Special Issue. Plato's *Parmenides*, Origins and Aporias of a Dialogue on the One

Introduction

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The papers collected in this volume were presented in Chania, Greece, at the *Plato's Parmenides* conference, organised by Sylvana Chrysakopoulou and Benoît Castelnérac. The organisers of this symposium would like to thank the Center of Mediterranean Architecture for providing a wonderful venue and the various people involved in the whole process from organising the conference to the publication of the following papers. We owe special thanks to Professor Athena Kavoulaki (University of Crete) for her wonderful hospitality and organising skills. The conference would not have been possible without the financial support of the Prefecture of Crete (division of Chania).

The papers here published are those contributions which deal directly with the text of the *Parmenides*. It is envisaged that the papers that address the momentous legacy of the dialogue will be published in a different volume. We wish to express our gratitude to all the people who helped in the publication of the papers included in this volume, in particular the anonymous referee, the editors in charge of this journal, and its editorial staff, Jill Flohil and Cécile Facal.

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Most of Plato's characters are only names for us. That does not mean they are minor characters in Plato's Plays. The fame of Meno's "Slave" in the art of question and answer is more than 2,400 years old. Yet he will never be more than the *Meno's* Slave. But some of Plato's characters—Protagoras, Gorgias, Thrasymachus, and a handful of others—are considered to be Authors, with a capital A. They were famous and widely discussed years before Plato started to read philosophy, and their long lasting fame surely could have existed without his "publicity". Among them are Zeno and Parmenides, the latter being one of Plato's oldest characters. About Plato's *Parmenides*, is its title only due to the fact that "Parmenides" is the main character of the play, or is it because the "young" Plato intends to discuss old Parmenides' theses earnestly? Of course, things are not that simple, but in the end we would choose the second hypothesis. In the *Parmenides* Plato hands to Parmenides the most provocative counterarguments to key developments of his Theory of Forms in the *Meno*, the *Republic*, and the *Phaedo*, *inter alia*. It is the problem Plato needs to solve if he is to offer an efficient solution to radical oppositions between of the Friends of the earth and the Eleatic tribe (see *Sophist* 242b-249d). Plato needs to reply to the Eleatic Parmenides and his friends. Yet, he is saddled with them. He escaped with one concession to Eleatic rigor, in the *Sophist*, but on significant points he spent a great amount of time and caution contributing to what the Stoics will rightfully call Dialectic.

Another important thing to consider is the place of the *Parmenides* in the supposed chronological ordering of Plato's writing. In Plato's Late Dialogues the *Parmenides*, along with the *Sophist*, bears clear signs of intense work being done on the hypothesis of the Forms, but also on division, error, contradiction and a host of other questions bearing on coherent argumentation. It seems that Plato came to understand argumentation from the perspective of three main types, the Sophist, the Statesman, and the Philosopher. If we are to understand anything in this story, a part of our inquiry is to find out why the Eleatic filiation, from Xenophanes on, meant so much to Plato.

In the *Parmenides*, Plato begs to reopen the "case of the One". He devoted enough time and art to complete the "dialectical survey" of one "Form," the One, and this is either saying goodbye to Parmenides or a late testimony of a late (?) inquiry done following Parmenides' structures. So much erudition for the moment, be it Parmenides' One, Plato's own theory of Oneness, a series of *problemata* on the notion of unity, or a complex embroidery of all the above and more "knots" unknown to us, it would be hard to maintain that all this attention on Elea, a village located in the South West coast of Italy, is contingent or anecdotic. Plato's discussion with his predecessors is a thorny issue for every name in case, but it is always surprising to see how little work has been done to understand the linkage from Parmenides to Plato under the light of the history of "dialectic", to wit "questions about knowledge and argumentation". Although the above statements are only endorsed by the editors of this volume, we are confident that the following papers share in some way or others in the

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project of finding out how much of the historical Parmenides is in Plato's rendition, and how far Plato's *Parmenides* is a significant piece in his intellectual production. Here is a short presentation of what the reader will find in this volume.

On the basis of an analysis of key passages in Plato's *Parmenides*, Mathieu Marion argues that Zeno's paradoxes were used, in an eristic fashion, to ridicule Parmenides' opponents. In this dialogue, Socrates wrongly deduces therefrom that Zeno considered that he had shown his master's thesis to be "true". The review of Zeno's four paradoxes on divisibility and movement reveals that they are designed around hypotheses in which the subject is treated "in relation to itself," and "in relation to other things".

The next paper is devoted to the *Parmenides*' methodological preamble, in which Parmenides teaches how to train for dialectical study. The method presented there recalls the advice expounded by the historical Parmenides in his Poem, to think "the way of being and the way of non-being." In Plato's *Parmenides*, these two Ways are seen as manners of examining a hypothesis. Benoît Castelnérac explains that the method is exhaustive insofar as it requires repeatedly asking what the consequences are if a thing exists or not. Lastly, he suggests that this type of inquiry should be distinguished from other dialectical practices found in Plato's work.

Constance Meinwald analyses the distinction between *pros ta alla*[1] ("in relation to other things") and *pros heauto* ("in relation to itself") in Plato's *Parmenides* as a contrast between ordinary predication (corresponding to an individual's display of a feature or, more technically, instantiation) and tree predication (based on a nature X being involved in a nature Y). She engages with her critics and argues that this interpretation vindicates Plato's methodological remarks and maximizes his argumentative success. Her interpretation shows how the *Parmenides* bridges the gap between Plato's Middle Dialogues and the outstanding technical developments of his Late Dialogues.

Mary Louise Gill argues, for her part, that the second part of the *Parmenides* can be read as Parmenides' reply to the challenge set by Socrates in *Parmenides* 129d-130a.[2] In her view, Socrates is wrong, since the hypotheses "if the one is" and "if the one is not" lead to unwanted results. Yet, the world's existence cannot be denied. Readers of the *Parmenides* should therefore examine its second part as an exercise which indirectly results in reminding us that it is necessary to consider the hypothesis of the Forms.

Marc-Antoine Gavray's article shows how Plato's *Parmenides* explores the relationship between the notion of place and the geometric forms that are

[1] In this issue, Greek words are romanized when used for philosophical discussion, whereas Greek characters are used for philological questions.

[2] Here and for other articles in this special issue, passages in Plato's dialogues and other Ancient sources are indicated using the standard abbreviations. The fragments of Presocratic authors are numbered according to the Diels-Kranz edition, section B.

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inscribed in it, without resorting to other notions like sensation, becoming and causality. His analysis concurs with essential points in the *Timaeus* about the *khôra*, which is deprived of any intrinsic qualities and on the surface of which every sensitive reality is drawn.

Lastly, Spyridon Rangos examines Plato's concept of time by focusing on the "third" hypothesis in the *Parmenides*. He analyses the notion of limit between two sudden moments. He argues that the "third" hypothesis cannot be conceived as an appendix to the previous hypothesis in view of the fact that it bears the explicit trace of Plato's thought on temporality and "the sudden moment".

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