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Heraclitus and Xenophanes in Plato's *Sophist* : The Hidden Harmony*

THE PRINCIPAL aim of the present article is to shed light on Heraclitus' intellectual kinship with Xenophanes. Although the overlap of fundamental patterns and themes in both thinkers' worldview could be partly due to the osmosis of ideas in the archaic era, the intertextual affinity between them, as transmitted by the history of reception, cannot be regarded as a mere accident of cultural diffusion. Our primary intention is to focus on the common grounds of their criticism against the authority of the epic poets on the theological education of the Greeks and more particularly on its Platonic appropriation.

Xenophanes is renowned for having addressed the first explicit dismissive remarks against the theology propagated by his predecessors, that is to say the epic poets (21 B10,11,12 DK), while Heraclitus

* Οφείλω θερμές ευχαριστίες στον καθηγητή Αρχαίας Ελληνικής Φιλοσοφίας του Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης, Αντρέα Λέμπεντεφ —τον διαπρεπέστερο γνώστη του Ηρακλείτου από όσους γνώρισα παγκοσμίως κατά την δεκαετή μου θητεία στο εξωτερικό— για τις πολύωρες συζητήσεις πάνω στους Προσωκρατικούς, οι οποίες υπήρξαν καθοριστικές για την τελική διαμόρφωση της προκείμενης μελέτης. Μία πρώτη μορφή της είχε παρουσιαστεί τον Ιούλιο του 2006 στο διεθνές συνέδριο για τον Ηράκλειτο στο Μεξικό.

followed his line of criticism closely (22 B40,42,56 DK). Moreover, they have both adopted a similar attitude towards their contemporaries, namely the lyric poets: Xenophanes' symposiac elegy is presented as a reform of the banquet poetry of his time (21 B1 DK), not to mention the banquet practices themselves, while Archilochus according to Heraclitus ought to be banned from all poetic competitions along with Hesiod (22 B42 DK). Although Heraclitus does not exclude Xenophanes from his scornful remarks against useless polymathy (22 B40 DK), the harsh criticism they both address their predecessors and contemporaries is a clear indication that they consciously place themselves within the same so-called 'agonistic' tradition, which started with Homer and Hesiod and continued up to Plato: the exiled poets from his *Republic* are replaced in the *Laws* by their 'antagonists' lawgivers, who compose the best drama (817 a-c).[1]

In the second book of the *Republic* Plato repeats the accusations Xenophanes addressed the epic poets (377c-379a; cf. 606a-607d), while in the *Sophist* (242c-243a)[2] Xenophanes becomes an emblematic figure, whose monistic account is purified from the epic tales of the pluralists. As will be argued below, it is far from accidental that Plato refers to Heraclitus right after Xenophanes in the same testimony: the monistic formula 'all is one' ascribed to Xenophanes echoes directly Heraclitus, not to mention that Plato presents the latter's account as a response to the former: Heraclitus' synthesis (*sumplekesthai*) between the one and the many is said to be 'safer' (*asphalesteron*) than the monistic account provided by Xenophanes, to the extent that it prefaces the *sumplokên eidôn* that Plato introduces in the *Sophist* (259e). In view of the dialogue —implicit and explicit— which was held between Xenophanes and Heraclitus within the frame of the 'agonistic' tradition of their time, the founder of mon-

1 In this respect, Plato follows Solon's example, who claimed to know the measures of desirable wisdom: *himertês sophiês metra epistamenos* (fr. 13.52 West) — the term *'metra'* referring both to poetic metrics and to the measures of his legislation.

2 See below for the citation of the whole passage in translation.

ism will prove closer to the theorist of flux than the commonly held view of modern scholarship is perhaps prepared to acknowledge.

It was mentioned above that Heraclitus does not exclude Xenophanes from his criticism against useless 'polymathy' of which he accuses not only Hesiod, but also the historian Hecataeus and the legendary Pythagoras; nonetheless, Plato in the *Sophist* provides us with a doxography, which offers indications of a close affinity between the two thinkers not only concerning the targets of their criticism, but also its specific line: Xenophanes was indeed the first to doubt the authority of the epic poets and this is what raises him into an exemplary figure both in the *Sophist* and in the *Republic*, where (as noted above) Plato repeats his accusations against Homer's and Hesiod's unworthy predominance among the Greeks. Yet, in both Platonic accounts, where there is an implicit or an explicit mention of Xenophanes, Heraclitus is to be treated as a key figure: Not only was he the first to follow Xenophanes by disproving the authority of the epic poets, as Plato himself does later on in the *Republic*; what is more, in the *Sophist* (as will be shown in detail below), Plato goes as far as to put one of the most celebrated Heraclitean sayings (22 B50 DK) into Xenophanes' mouth, in order to describe the quintessence of the latter's monism. By ascribing to Xenophanes the first monistic account, Plato removes from the latter any accusations concerning polymathy according to Heraclitus, polymathy being in principle closely related to the pluralistic accounts Xenophanes is said to have abolished by claiming that 'all things are one'.

The underlying relationship between Xenophanes and Heraclitus as construed in the first Platonic doxography on his predecessors is somehow reflected in later testimonies: According to Diogenes Laertius' doxographical account in his *Lives of the Philosophers*, both Heraclitus and Xenophanes were isolated cases (viii 50, 91, ix 20), neither to be ranged among the Ionians, otherwise known as the Milesians (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes), nor among the Italiots, to which both the Eleatics (Parmenides, Zeno, Melissus) and the

Pythagoreans belong. In other words, both Xenophanes and Heraclitus are treated as categories apart, resisting any classification. Biased by the anachronistic criteria of his contemporary doxography, Diogenes classifies all known Greek thinkers into schools, which indicated largely only a close relationship between a master and his disciple or disciples.[3]

According to Diogenes' arrangement into schools, Heraclitus was not only supposed to have no master, but also no disciple whatsoever. However, it is Diogenes himself, following Plato's *Cratylus*, who reports the existence of the so-called Heracliteans: they were supposed to have been made Heraclitus' disciples, after having read his book, dedicated by him to Artemis' temple in Ephesus (ix, 6). Heraclitus' religious authority,[4] which raises his account into a sacred 'logos', if combined with Diogenes' claim that he was an autodidact, links him directly to the epic tradition. The first autodidacts were indeed the *aoidoi*, who were composing their own verses, like Homer and Hesiod themselves, as opposed to the *rhapsôidoi*, who were reciting other people's verses and in particular Homeric and Hesiodic ones, Ion being a later demonstration of such practices in Plato's time (as shown in his *Ion*). Diogenes, in a rather paradoxical construction writes about Xenophanes that he was the rhapsode of his own verses ('*errhapsôidei ta heautou*' ix,18,20). In any case, both Xenophanes and Heraclitus are placed within the same tradition as the first epic poets they oppose, namely Homer and Hesiod. Diogenes' claim that Xenophanes and Heraclitus were considered to be the only self-taught thinkers of their time is strengthened by a *prima facie* contradictory report: Heraclitus according to Sotion was said to have been Xenophanes' disciple (ix, 5,24): '*Sôtiôn de phêsin eirêkenai tinas Xenophanous auton akêkoenai*'. Such a report is a further indication of

3 See, infra, note 5.

4 He is reported by Strabo (22 A2 DK) to have been of an aristocratic descent coming from Codrus, the first king of Athens. Thus, he was called a king by descent and received kingly honors, presiding in competitions and bearing a purple gown and a stick (*skipon* instead of *skêptron*) as well as the symbols of the mysteries of Eleusis (personal translation).

the close affinity between them, especially since the same doxographer reports at the same time that they were both self-taught. In other words, the two reports lead to the natural assumption that Xenophanes paved the way for Heraclitus, their shared intention being to reform the epic tradition initiated by Homer and Hesiod, while still adhering to it.

Plato was indeed the first to raise this point, when he dealt with Xenophanes and Heraclitus within the same doxographic account in the *Sophist*, in a passage which is worth quoting in full at least in translation (*Sophist* 242c-243a):

> ***Stranger***: *It seems to me that Parmenides and all of those who undertook for the first time a critical definition of the number and the nature of beings, have been quite loose in accounting for them to us.*
>
> ***Theaetetus***: *How is that?*
>
> ***Stranger***: *Every one of them seems to tell us a story (mythos), as if we were children. One says that there are three beings, that some of them sometimes engage in a sort of war with each other and sometimes come close and marry and have offspring and bring them up; and another says that there are two (beings), wet and dry or hot and cold, which he settles together and unites in marriage. Yet, the Eleatic tribe (ethnos) in our region, beginning with Xenophanes and even earlier, gives its own account, according to which what we call all things is one. Later though, some Ionian and Sicilian Muses fell in agreement and thought that it was safer to combine the two accounts and say that the being is both many and one, held together by enmity and friendship. The more strenuous of the Muses say that what differs from itself is always in agreement with itself, whereas the softer ones moderated such a doctrine, by saying that the all is sometimes one and loving under the rule of Aph-*

rodite and sometimes many and at odds with itself because of some sort of strife. Now, whether any one of them spoke the truth about those things, or not, it would be unkind and inappropriate to impute to renowned men of ancient times such a great wrong. But one can say the following without discourtesy.

***Theaetetus**: What is that?*

***Stranger**: That they disregarded and did not pay attention to most of our kind, without caring whether we follow them in what they say or if we are left behind, each one of them going his own way till the end.*

Plato's view, voiced by the Eleatic Stranger, is that Xenophanes was the founder of the so-called Eleatic 'kin' and thus the first monist, in the sense that he was the 'father' of Parmenides, the traditional founder of the Eleatic school. By proposing Xenophanes as the founder of the Eleatic 'kin', distinct from the Ionian and Sicilian *Muses*, i.e. Heraclitus and Empedocles respectively, the Eleatic Stranger appears to adopt a proto-classification into schools of different origins or rather a philosophical genealogy of a different lineage, in juxtaposition to the *megista genê* that he will introduce later on in the *Sophist* (254c). Such a taxonomy proves more insightful and more question-begging than later schematic and anachronistic approaches to the matter, although, *prima facie*, it is also based solely upon geographical criteria.[5]

Indeed, if we take a closer look at the account in the *Sophist*, the classification into schools of different origins is made clearer and sharper by the parallels which are drawn between the mythologists,

5 In the *Lives of the Philosophers*, Diogenes classifies all known Greek thinkers into different schools, which indicated largely only a close relationship between a master and his disciple(s). For the history of the matter, I quote Kirk, Raven and Schofield (1983: 102, footnote 2): 'The arrangement of early philosophers into schools and into masters was initiated by Theophrastus and systematically applied into succession by Sotion, c. 200 B.C. Apollodorus used the latter work, normally assuming a 40 year interval between master and pupil.'

that is to say the epic poets, who give theogonic accounts of a Hesiodic nature, and the pre-Platonic thinkers in question. Moreover, although it seems that the Eleatic Stranger dismisses all pre-Platonic thinkers as 'mythologists', in the sense of story-tellers, the differences that he highlights when he refers to them by name or group, as well as by the way in which they give their accounts (myths), differentiates their status. First and foremost, the Eleatic Stranger draws a sharp distinction between the pluralists and the monists. He is completely dismissive of the former, to whom he ascribes epic tales which could only be suitable for children's ears: the one who posits three beings makes them fight with each other, or intermarry and have children, whereas the other who posits two opposite beings, makes them settle with each other in marriage. However, when he refers to the monists, he not only refers to them by name, as opposed to the anonymity of the pluralists, but also identifies himself as a descendent of their 'kin', whose real founder was Xenophanes, though allegedly the '*Eleatikon ethnos*' existed long before him (*kai eti prosthen* 242d). Moreover, he portrays the monists as dealing with the 'myths' in a manner that left no space for the pluralists' epic tales. By claiming that "all things are one", the monists engaged in another type of account, that was diametrically opposed to the pluralistic one.

Xenophanes was indeed the first to criticize the Homeric, especially the Hesiodic, accounts of the Greek gods, according to which gods were born, married and fought with each other. Similarly to Plato, who regarded the pluralistic accounts as merely epic stories destined for children, Xenophanes called them the useless 'fictions' of the previous poets (21 B1 DK, v. 22-24).[6] He condemned, in the same breath, all stories referring to Giants, Titans and Centaurs, as echoed later in the *Sophist*, when the fight between the materialists and the 'friends of the forms' is presented as the Gigantomachy (246 a-c).

6 On the question of whether the term '*proteroi*' refers to the previous poets or to the older generations, the answer is obvious: in the preceding verses, Xenophanes clearly refers to the symposiac practice of reciting extracts from the epics referring to Titans, Giants and Centaurs, not to mention that in his *Silloi* he condemns Homer and Hesiod by name.

Against the background of the ancient quarrel between Xenophanes and the epic poets, Heraclitus and Empedocles are presented by Plato as the Muses who 'came into agreement', the verb '*sunennoêsan*/ *xunennoêsan*'[7] echoing clearly Heraclitus, who proclaims that the Logos, in whose name he speaks, is common (*xunos*) (22 B1,2 DK). In a rather significant *jeu de mots* the term '*sunennoêsan*/ *xunennoêsan*' also voices Heraclitus' primary concern (22 B114 DK), namely that the common Logos (*xunos Logos*) ought to be understood '*xun noôi*' (by the Intellect), *Nous* being the Unifying principle of perception for both Heraclitus and Xenophanes. Furthermore, Heraclitus is presented in the same context as an Ionian Muse *(Iades Mousai)*, who is '*suntonos*', probably referring to the rest of the fragment 22B51, paraphrased in the *Sophist,* where the harmony produced by the bow and the lyre, the instruments of the divine children of Leto, Artemis and Apollo, is called '*palintonos*' according to one version[8] and thus produced by tension and opposition. If this is the case, the replacement of the adjective '*palintonos*' (defining '*harmoniê*') by '*sun-tonos*' is significant for Plato, inasmuch it echoes the '*sun-plokê eidôn*' (interweaving of forms) he introduces later in the *Sophist* (259e *dia gar tên allêlôn tôn eidôn sumplokên ho logos gegonen hêmin*), not to mention that in fragment 22B8 Heraclitus claims that the 'best harmony' (*kallistên harmoniên*) is produced by the coming together of opposites (*antixoun sum-pheron ek tôn diapherontôn*). Thus, Heraclitus in the *Sophist* is presented as Plato's forerunner, inasmuch he introduces from the back door the *genos* of 'difference' as opposed to Parmenidean monism.

In other words, Plato in the *Sophist* associates Parmenides (the conventional founder of the Eleatic school) with Heraclitus via Xen-

7 *Xunennoêsan* is the reading in T as well as in Eusebius and Simplicius; B has *xunennoêkasin* (see the apparatus criticus in Burnet's edition). The variant reading shows that even if Plato wrote *sunennoêsan*, his ancient readers read Heraclitus in it.

8 '*Palintropos*' being the other version, which is echoed in Parmenides '*palintropos keleuthos*' (28 B6 DK, v. 9) as a hypothetical response to Heraclitus.

ophanes, by introducing and presenting Xenophanes as the 'father' of Parmenides. Historically speaking, this association is far more reaching than a hypothetical direct confrontation between Heraclitus and Parmenides. The secondary literature based on this assumption certainly derives from the Platonic view, according to which Heraclitus and Parmenides are regarded as the two opposing paradigms on the question of being. Nevertheless, to our knowledge, such a confrontation never really occurred and the scarce indications[9] that may be found in the Parmenidean poetry do not suffice as evidence for such an encounter.

What is more, unlike Parmenides, neither Xenophanes nor Heraclitus have ever dealt with the question of being as such, as it is the case in the *Sophist,* theology being explicitly or implicitly their primary concern. Admittedly, the being in the Parmenidean poem is ascribed the very same properties Xenophanes has attributed to his god (28 B7 DK). Yet, nobody before Plato in his doxographic account in the *Sophist* endeavored to assimilate the Xenophanean god to the Parmenidean being, in order to make Xenophanes the father of Parmenides and thus of Eleatic monism.[10] Such an assimilation was made possible through a simple syntactic operation which is echoed in the Aristotelean *Metaphysics* A (986 b): *Xenophanês de prôton toutôn henisas (o gar Parmenidês toutou legetai mathêtês) ... eis ton holon ouranon apoblepsas* ***to hen*** *einai phêsi* ***ton theon***.

The attribute 'one' which is predicated to god by Xenophanes and to being by Parmenides becomes the subject of god, while the latter becomes predicate to the former by a simple inversion of their syntactic role. Thus god, being or the cosmos —as it is the case in Heraclitus (22 B30 DK)— become the predicates of the 'one', 'oneness' being considered this way as the primary essence of everything. This is the sense in which Plato ascribes to the father of monism, Xenophanes, the 'everything is one' formula. Yet, as is well known, the same formula is echoed verbatim by Heraclitus (22 B50 DK), who comes right after Xenophanes in the Platonic testimony in question.

9 See previous note.

10 On this question see also Palmer 1998.

In this way Plato makes the transition from the latter to Heraclitus, to whom he assigns another kind of unity than strict monism in the Eleatic sense.

It is indeed the case that Heraclitus could be imputed a cosmological monism, to the extent that in his fundamental fragment on the cosmos (22 B30 DK) he proclaims the world to be one, using the same wording as Xenophanes in his fundamental theological fragment, where he professes one God (21 B23 DK). In particular, Heraclitus makes use of the same structure Xenophanes employs in the first verse of his fundamental theological fragment (21 B23 DK), as if the former meant to allude to the latter: While Xenophanes in fragment 21B23 advocates that there is one God, the greatest among men and gods (*heis theos, en te theoisi kai anthrôpoisi megistos/ oute demas thnêtoisin homoiios oude noêma*), Heraclitus in a similar oracular tone professes (22 B30 DK) that this world, which is one and the same for all (men and gods) is neither god-made nor man-made (*kosmon tonde ton auton hapantôn, oute tis theôn oute anthrôpôn epoiêsen*). Put differently, Heraclitus seems to be responding to Xenophanes, by substituting cosmos for God. The transposition from the Xenophanean God to the Heraclitean Universe is also reflected in the *Sophist,* where Plato attributes to Xenophanes the Heraclitean 'all is one' formula. What is more, according to the later Aristotelean interpretation (*Metaphysics* A 982 b), which follows the Platonic one in many respects,[11] Xenophanes is supposed to have reached the conclusion that god is the one, by taking as a model the Universe as a whole (*eis ton ouranon apoblepsas hen ton theon einai*). We cannot be sure whether Aristotle was the first to make such an assumption. Nevertheless, we may assume that at an early stage in the history of reception, the Xenophanean god was assimilated to the Universe as a whole, because of his association with Heraclitus, for whom it is certainly the case.

Within the same set of ideas, it is worth going back to the 'all is one' formula, which encapsulates the quintessence of monism

11 Aristotle considers Xenophanes as the first monist and thus Parmenides as his first pupil (*Metaphysics* A, 986b).

according to Plato: Yet again, it is not to be found *verbatim* in Xenophanes, or in any other Eleatic thinker, but only in Heraclitus (22 B50 DK *hen panta einai*). Whether Heraclitus alludes to Xenophanes in this fragment or not, is not easy to verify, unless we listen to the polyphonic symphony Plato composes in the *Sophist*. Yet, it is notable that Plato speaks of Heraclitus right after attributing the 'all is one' formula to Xenophanes. Indeed, what could serve as a better demonstration of the Unity of opposites, which is central to Heraclitus' teaching, than the above formula, which brings together 'the one' and 'everything' in its generic sense comprising all opposites, not to mention that in the above-mentioned fragment the 'all is one' formula is attributed to the '*Sophon*' by Heraclitus, which is identifiable to God (*homologein sophon estin hen panta einai*). In other words, Plato is led to the identification of the Xenophanean God with the 'all is one' Heraclitean formula, inasmuch as he recognizes in Heraclitus a strong Xenophanean imprint.

In conclusion, Plato in the *Sophist* uses Xenophanes' and Heraclitus' theological affinity as a *trait d'union* between the latter and Parmenides, inasmuch as Plato's ontology is presented as a response to Parmenides' account on being. Based on the Heraclitean concept of the unity of opposites, Plato imputes on Heraclitus a type of unity, produced by tension and opposition, which is close to the concept of the interweaving of forms Plato introduces in the *Sophist*. Encapsulated in the 'all-is-one' formula, this type of unity is associated with the Xenophanean God, while echoing 'the Wise' in Heraclitus, which is also identifiable with God. In the rest of our analysis we will endeavor to revive the polyphonic dialogue which was held among Xenophanes and Heraclitus, following the counterpoints Plato composes in his doxography.

It is indeed the case that in the fragments ascribed to him, Xenophanes turns against the theological accounts propagated by the epic poets, by condemning in the same breath all epic stories presenting gods as being born, having children and fighting with each

other. As Plato does in the *Sophist*, he accuses them of childlike naivety, to the extent that they ascribe anthropomorphic qualities on God. The radical opposition between mortals and immortals is the foundation of such a criticism. Both Xenophanes and Heraclitus have tried to reverse the anthropomorphic patterns promoted by the epic poets by asking themselves about gods' true nature, paving the way for Empedocles, who inverses the anthropomorphic theological tradition: Empedocles in his poetry introduces himself to his audience as a godlike human, the way Plato playfully presents the Eleatic Stranger in the opening of the *Sophist* (216b). Against this theological background, it is no wonder why Empedocles features after Heraclitus in the Platonic testimony in the *Sophist*. Finally, the reason why Plato may have brought together in the same account Xenophanes, Heraclitus and Empedocles is not their mere opposition to the epic tradition, but their primary concern to change its perspective by adopting a godlike perception of reality. Revealed by the Goddess of Truth, Parmenides' account of being can be regarded as the paradigm *par excellence* of a divine explanation, not to mention that already Heraclitus' account is presented as a sacred one, signaling to humans the only acceptable way of perceiving things sealed by the divine Logos itself.

Both Xenophanes and Heraclitus present God as a transcendental, yet immanent principle that encompasses and governs all things in the cosmos. According to Xenophanes God is one, eternal, omniscient, almighty and moves all things by the intellectual force (*phrên*) of his unmovable all-encompassing unifying *Nous* (21 B22-25 DK). In Heraclitus' case, God is identified to 'the Wise', which represents the highest manifestation of his Unifying Logos, summing up a directing principle for mathematical analogy, as well as for intellectual and verbal understanding of how all things work according to their nature. The Wise is said to be separate and thus different in nature from all things (22 B108 DK), as it is the case with the Xenophanean god.

God according to Xenophanes grasps the totality of things as a unity, as opposed to humans whose perception is limited by time and

their senses. To the divine Intellect, a total stranger to the anthropomorphic Olympians as presented by Homer and Hesiod, both Xenophanes and Heraclitus refuse to give the traditional names of Greek gods. Xenophanes describes God as an all-encompassing *Nous*, whereas Heraclitus alludes to God as the *Logos* and the 'Wise' (*to sophon*), Ahura Mazda (the Wise Master) being the name of the supreme divine entity in the Persian religion of their time. Despite the apparent hostility against the Persian conqueror which transpires in their teachings, both Xenophanes and Heraclitus seem to have adopted elements from the Mazdean religion,[12] to the extent that it fit better the requirements for propriety they set in the formation of a new model of understanding the true role of the divine in nature, the cosmos and the polis. By removing the impious inconsistencies of the epic poets and by pointing to the absurdities of the religious practices in honor of the Olympian gods, they become the reformers of the theological misconceptions underlying the predominant Greek cultural life of their time.

It is far from accidental that the same 'floating' anecdote is attributed both to Xenophanes and to Heraclitus (22 B127 DK). Both are said to have had the same reaction to a religious practice, in which piety was expressed by mourning for the death of a goddess: 'If she is a goddess, they should not be mourning for her. If she is not, she should not be offered sacrifices' Xenophanes is supposed to have said according to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1400b = 21 A13 DK; cf. 21 A12, 13a,13b,13c). The rigid distinction between mortals and immortals is the subliminal principle lying under the aforementioned anecdote, equally attributed to Xenophanes, who condemns all the human-like representations attributed to gods by the epic poets, as well as to Heraclitus who differentiates radically between men and gods in many fragments (22 B78,79,102 DK). Attributing such an anecdote to the latter could also fit his dismissive comments against the absurdity of certain religious practices (22 B5,14,15 DK).[13] In the last indicat-

12 Gemelli-Marciano 2005: 118-34.

13 According to an alternative interpretation the same exempla could serve as

ed fragment, the identification between Dionysus, the God of sexual reproduction, and of Hades, the god of the underworld, could go back to Xenophanes, who exempts gods not only from death, but also from birth by definition. By eliminating the genealogies of gods in the Hesiodic *Theogony* in favor of one God, Xenophanes condemns all epic stories on the Olympian Gods as bad fictions of the past epic poets (*plasmata tôn proterôn* 21 B1,22 DK).

Yet, unlike Xenophanes' direct and clear-cut manner of opposing the epic tales of Homer and Hesiod, in order to readdress the question of god, Heraclitus' highly symbolical language is far richer with associations and connotations and thus more difficult to assess and to put in a single 'monistic' category. Heraclitus' perplexity is most likely the reason why Plato considers him closer to his ontological project of the interweaving of forms than his Eleatic predecessor. Though equally dismissive of the epic poets as Xenophanes, Heraclitus, in his unparalleled prophetic style, claims that 'the Wise yields and does not yield the name of Zeus' (22 B32 DK). The name of Zeus, the traditional king of the Olympians, is not to be rejected in the Heraclitean theological context. Similarly to Empedocles, who would later use the names of Greek gods as denominations of his cosmological roots, Heraclitus used the name of Zeus as the supreme divinity, whose symbol of power, i.e. the thunder, is broadly used in the former's cosmology: Being also the symbol *par excellence* of the cosmic fire in Heraclitus, the thunder becomes the curator of cosmic justice, which will judge all things at the end of the world according to the doctrine of the universal conflagration (*ekpurôsis*). The nature of the world itself being fiery in its constant transformations, thunder becomes the cosmic symbol *par excellence* and its directing principle. Indeed, the thunder steers all things (22 B69 DK) according to Heraclitus, inasmuch as every creature crawling on earth is ordered by a stroke (22 B11 DK). While the *Logos* as a common principle of all things always remains one and the same and everything happens according to it (22 B1,2 DK), the thunder, God's symbol in the physi-

demonstrations of the principle of the unity of opposites. See Adomenas 1999.

cal realm, transmits his will in the Universe (*boulê Dios*). Similarly, the divine '*phrên*' of the Xenophanean God shakes or holds together everything (*panta kradainei*), while God remains immovable (21 B26 DK) in the same place and thus separate[14] from all things as the '*Sophon*', identifiable with God in Heraclitus (22 B108 DK).

Inversely, in the most telling fragment of the Heraclitean cosmology (22 B30 DK), the world as cosmic fire is treated as a separate entity from God, inasmuch as it is not god-made. Yet, all-consuming fire is not only the symbol of the world in Heraclitus, but also of God himself —a further indication of God's underlying identification to the world, previously explored—, in the sense that it becomes the substrate underlying all opposite denominations ascribed to God (22 B67 DK): day–night, winter–summer, peace–war, satiety–hunger. Compared to the different perfumes of incense burning in a sacred fire, the opposites become a unity in God's name. The sacred fire, being central in Heraclitus' cosmological model, is also God's manifestation in the world. In Heraclitus' religious view of the cosmos as a whole, God guarantees the unity of opposites without losing his identity in the constant transformation of the ever-burning cosmic fire. Similarly to Heraclitus who accuses Hesiod of childlike stupidity for distinguishing between day and night, 'though they are one' (22 B57,106 DK), Parmenides, i.e. Xenophanes' alleged disciple according to the *Sophist*, right from the beginning of the second part of his poem, commonly referred as the '*doxa*' part, condemns mortal men for committing the same error (28 B7 DK, v. 50-56). The practice of giving opposite names to things which are regarded as a unity, in the sense that they are either complementary or coexistent, seems to oppose not only the Heraclitean Logos, but also the monistic percep-

14 Chrysakopoulou forthcoming: In my opinion, Xenophanes in his epistemology seems to make a distinction between the account on gods and his account on everything else. This epistemological separation between theology and physics is also reflected in the Xenophanean theological project, to the extent that God cannot be an object of empirical research, but an object of thought purified from the senses. On Xenophanes' epistemology in general see also Lesher 1991 and 1994.

tion of Being ascribed to Parmenides' father, Xenophanes, according to Plato in the *Sophist.* The traces the Parmenidean Being leaves behind are no other than the attributes of the Xenophanean God, not to mention that the Heraclitean cosmos is also presented along the same lines as the Xenophanean God in the same testimony.

Though their theological views converge to a certain extent, Xenophanes and Heraclitus develop differently from a gnosiological perspective, to the point that the former becomes an open target of criticism for the latter. Why does Heraclitus in fragment 22B42 accuse Xenophanes of polymathy along with Hesiod and Pythagoras, while Xenophanes himself condemns Hesiod's arbitrary claims on knowledge and ironizes the epistemological grounds of the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of the soul (21 B7 DK)? What is more, Heraclitus seems to hint to Xenophanes in particular in the abovementioned fragment, by making use of the expression '*noon echein*', as opposed to polymathy, '*noos*' being one of the favorite notions of Xenophanes', who describes his God as such, capable of encompassing and moving all things with his perception (21 B25 DK). The tension between the notion of the 'many' in the word '*polumathiê*' and the singleness of '*Noos*' underlies once again Heraclitus' aphorism.

This is not the only case, where Heraclitus seems to criticize Xenophanes. By adapting the Xenophanean saying about the infinity of Earth (21 B28 DK) to the case of the soul (22 B45/101 DK), he seems to criticize the methods, according to which Xenophanes reached the previous conclusion, namely that Earth is infinite. Xenophanes was known to be an empiricist and to infer conclusions concerning certain physical phenomena by means of digging and searching as a typical *physicist.*[15] Heraclitus, on the contrary, does not seem to consider it necessary to make use of the same methods, in order to reach his conclusions concerning the cosmic procedures. He trusts Logos more than eyes and ears (22 B55 DK). To him, digging much Earth only reveals little gold (22 B22 DK), and the sun —though as small as

15 Graham 1997.

a foot (22 B3 DK)— governs the Earth which is without limits. The *logos*, on behalf of which he talks, is the only measure of all things, even the indefinite ones, as it is the case with the self-increasing Logos of the soul (22 B115 DK). Thereby, Heraclitus reverts the direction of the research methods of his time, the '*historiê*', which was based on the empirical observation of phenomena and whose main representatives were Xenophanes and Hecataeus both accused of polymathy (22 B40 DK). Indeed, Heraclitus turns away from deductive processes, aspiring to an intuitive and inductive concept of things, which is confirmed by all aspects of reality, as they are regulated by the Logos, which is common to all things, being both the cosmic principle *par excellence*, and the only reliable principle of their understanding. By accusing Xenophanes of 'polymathy', Heraclitus condemns his scientific interest in physics, rather than his rational theology, two subject matters that are treated quite separately in Xenophanes' epistemology (21 B34 DK).

In conclusion, the polymathy Heraclitus accuses Xenophanes of, is a key concept in his criticism against his contemporaries, because it is opposed to the unifying principle of perceiving reality, namely the Logos, which is one and yet common to all things. The unity of opposites, which Logos holds together, is illustrated through several examples taken from the natural, the political and the religious realms (*peri tou pantos kai politikôn kai theologikôn*), which he intends to unify under the same guiding principle (22 B1,5 DK). By conferring on them a paradigmatic character, that is to say a character of exempla, he transforms the notion of the '*historiê*' of his time, which consisted primarily on the knowledge of many distinct things, without any systematic attempt to unify them by means of a leading principle. If Heraclitus is the thinker best known for his idea of flux according to Plato, it is only because he tried to make sense of it by means of a unifying principle, the Logos, which could account for it, without disregarding it, or reducing it into a limited, fixed reality, as it is the case with the monists.

Yet, both Xenophanes and Heraclitus adopt the same stance against their predecessors for similar epistemological reasons. The

epic poets are accused of lying because of lack of firm knowledge. What is interesting from an intertextual viewpoint is that Plato reserves for his predecessors the same criticism Xenophanes and Heraclitus have addressed theirs. By dismissing all previous thinkers as poets, Plato echoes Xenophanes, who criticizes previous poets for lack of precise knowledge (*saphes*) and utility (*chrêston*) in their fictitious tales (21 B1,23-24/34 DK).

Indeed, both Xenophanes and Heraclitus have tried to set firm criteria and conditions, which could make knowledge possible, if not to reach it to a full extent as is the case with Heraclitus, who claims so in fragment 22B1. Xenophanes, for instance, tries to correct the Hesiodic claim in the *Theogony* (v. 27-28), according to which the Muses can tell lies, which seem like truths in a similar manner that they can utter truths, by distinguishing between the two. Furthermore, Xenophanes ascribes truth to the Gods and opinions resembling truth to humans (21 B35 DK), who can nevertheless progress in knowledge over time through research. Despite asserting the unstable ground, on which human knowledge resides, inasmuch as humans can never be definitely certain about anything (21 B34 DK), Xenophanes proves to be an epistemological optimist. While correcting Hesiod, he recognizes —in certain representations of things— claims to truth (21 B35 DK) paving thus the way to the notion of '*eoikos logos*' in the *Timaeus*.

What is more, Diogenes' assumption that Heraclitus and Xenophanes were supposed to be the only self-taught thinkers of their generation, relies also on their similar attitude towards knowledge: Xenophanes' alleged epistemological skepticism is complemented by Heraclitus' doctrine, according to which truth is not transmissible by teaching.[16] Each human being has to find truth by oneself, his book

16 According to the proem of his discourse in 22 B1 DK, Heraclitus does not believe that the Logos is transmissible, though common in all things. Yet, it is liable to be understood (*akousai*) by each 'hearer' individually who can give the right interpretation to the signs of Logos itself by trying the words and the actions (*epea kai erga*) Heraclitus indicates. On the other hand, Xenophanes admits that even if an individual were to perceive the truth, he would not be

serving only as a guide signaling (*sêmainein)* the way to truth: *edizêsamên emeôuton* (22 B101 DK).[17] The Delphic precept 'Know thyself' is appropriated by Heraclitus, who presents himself as the interpreter of Apollo's oracles: 'The king in Delphi, neither tells, nor hides (the truth); he gives signs'. The '*logos*' Heraclitus dedicates to the temple of Artemis in Ephesus is an interpretation of the 'book of nature', whose author is God, the 'Wise' par excellence. Heraclitus presents his discourse as a revelation, which could be guaranteed by Logos itself, on which he confers a divine status, both transcendental and immanent in the cosmos. Heraclitus relies fully on his own capacity to understand the works of the Universe thanks to the Logos which is common to everything, measuring his infinite soul, as well as regulating the works of the cosmos. Inherent in all individuals and still the governing principle of the whole world, the Heraclitean Logos comprises all the extremes and brings them together in a unity.

The "all is one" formula imputed by Plato to Xenophanes, the founder of the Eleatic monism, betrays its Heraclitean identity to the extent that it summarizes the unity of opposites in a most successful way. Yet, it is also quite fitting for Xenophanes' notion of God who perceives and moves all things by his unifying '*Noos*', quite distinct from the '*noos*' of men, which is not only dispersed in the different organs of perception, but also limited by time. The Unity as conceived by the *Nous* of God in Xenophanes, 'descends' to the mortals in Heraclitus by means of his Logos, which unifies the Universe, according to whose Laws he intends to model the human polis and the civic behavior. The stoic *homo-logoumenôs [têi phusei] zên* (living in accordance to the [natural] common Logos) was beyond any doubt inspired by the Heraclitean model of unification between the

aware of it because of the *dokos*, which permeates all things (21 B34 DK).

17 On the matter of the Heraclitean '*edizêsamên*', see also Parmenides' two ways of inquiry (*dizêsios*) (28 B2, v. 8-10) in relation to the '*sêmata*' (signs), which lead to the way approved by the goddess (28 B8,2 DK), its '*sêmata*' (signs) being no other than the attributes of the Xenophanean god: '*agennêton*', '*anôlethron*', '*oulomeles*', '*ateleston*'.

natural and the political–ethical realm that Plato takes upon in his *Laws*, where the true Law is presented as *kata phusin* and the anti-poets lawgivers as the composers of the best drama, an imitation of a true bios.

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Ηράκλειτος και Ξενοφάνης στον *Σοφιστή* του Πλάτωνα : Η *αφανής* αρμονία

ΣΥΛΒΑΝΑ ΧΡΥΣΑΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ

Περίληψη

ΤΟ ΠΑΡΟΝ άρθρο πραγματεύεται την εκλεκτική συγγένεια μεταξύ Ξενοφάνη και Ηρακλείτου, όπως απηχείται στην πρώτη πλατωνική δοξογραφική μαρτυρία στον *Σοφιστή*, βάσει της οποίας ανασυγκροτείται ο μεταξύ τους διάλογος με αφορμή την δεδηλωμένη εκ μέρους τους ρήξη με τους προκατόχους τους επικούς ποιητές.