.6, "einen Phokylides kannte man kaum mehr dem Namen nach," seems hardly correct.

<sup>22</sup> Ziegler (*op.cit.* [*supra* n.4] 917) notes: "beiden älteren Tragikern weit voran steht in der Schätzung P.'s Euripides, obschon er natürlich oft an ihm Kritik zu üben findet. Er hat ihm eine eigene Schrift gewidmet . . . und ihn doppelt so oft zitiert wie Aischylos und Sophokles zusammen." Schläpfer gives a similar judgement, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.18) 48.

χοποιία) is not unique,<sup>23</sup> it is hard to believe this was based on a few verses culled from compendia. The criticism is fairly sweeping and in conjunction with Plutarch's other references to and quotations from Parmenides, suggests his familiarity with a large portion of the poem.

The third allusion to Parmenides is at *De Pythiae oraculis* 402F. In response to Diogenianus' query as to why the Delphic priestess ceased to give oracles in metrical form (the dialogue's *Hauptthema*; see 397D),<sup>24</sup> Philinus notes that philosophers also formerly published their doctrines in poems, e.g. Orpheus, Hesiod, Parmenides, Xenophanes, Empedocles and Thales. Now all have ceased using metrical form except Sarapion, a participant in the dialogue. This change from poetry to prose, however, does not mean the end of philosophy or of prophecy (403A). Philinus' observation on the disappearance of poetry from philosophy and probably from prophecy seems accurate.<sup>25</sup> All the thinkers mentioned by him, except perhaps Orpheus and Thales, wrote in verse. That Orpheus composed in verse was a commonplace in antiquity.<sup>26</sup> About Thales' written works there was doubt (see 403A, where Plutarch questions his authorship of the *Astrology*).<sup>27</sup> In any case, Parmenides and Empedocles were the last important Greek philosophers to write in verse, and Philinus is correct in citing them as examples.

In the previous three references, Parmenides is mentioned with authors whom Plutarch generally knew well, or probably as well as anyone in antiquity. Plutarch's biography suggests that he had access to a copy of Parmenides' poem. Although the library at Chaeronea was not extensive (see Plutarch's complaints at *V. Demosth.* 2.1 and *De E ap. Delph.* 384E), Plutarch traveled to Athens, Alexandria and Rome. While at Athens, he studied with Ammonius, by whom he was intro-

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Diels, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.15) 7: "dass seine Verse oft holprig, seine Prosa die ungewöhnlich, der dichterische Ausdruck nicht selten ungeschickt und streckenweit lediglich Prosa der dürrsten Art ist, dass die paar poetischen Metaphern durch Wiederholung zu Tode gehetzt werden . . . wer will das leugnen?" A. Mourelatos finds these judgements harsh. Yet he speaks of "metrical" and "expressive awkwardness." See his *The Route of Parmenides* (New Haven 1970) 3f, 35f and 246f.

<sup>24</sup> So Ziegler, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.4) 829.

<sup>25</sup> According to F. C. Babbitt (Plutarch, *Moralia* V [LCL 1957] 256), almost all Delphic oracles were in hexametric verse, and though there is "no means of determining the truth of Plutarch's statement . . . there is little doubt that he is right." Plutarch probably wrote a treatise no longer extant on oracles: *Χρησμάτων συναγωγή*, no.171 of the Catalogue.

<sup>26</sup> See M. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*<sup>2</sup> I (Münich 1961) 682.

<sup>27</sup> On the problem of Thales' authorship, see Kirk and Raven, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.19) 85.

duced to the Academy, and in *de E apud Delphos* Plutarch refers to the advantages of Athens with its “many books” (384E). Although, according to Plutarch, the great library at Alexandria was burnt when Julius Caesar was besieged (*V.Caes.* 49), it is unlikely that total destruction was involved. While at Rome, Plutarch also had access to various libraries as well as a research staff.<sup>28</sup> In short, Plutarch had opportunity to consult a copy of Parmenides. Moreover, Plutarch’s general comments on the poem do not exhaust his treatment of Parmenides. He preserves several fragments and interprets Parmenides’ thought. All these factors suggest, contrary to Fairbanks, that he studied Parmenides for himself, though the extent of his interest needs to be determined.<sup>29</sup>

Three reasons have been offered for denying Plutarch extensive or studied knowledge of Parmenides: (1) some quotations seem fairly common in antiquity (B1.29–30, B8.4 and B13) and, moreover, the number of quotations is not great; (2) two quotations seem inaccurately rendered; (3) the influence of Plato (and Aristotle) is notable in the case of some fragments, e.g. B13, and generally Plutarch’s discussion of Parmenides seems anachronistic, displaying Platonic overtones. These three contentions must now be examined.

First, although it is true that one fragment, B13, is quoted by Plato and Aristotle and that Plutarch’s discussion was also influenced by them, Martin has demonstrated that Plutarch’s interpretation of the text is more accurate than either Plato’s or Aristotle’s, and that there is good indication that Plutarch examined the context of the poem for himself.<sup>30</sup> In any case, Plutarch’s discussion of B13 (correctly quoted by him, *πρώτιστον μὲν Ἔρωτα θεῶν μητίεατο πάντων*) is consistent with that of Simplicius, who probably had a complete text of Parmenides’ poem and who made some illuminating comments on the fragment.<sup>31</sup> As for B1.29–30 and B8.4, it should be noted that Plutarch

<sup>28</sup> See C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford 1971) 84.

<sup>29</sup> According to Fairbanks (*op.cit.* [*supra* n.3] 82), there is an “absence of any evidence that Plutarch had studied the work of Parmenides for himself, or had any interest in it except through his interest in Plato.” This is an extreme judgement and unwarranted by the evidence.

<sup>30</sup> See Martin’s conclusions on *Amat.* 756E–F, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.6) 197f.

<sup>31</sup> Simplicius’ remark at *Phys.* 144.25 strongly suggests that he had a complete copy of the poem. The text is in H. Diels (ed.), *Simplicii in Aristotelis Physicorum libros quattuor priores commentaria* (*Comm. in Arist. Graeca* IX [Berlin 1882]) 144.25–28: *καὶ εἴ τῳ μὴ δοκῶ γλίεχρος, ἡδέως ἂν τὰ περὶ τοῦ ἐνός ὄντος ἔπη τοῦ Παρμενίδου μηδὲ πολλὰ ὄντα τοῖςδε τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι*

appears to be our earliest source for these verses: B1.29–30 are quoted by Clement, Sextus, Proclus and Simplicius; B8.4 is quoted by Clement, Eusebius, Theodoretus, Philoponus and Simplicius.<sup>32</sup> In short, it is misleading to observe, as Fairbanks does, that these quotations were common in antiquity, since they appear in authors later than Plutarch.<sup>33</sup> Plutarch also preserves two fragments, B14 and B15, not quoted elsewhere. Possibly the previous verses of Parmenides were quoted by authors before Plutarch whose works are lost to us. Such an assumption, however, seems unwarranted by the evidence.

Second, Plutarch's accuracy in quoting B1.29–30 and B8.4 has been much discussed. Both, however, occur in *Adversus Colotem*, which is extant in two mss only, **E** and **B**, both late and notorious for confluations and lacunae.<sup>34</sup> In the case of B1.29–30, quoted by Plutarch at 1114D probably as ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος ἀτρεκέες ἦτορ, ἀτρεκ[ ] is followed by a blank of seven letters.<sup>35</sup> In B8.4, quoted by Plutarch at 1114c possibly as follows: οὐλομελέε τε καὶ ἀτρεμέε ἡδ' ἀγένητον, οὐλομελέε may be a conflation of οὐλον μουνογενέε, resulting from a scribe's error and not Plutarch's.<sup>36</sup> In both cases, there are several variants of the fragments in antiquity,<sup>37</sup> and Plutarch seems no less reliable than other ancient authors in quoting the lines. Moreover, it is not clear that Plutarch intended B8.4 to be a complete quotation. Ἔστι γὰρ was probably not part of the quotation (it precedes οὐλομελέε κτλ. quoted above but there omitted), and Westman may be correct, despite his effort to reconstruct the line, in noting "es geht dem Plutarch nicht darum, einen bestimmten Vers des Parmenides zu zitieren, sondern darum, Parmenides' Seinsbegriff zu charakterisieren."<sup>38</sup>

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παραγράφαιμι διὰ τε τὴν πίστιν τῶν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ λεγομένων καὶ διὰ τὴν σπάνιν τοῦ Παρμενιδείου συγγράμματος.

<sup>32</sup> For B1.29–30, see Tarán, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 8 and 16–17; for B8.4, *ibid.* 82 and 88–93.

<sup>33</sup> See Fairbanks, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.3) 81–82.

<sup>34</sup> For an informative discussion of the manuscript tradition, see Westman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 15–17.

<sup>35</sup> Tarán (*op.cit.* [*supra* n.5] 16–17) quotes the line: ἡμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμέε ἦτορ, noting that Jameson, Deichgräber and Fränkel prefer εὐπειθέος; Fränkel prefers ἀτρεκέεε to ἀτρεμέεε.

<sup>36</sup> Cherniss' suggestion to Tarán, *ibid.* 92. Tarán quotes B8.4: οὐλον μουνογενέε τε καὶ ἀτρεμέεε ἡδὲ τελεετόν.

<sup>37</sup> For variants of B1.29–30 see *ibid.* 8; for those of B8.4, *ibid.* 82.

<sup>38</sup> Westman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 238. For a brief, unconvincing rejection of Westman's proposed reading μούνον τ', οὐλομελέε τε καὶ ἀτρεμέεε ἡδ' ἀτέλεετον, see Tarán, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 91.



In support of Westman's observation, it should be noted that Plutarch tends to paraphrase lines of Parmenides' poem, or to use terms taken from it, working them into his own discussion. The following seem to be examples of this practice. In 929A, B14 quoted at *Adv. Colot.* 1116A is probably paraphrased or alluded to as *φωτὸς ἄλλοτρίου δεομένη* (i.e. *κελήνη*). In 1114B Plutarch maintains that Parmenides . . . *καὶ διάκοσμον πεποιήται, καὶ στοιχεῖα μιγνύς τὸ λαμπρὸν καὶ σκοτεινὸν ἐκ τούτων τὰ φαινόμενα πάντα καὶ διὰ τούτων ἀποτελεῖ. Διάκοσμον πεποιήται* probably echoes the *διάκοσμος* announced in B8.60 of Parmenides' poem.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, although only Plutarch names the Parmenidean elements *φῶς* (or *πῦρ*) and *νύξ* (see B8.56–59 and B9.1–3) “*λαμπρὸν*” and “*σκοτεῖνον*,” his designations are preferable to the usual terminology of later reporters, *πῦρ* and *γῆ*.<sup>40</sup> More important, Plutarch's remark at *Adv. Colot.* 1114B–C that Parmenides said much *περὶ γῆς . . . καὶ περὶ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἡλίου καὶ κελήνης* parallels the first verse of B11 quoted by Simplicius, *De caelo* 559.31; *πῶς γαῖα καὶ ἥλιος ἠδὲ κελήνη*. With the exception of Plutarch's *οὐρανοῦ*, the order is the same: earth, sun and moon. Moreover, in verse 2 of B11 a *γάλα οὐράνιον* is posited by Parmenides, and Plutarch's mention of *οὐρανός* is probably supported by Parmenides' *τά τ' ἐν αἰθέρι πάντα | σήματα καὶ καθαρᾶς εὐαγέος ἡελίοιο* in B10.1f. Lastly, in 756E–F Plutarch may give a title, if not of the whole of Parmenides' poem, at least of the second part: *κοσμογονία*.<sup>41</sup>

In sum, it is difficult to accuse Plutarch of carelessness in quoting Parmenides since he tends to paraphrase. This may well be the case with B8.4. Moreover, it is tempting to conclude from the paucity and brevity of fragments quoted that Plutarch relied on his memory and did not use notebooks (*ὑπομνήματα*) when discussing or referring to Parmenides' poem.

<sup>39</sup> Westman (*op.cit.* [*supra* n.7] 240) remarks: “am Anfang des Berichtes hat Plutarch das Wort *διάκοσμος* offenbar aus Parmenides selbst (B8.60).”

<sup>40</sup> Westman correctly notes that ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ are usually interpreted as *πῦρ* and *γῆ* by ancient commentators. The interpretation probably goes back to Arist. *Metaph.* A 5.986b.18.

<sup>41</sup> According to Martin (*op.cit.* [*supra* n.6] 193), Plutarch has “given the title of Parmenides' poem.” Martin may be correct, but it is not clear that *κοσμογονία* at 756E is a title or a descriptive term used by Plutarch. *Κοσμογονία* seems late. Apart from Plutarch's work, it apparently occurs only in that of Cleomedes, a first-century astronomer (see *LSJ*). *Κόσμος* appears in Parmenides' poem (*κατὰ κόσμον* in B4.3) but probably means ‘order’ (or ‘in order’). See Tarán, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.5) 47–48. In any case the title, if it is a title, cannot readily apply to the whole poem, especially the “Way of Truth” with its vision of unbegotten and indestructible existence.

What perhaps makes Plutarch most vulnerable to the charge of unreliability is not his seeming carelessness or the small number of quotations but his interpretation of Parmenides from a Platonic point of view. This is the case mainly with his discussion in *Adversus Colotem*, especially the relationship between *Ἀλήθεια* and *Δόξα* in Parmenides' poem (see 1114B–F). Westman probably objects most strongly to Plutarch's interpretation: "Jedoch heisst es völlig an der Oberfläche bleiben, wenn Plutarch 13, 12 p. 1114e sagt, Parmenides habe seine Alleinslehre nur zu dem Zweck erfunden, um zu zeigen, dass die Sinnendinge zwar existieren, aber von dem durch den νοῦς erfassbaren Gebiet, dem νοητόν, verschieden sind . . . Wenn man wie Plutarch leichter Hand mit den platonischen Ausdrücken νοητόν und δοξαστόν spielt, so ist die parmenidische Errungenschaft stillschweigende Voraussetzung. Parmenides durch Platon deuten zu wollen ist flagrant unhistorisch."<sup>42</sup> Westman's remarks have been quoted *in extenso* because they raise fundamental problems in connection with Plutarch's interpretation of Parmenides.

First, Plutarch is not so unhistorical as Westman suggests. At 1114c Plutarch remarks, "even before Plato and Socrates, he (Parmenides) understood that Nature is something about which there can only be conjecture (ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ Πλάτωνος καὶ Σωκράτους ἔτι πρότερος συνείδεν ὡς ἔχει τι δοξαστόν ἢ φύσις)." Second, the dichotomy between νοητόν and δοξαστόν which Plutarch attributes to Parmenides seems based on knowledge of the poem (see B1.29–30 quoted by Plutarch, and B8.50f not quoted by Plutarch but probably implicit in his discussion, e.g. at 1114B), and reflects Parmenides' own distinction between truth or "that which is" (τὸ εἶναι) and the guesswork of mortals (βροτῶν δόξαι). More important, it is inaccurate to interpret Plutarch as maintaining that sensible objects "zwar existieren" for Parmenides. On the contrary, Plutarch is explicit in maintaining Parmenides' distinction between existence or what truly is (Plutarch's expression is τὸ μὲν ὄντως ὄν in 1114E) and the things which now are and are not (see 1114E, ταῦτα δὲ νῦν μὲν ἔστι νῦν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν; Plutarch's words may echo or be a paraphrase of B6.8–9, οἷς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταῦτόν νενόμισται | κοῦ ταῦτόν). In any case, Parmenides' Being νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πάν (B8.5), and nowhere does he claim that the entities of our world, e.g. sun, moon, stars, do not exist or are τὰ μὴ εἶναι. In fact, one cannot recognize or declare that which is not (see B2.7–8). Plutarch is therefore

<sup>42</sup> Westman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) 235.

probably correct in remarking against Colotes that Parmenides has not denied the existence of “fire, water, a precipice, or cities in Europe or Asia, but has actually made a cosmic order (*διάκοσμον*, cf. B8.52 and B8.60) mixing elements, light and dark” (for *μῦθις*, see B12.4–5).

Finally, the precise relationship between the two parts of Parmenides’ poem has been a subject of dispute and speculation even in contemporary discussions, and Plutarch’s remarks seem no less cogent or reliable than those of recent interpreters. In general, it seems unfair to accuse Plutarch of anachronistic interpretation or of failure to interpret Parmenides’ thought. That Plutarch understands the Eleatic from a Platonic point of view is not surprising because of Plutarch’s own Platonism and Parmenides’ foreshadowing of Platonic doctrines, e.g. the unintelligibility of what is not, or the distinction between that which is and that which is not, the perfectly real and the completely unreal (cf. *Republic* 476E f, and, of course, the *Sophist*).

Two aspects of Plutarch’s treatment of Parmenides remain for examination: (1) the often polemic context of his discussion and quotations; (2) the positive value of his interpretation. The latter has thus far received only tangential treatment.

The polemic nature of Plutarch’s discussion is most evident in *Adv. Colot.* 1113E–1114F, where he replies to the Epicurean Colotes’ charge that Parmenides’ doctrine of Being abolishes (*ἀναιρεῖν*) all things, making it impossible to live. Contrary to Colotes, Plutarch (1114B) claims that Parmenides *οὔτε πῦρ ἀνήρηκεν οὔτε ὕδωρ οὔτε κρημνὸν οὔτε πόλεις*, ὡς φησι Κωλώτης, ἐν Εὐρώπῃ καὶ Ἀσίᾳ κατοικουμένας. The examples are probably from Colotes’ work; whether they correspond to anything in Parmenides’ poem is less clear. *Πῦρ* occurs in the fragments (see B8.56), and the cities of Asia and Europe may refer to the *πάντ’ ἄστυ* of the proem (B1.3). Assuming that Plutarch is reproducing the main contents of Colotes’ attack, however, there is no evidence, contrary to Westman, that “Kolotes wird Parmenides’ ganzes Gedicht gekannt haben.”<sup>43</sup> The evidence suggests at best that “Kolotes sich um Parmenides’ Δόξα nicht kümmert,”<sup>44</sup> assuming with Westman that Colotes knew it. Plutarch can, in any case, readily counter Colotes’ charge with examples from the *Δόξα* because either Colotes was unfamiliar with it or, assuming his familiarity, he was unable or un-

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.* 234.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.* 235.

willing to see a relationship between the poem's two parts. In either case, there is reason for thinking, despite Plutarch's Platonizing tendencies, that he was a more reliable interpreter of Parmenides than Colotes, who made the *'Αλήθεια* the sole object of his attack. What is especially clear is that Plutarch was not kindly disposed to the Epicurean school, and his treatment of Parmenides in *Adversus Colotem* was largely polemical.<sup>45</sup>

A similar but less obvious use of Parmenides by Plutarch occurs in *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*, where Lamprias and Lucius, the dialogue's main characters, engage in polemic against the Stoics. Lucius' anti-Stoic position is clear.<sup>46</sup> At 921F he demands refutation of the Stoic theory that the moon is a mixture of fire and air, its dark spots being collections of air. This is given by Lamprias, who in debate with the Stoic Pharnaces maintains the Academic theory that the moon is earth.<sup>47</sup> According to Pharnaces, this is impossible since earth, in accord with its nature, is located in the middle of the cosmos to which all weights and earthy bodies converge (923F). Underlying Pharnaces' objection is the Stoic doctrine of natural places, to which Lamprias makes several rejoinders. In doing so, he notes that the Stoic doctrine of natural places involves, in fact, the negation of their own theory of providence (926c f). For a state in which earth, air, fire and water find their natural places is really pre-cosmic and the condition in which things are when god is absent, or when intellect and soul (*νοῦς καὶ ψυχὴ*) are not present in bodies. And so things were *ἄχρι οὗ τὸ ἱμερτὸν ἦκεν ἐπὶ τὴν φύσιν ἐκ προνοίας, φιλότητος ἐγγενομένης καὶ Ἀφροδίτης καὶ Ἐρωτος ὡς Ἐμπεδοκλῆς λέγει καὶ Παρμενίδης καὶ Ἡσιόδου, ἵνα καὶ τόπους ἀμείψαντα καὶ δυνάμεις ἀπ' ἀλλήλων μεταλαβόντα καὶ τὰ μὲν κινήσεως τὰ δὲ μονῆς ἀνάγκαις ἐνδεθέντα καὶ καταβιασθέντα πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον ἐξ οὗ πέφυκεν ἐνδοῦναι καὶ μεταστῆναι <τὰ σώματα> ἀρμονίαν καὶ κοινωνίαν ἀπεργάσεται τοῦ παντός.* No doubt Plutarch is recalling Parmenides' B13 quoted at 756D–F. More important, however, the reminiscence of the fragment occurs in a polemic context, supporting Lamprias' attack on Stoic doctrine.

<sup>45</sup> Besides Westman's study, see R. Flacelière, "Plutarque et l'épicurisme," in *Epicurea in memoriam H. Bignone* (Genoa 1959) 197–215.

<sup>46</sup> See H. Cherniss's Loeb ed. of *De fac. orb. lun.* (*Moralia* XII [1957] 7 n.a). For extensive discussion of Plutarch's anti-Stoicism, see D. Babut, *Plutarque et le Stoïcisme* (Paris 1969). According to him, Plutarch remained "un adversaire déterminé" of Stoicism.

<sup>47</sup> Cherniss, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.46) 55, esp. n.b.

Another similar use of Parmenides occurs in *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*. Lamprias pauses in his controversy with Pharnaces (928E), and the Peripatetic Aristotle remarks that it is necessary to consider the theory that the stars have a natural circular motion, their substance being different from that of the four elements. Lucius, however, will not examine this theory about the stars. According to him, the moon is not a star since it does not have its own light but only reflects that of the sun. In support of this, Lucius quotes Parmenides' B15 at 929B: αἰεὶ παπταίνουσα πρὸς ἀγὰς ἡλίου. And before this, B14 (quoted at *Adv. Colot.* 1116A) seems paraphrased or echoed: εἴ γε τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ τοσοῦτων τὸ πλήθος ὄντων μόνη φωτὸς ἀλλοτρίου δεομένη (i.e. *κελήνη*) περιείσι. Lucius continues, of course, to uphold the doctrine that the moon is a solid, earthy body.

In sum, in *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet* three references are made to Parmenides, one in quotation and two in paraphrase, all supporting the position of Lamprias and Lucius that the moon is earthy, contrary to the Stoic view that it is semi-igneous.

Although most of Plutarch's allusions or quotations and paraphrases occur in anti-Stoic and anti-Epicurean contexts, two occur in literary or non-polemical discussions. One of these, quoted at *Quaestiones Romanae* 282B, also appears at *De fac. orb. lun.* 929B discussed above. At 282B Plutarch offers one of several explanations for those of noble birth wearing crescents on their shoes. Perhaps, he suggests, this custom was a lesson in obedience, teaching them not to be displeased with kingly rule, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἡ κελήνη προσέχειν ἐθέλει τῷ κρείττονι καὶ δευτερεύειν

αἰεὶ παπταίνουσα πρὸς ἀγὰς ἡλίου

κατὰ τὸν Παρμενίδην, οὕτω τὴν δευτέραν τάξιν ἀγαπᾶν χρωμένους τῷ ἡγεμόνι καὶ τῆς ἀπ' ἐκείνου δυνάμεως καὶ τιμῆς ἀπολαύοντας. The context and Plutarch's brief remark on the quotation do not assist greatly in the interpretation of the fragment. For this, account must be taken of 929B, where it is clear that the line refers to the illumination of the moon by the sun.

The second quotation occurring in a literary context is at *Amat.* 756E-F. In 755E-756 Plutarch raises the question how so strong a πάθος as Eros can be called a god. Plutarch considers this a dangerous question and makes a reply which, broken occasionally by remarks of his friends, lasts until the dialogue's end. According to him, Eros is

one of the oldest gods, closely connected with Aphrodite, although they have different functions. Parmenides' B14 is quoted in support of Plutarch's observations: διὸ Παρμενίδης μὲν ἀποφαίνει τὸν Ἔρωτα τῶν Ἀφροδίτης ἔργων πρεσβύτατον, ἐν τῇ κοσμογονίᾳ γράφων

πρώτιστον μὲν Ἔρωτα θεῶν μητίκατο πάντων.

The passage has been analyzed carefully by Martin, and in view of his discussion there is good reason for concluding that Plutarch's use of the fragment was independent of the interpretations of Plato and Aristotle, who also quote it. In particular, Plutarch has eliminated their vagueness by indicating that Aphrodite is probably the subject of the verb, and has recognized Aristotle's error in classifying Parmenides' Eros, instead of his procreative *daimon*, as an efficient cause.<sup>48</sup> There is also a use of Parmenides similar to that in *Adversus Colotem* and in *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet* to support Plutarch's own position. Strictly speaking, the context is not polemical, though shortly after the quotation Plutarch maintains that it is atheism (*ἀθεότης*) to identify the gods with *πάθη, δυνάμεις* or *ἀρεταί* (see 757c), and Plutarch probably has the Stoics in mind.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps the passage in *Amatorius* with its quotation of Parmenides, although literary in a broad sense, should be categorized with those in *Adversus Colotem* and *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*. In particular, if the context of *Amat.* 756D–F be related to 757c and *De fac. orb. lun.* 927A, it seems clear that Plutarch has used Parmenides' thought, once in quotation and once in paraphrase, to support his anti-Stoic position.

As a source for Parmenides, Plutarch is *prima facie* of no great importance. Such an impression, however, is outweighed especially by his preservation of B14 and B15 and his discussion of B13 at *Amat.* 756E–F. B14 and B15 are the only extant quotations of Parmenides concerning the moon. B15, *αἰεὶ παπταίνουσα πρὸς ἀγὰς ἡέλιου*, is evidence that Parmenides believed the moon receives its light from the sun. B14 suggests strongly that the moon wanders about the earth:

<sup>48</sup> See Martin, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.6) 199.

<sup>49</sup> See W. C. Helmbold (*Moralia IX [LCL 1961] 353 n.f.*). On the close connection between *θεός* and *δύναμις*, see Diog.Laert. 7.147 and Alex.Aphrod. *De mixtione* 226.10, both cited in J. von Arnim (ed.) *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta II* (Leipzig 1903–24) 305 and 308. Plutarch is probably thinking of Stoic allegorization of the gods of mythology and popular belief. For examples, Ares is war, and Aphrodite is unrestrained passion or lack of control. See E. Zeller, *The Stoics, Epicureans, and Sceptics*, transl. D. J. Reichel (London 1892) 365f.

νυκτιφαῆς περὶ γαῖαν ἀλώμενον ἀλλότριον φῶς. And this is consonant with Parmenides' view that the earth is spherical, a conception which, according to Theophrastus, Parmenides was the first to maintain.<sup>50</sup> As for B13 at *Amat.* 756E–F, there is little doubt that Plutarch assists in clarifying an otherwise obscure line from Parmenides' poem. These may be small gleanings, and yet in the case of Parmenides' work which remains fragmentary they should not be minimized. Finally, Plutarch's comments, especially on Parmenides' "Way of *Doxa*," invite further reflection on the enigmatic relationship between the two parts of the Eleatic's poem.

A summation of Plutarch's treatment of Parmenides is now in order. First, Plutarch shows interest in Parmenides' biography, relating one incident possibly derived from Speusippus' *Περὶ φιλοσόφων*. Secondly, he shows interest in Parmenides' poem, and his observations are probably based on first-hand acquaintance with it. This seems especially so since Parmenides is mentioned with other ancient authors whom Plutarch knew well, and in his travels and study at some major cities of the ancient world, e.g. Athens, Plutarch could easily have had access to a copy of the poem. Further support for attributing to Plutarch direct knowledge of Parmenides' text is found in his discussion of B13 at *Amat.* 756E–F and his quotation of B14 and B15, not found in other sources. Thirdly, Plutarch seems familiar with both parts of Parmenides' poem. Although his discussion is Platonic in emphasis, his interpretation is not wholly unwarranted by the evidence. Parmenides does seem to have been the first thinker to make some kind of distinction between the 'sensible' and 'intelligible' worlds, even though the terminology is not his. At least the things perceived by mortals do not have the characteristics Parmenides ascribed to τὸ εἶν. Fourthly, there are no clear indications that Plutarch's quotations are inaccurate. Some difficulties, especially in connection with B8.4, can be explained by a copyist's carelessness or Plutarch's tendency to paraphrase Parmenides, possibly from memory. In any case, rather than positing a use of compendia by Plutarch (for which there is no evidence), it seems more plausible to maintain Plutarch's reliance on notebooks based on his direct acquaintance with the poem. Last, and perhaps most important, it would be erroneous to presume

<sup>50</sup> See Westman, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.7) and Theophr. *Phys.Opin.* fr.6a (*Doxogr.Gr.* p.482,17)=*Diog.Laert.* 9.21=Parm. A1 (Diels, *Vorsokr.* I p.217,27–p.218,1).

that Plutarch's quotations from and references to Parmenides are wholly disinterested. Several are found in anti-Epicurean and anti-Stoic contexts, a phenomenon which suggests, if nothing more, that Plutarch considered Parmenides an ally of the Academy.<sup>51</sup>

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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