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Abstract of the Dissertation

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The semantics and performativity of Parmenides and Empedocles – who appear roughly one hundred years before the dialogues of Plato – are traditionally ignored by historians of rationality, or at best relegated to the status of poetic adornment, despite the fact that these figures belong to an oral culture. By retrieving a sense of how their core doctrines are enmeshed within key attributes of this culture, this dissertation argues that their true 'subject matter' is not logic or cosmology as such, but rather the performative invocation of an original event of hospitality that is constitutive of cosmos for the Greeks. Since the dialectical rationality of Plato and Aristotle establishes itself by abstracting from this culture and isolating these figures from their native context in order to determine them as its own predecessors – thereby grounding philosophical discipline in an artificial historical metanarrative – Western reason is marked by a preclusion of hospitality, or what contemporary thinkers have identified as a subordination of otherness. Using the later writings of Jacques Derrida on religion and hospitality to frame this discussion, I argue that the project of deconstructing the origins of Western metaphysics is not only assisted and revised by the reappraisal of Parmenides and Empedocles, but that the turn to religion in contemporary thought may be informed by their shared ontology of embodiment, sexual difference and the role of welcoming in the structure of their poetic – and prophetic – contributions at the borders of philosophy.

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Introduction

Philosophy begins with the foreigner – without whom there would be no question. The stipulation of *hospitality* – the question is essentially a foreigner and vice versa[1] – makes it the indispensable precondition of thought, without which real questioning could not occur. Though we find a perfunctory tribute to hospitality offered by Plato in his dialogue *Sophist*, even this cursory acknowledgement fades quickly as dialectic establishes its own investigative autonomy -- by the twentieth century it is recognized that Western thought is historically determined by a logic of *inhospitality*, a closing-off or limitation of the question.[2] This basic infidelity is what leads Derrida (greatly influenced by Levinas) to develop a philosophy of hospitality that sidesteps and disrupts the legacy of Greek metaphysics (which he defines as the domination of sameness and unity[3]) with a Semitic alternative[4] that

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[1] This basic association that deeply marks Plato's *Sophist* is a beginning point for Derrida in his reflections on hospitality (2000).

[2] In the sense that Being is always thought in terms of proximity, within a mode that privileges presence to oneself coupled with presence to Being. This assertion pervades Derrida's work: see, for example, 'The Ends of Man' (1982, pp. 124-34) which describes the terms on which this traditional schema is made to tremble radically by the arrival of something foreign, characterized by absence and coming from "a certain outside".

[3] This domination, in the judgment of contemporary thought, originates with Parmenides. See Derrida's general agreement with Levinas (1978 p. 91) that "Parmenidean tradition… disregards the relationship to the other" and arises from an "ancient clandestine friendship between light and power" that "would make common cause with oppression and with the totalitarianism of the same." See also Levinas 1969, p. 269.

[4] See Gil Anidjar's observation (2002, p. 3) that Derrida's writing on religion is always Abrahamic. For another assessment of the pervasiveness of this contemporary break from the Greeks see John D. Caputo's introduction to 'the religious' in Continental thought and its alignment with "prophetic counter-tradition…with honorary headquarters in a Jerusalem that

emphasizes a dialogical concern for and awaiting of *the other*. Without summarizing or evaluating the profound contributions of this strand of thought in contemporary discussion, it must be said that Derrida, in so decidedly parting from the Greeks, presents something of a false dilemma. By stating that Western thought is from the beginning dominated and tainted by a metaphysics of presence[5] – "from Parmenides to Husserl"[6] – he implicates the earliest beginnings of Greek thought in something that comes only later – the structure and *telos* of Platonic dialectic – thereby neglecting the immense heritage of Greek hospitality that precedes Platonism and informs Parmenides and Empedocles. Since such neglect is foundational to the history of metaphysics – determining a skewed reading of the early Greeks that is inaugurated by Plato and magnified by Aristotle – Derrida actually *ratifies* the original move of metaphysics in the midst of deconstructing it from a new angle. This does not undermine his actual critique, although it does obscure the ancestry of hospitality behind Western reason, and therefore prevents other exigencies of the genesis of reason from being understood in relation to hospitality. This link with the prehistory of reason may be restored by returning to Parmenides' logic, which, for Derrida, represents the domination of unity and

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is constitutionally wary of visitors from Athens." (2002, p. 2) We aim to show that such wariness need not apply for Greek visitors who are *not* from Athens.

[5] Leonard Lawlor (2002, p. 2) offers a concise and helpful formulation: "Presence, for Derrida, consists in (a) the distance of what is over and against (object and form, what is iterable), what we could call 'objective presence,' (b) the proximity of the self to itself in its acts (subject and intuition or content), what we could call 'subjective presence,' and then (c) the unification of these two species of presence, that is, presence and self-presence, in the present… The 'metaphysics of presence' then, for Derrida, consists in the valorization of presence (as defined in this way, which can account for both ancient and modern philosophy as well as Husserl's phenomenology), that is, consists in the validation of presence as a foundation."

[6] Derrida, 'Ousia and Gramme' in *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 34: "From Parmenides to Husserl, the privilege of the present has never been put into question. It could not have been. It is what is self-evident itself, and no thought seems possible outside its element."

totality that so rightfully deserves the parricide depicted in Plato's *Sophist*. In contrast to this very conventional reading – on the basis of new philological, historical and semantic evidence – what we find there instead is a *logic of hospitality* that opens onto *phusis* and by definition excludes nothing. Our fundamental criticism of the alternative to metaphysics found in the contemporary philosophy of otherness is that, as stated by Derrida and Levinas, it fails to recognize the otherness of Parmenides with respect to other Greeks. If it cannot see his radical foreignness to Plato, then it cannot comprehend the full import of the metaphysical tradition it seeks to deconstruct. This most foundational of Greek texts – Parmenides' poem – gives access to something peculiarly un-Greek, if by 'Greek' we insist on meaning 'dialectical tradition', and demonstrates that there is an alterity to be found at the heart of the Hellenic monolith that conspires with the deconstruction of metaphysics and is implied by the very possibility of deconstruction. By remaining in the vicinity of the Greeks perhaps longer than most contemporary philosophies of difference, we hope to find traces of how the experience[7] of hospitality was first excluded from thought and why a certain contemporary wariness of the Greeks may actually inhibit a philosophy of hospitality from taking full shape.

It is helpful to begin by outlining the full significance of hospitality for the early Greeks, which will allow deviations from this culture be examined in their proper context. Immediately, the structure of early Greek religion (which is tightly interwoven with social custom as mutual products of an oral culture) offers itself as an example of the fact that, for

[7] Experience is a complex necessity in Derrida's thought, dictated by the encounter with absolute otherness. See, for example, his statement in 'Force of Law' (2002, p. 244) that "there is no justice without this experience, however impossible it may be, of *aporia*. Justice is an experience of the impossible…" This recourse to experience seems dictated by his turn to the messianic eschatology of Levinas (see Derrida 1978 p. 83) and his assertion that hospitality is "an experience of the impossible." (Derrida 2002, p. 364).

the early Greeks, *the genesis and stability of the cosmic order depended upon the event of hospitality*.[8] Zeus rules by might, but unlike his predecessors he is no tyrant and therefore his reign is not overthrown by his son. The halting of parricide by the 'god of the court' (*Od.* 22.334) denotes an essential relationship, on the cosmic level, between hospitality and eternity. The hospitable ones, in an ordered cosmos, are those who endure; eternity is something to be courted, is dependent upon an act of welcome that is tested and granted through the *xenos* (or 'guest-stranger'). This also suggests hospitality is a form of expiation for Zeus' own act of parricide (as justified as it seemed), and prompts an examination of the link between hospitality and forgiveness (which also has an importance place in Derrida's work, as discussed later). The vehicle for this cosmic validation is Zeus' son Apollo – the god of song – whose threatening reputation precedes his arrival from afar as a *xenos* who throws everything into question. Only Zeus is unperturbed when he enters the halls of Olympus; Apollo's response to the justice and generosity of his host is eternal praise that "unfailingly declares the will of Zeus to men" (*Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 133). Apollo is responsible for prophecy and the song by which Greek oral culture maintains its link with the divine.[9] The dynamics of this relationship suggest that in early Greek culture, at a fundamental religious level that would set the pattern for every instance of hospitality, the *xenos* is properly the averter of parricide, a guardian of continuance and praise, rather than the opposite.[10] The entry of the *xenos* is the renewal of bonds and limits; the visitation of

[8] The religious symbolism of this relationship will be examined below in detail in Part III.

[9] The 'cosmic innovation' of Apollo in discussed by Jenny S. Clay (1994 p. 29) and expanded below in Part III.

[10] As we will argue below, Plato's reversal of this symbolic rule in the dramatology of *Sophist* is evidence that his reversal of Parmenidean ontology is an attack upon hospitality.

'the other' prevents stagnation within 'the same' and precludes the self-destructive violence to which such insularity leads. The guest-stranger always brings with him the threat of violence, for he comes from outside the cosmic order and does not speak the familiar language, but the paradox of his arrival is that the tension he creates is the only medium in which the domestic order may be affirmed. The *xenos* originates from outside its domestic economy and cannot be accounted for – but is nevertheless the stimulus for an ultimate account (*logos*). This is the central enigma of the *xenos*: that he belongs, somehow, in not belonging. Founded upon this paradox, cosmos exists in virtue of offering hospitality to the *xenos* who somehow originates from outside it; his entry initiates a mutual gifting without which the cosmos could not truly come into being.[11]

The religious significance of hospitality for the early Greeks extends naturally to the domain of thinking which, for them, is less a disinterested reflection upon reality than the use of language to invoke it.[12] Since hospitality is constitutive of cosmos, *logos* may be understood as the initiation of the specific tension that holds together host and guest (or thought and question). This is why Socrates, for example, directs his questioning towards exposing the founding reality of *aporia* ('pathlessness') – which is exemplified by hospitality, as the encounter between same and other – rather than an exposition of positive doctrine; which of course greatly accounts for his difference from Plato. Socrates has a piety that Plato does not; the former submits to the *aporia*, a paradoxical not-knowing to which every form of fabricated knowing capitulates. His style of questioning is entirely devoted to eliciting the stunned encounter with the foreign, that is, discovering the reality of the question

[11] See below Part III.B.

[12] We will examine problems created by various genres of language use and their contribution to an artificial historical narrative in Part I.D below.

– which we might call 'the presence of absence' in which there is no recourse but hospitality.

Though Platonism springs from this art of questioning, it operates within an entirely different ontology than the being of *aporia* because of its determination as a literary discipline. No doubt shaken by Socrates' execution, Plato is highly invested in vindicating his teacher's wisdom to the *demos* ('public') which requires a method of demonstration separating it from the various devices (and practitioners) of oral persuasion. As is well-known, the ability to deceive – saying what appears true but is not – becomes a formal problem in Plato's *Sophist*, prompting him to develop an ontological theory to explain the possibility of deception, which in turn calls for the reversal of the sacred logic of Parmenides (that *nothing* does not exist and *being* cannot not exist). The elimination of this logic is a fatal blow to the essence of hospitality, since dialectic – the practice that follows from the reversal of this logic – operates through the *negation* of what is dissimilar. This purgative motion begins with the assertion of contaminated thought and language, and asserts that thought can only purify itself by deploying a concept of *resemblance* – which entails an imitation and an imitated – to systematically identify and formally discard those aspects of representation that are inessential but entangled with what gives the resemblance its truth. The *other* is what is managed and eliminated; dialectic, therefore, runs counter to the direction of hospitality, and it searches for and implodes any instance of hospitality that it encounters within the movement of thought.

There is therefore a cultural rift between Socrates and Plato that places the former in much closer proximity to the early Greeks than to the Athenian school founded in his honor. Because of the critical importance he placed upon *aporia*, Socrates is aligned with the enactment of hospitality in which there are no paths or resemblances that would make the

stranger – within oneself, as the sudden experience of unknowing – into something familiar. *Aporia* is the full actuality; there is nowhere subsequent to which it leads; we therefore posit a similar allegiance in the case of Parmenides, whose logic delivers, in self-referential fashion, the ontology of hospitality within a situation of hospitality.[13] It is unfortunate that Plato seeks to overturn this logic in defending and developing the wisdom of an informal adherent of this logic (Socrates), and it is also unfortunate that Derrida, in working towards the possibility of hospitality in contemporary thought, finds an enemy in Parmenides. We hope to show that not only does Parmenides strictly adhere to a *logos* of welcome, he does so in a way that avoids excluding *phusis* from the structure of thought (thereby not falling into metaphysics). Socrates and Parmenides therefore share a commitment to the event of hospitality within thought, to which both the *aporia* and the spherical being of the Goddess refer. Parmenides' logos, in turn, leads seamlessly into the cosmological thought of Empedocles (whom tradition renders into his dialectical adversary) and joins both these early Greeks in a pragmatics of language aimed at restoring mind (*phren*) to its rightful position with regard to the physical world. By investigating the bond between these two figures we arrive at a sense of how the early Greeks were able to use language purposefully in concert with the sensible world, rather than reducing *phusis* to a mechanics (Aristotle's *Physics*) or a duplicate of a transcendental idea (Plato's *Timaeus*). Within the oral culture of hospitality that sustained their thought, Parmenides and Empedocles provide different and complementary aspects of a *logos* that intertwines with the physical world and essentially addresses it *as a guest*. While the philosophical imagination beginning with Plato views the body as a *host* of the soul – a particularly loud, ephemeral and obstructive host – for these

[13] For the self-referential nature of Parmenides' Poem, see below Part II.D.

earlier Greeks the body, and *phusis* more largely, was something more than a mere receptacle: it was a primordial *xenos* whose visit prompted an event of hospitality that was constitutive of cosmos. This is a monumental departure from the customary view of the world, and therefore the body, as a *vessel* – one that is shared by both abstraction and romanticism, which together assume a familiarity with the physical that deprives it of its radical otherness: the former through negation and the latter through the wish for a lost integration or participation mystique. *Hospitality requires insolubility*; and despite appearing to make room for a conception of the world as *our host*, as providing a place for temporary guests to practice a responsible ecology, such an outlook dissipates into a biologism that is all too certain of nature's determinability and ultimate familiarity. It would make an end out of becoming the parts of a harmonious whole, which is certainly moral and pragmatic – given the global crisis we now face – but it also falls prey to a presumptuousness about the identity of this wild stranger before us: *phusis* is an enigmatic being who cannot be reduced to our category of *what is*.[14] The physical world always remains on the threshold of being, awaiting invitation – the *logos* cultivated by Parmenides and Empedocles is a pragmatics intended to soberly unfold the *aporia* of hospitality between a host and *phusis*.[15] This radical (and ancient) possibility leaves us with many questions: What does it mean for the physical world to be welcomed as a guest? How does language prepare itself for such a responsibility? By investigating these questions through a prolonged attention to the poetics of Parmenides and

[14] The acknowledgement of the mysteriousness of *phusis* or the use of a personal pronoun to refer to it does not entail romanticism or anthropomorphism; on the contrary, these notions intrude upon the absolute otherness required by the structure of hospitality that precedes even our determination of ourselves as *anthropos*.

[15] We do not ask about the identity of the host; as Derrida (1997, p. 41) states, the host experiences his own identity through his hospitality to the guest, therefore becoming a guest in turn.

Empedocles, we will argue that hospitality, by its very essence, implies that there is an *original guest*, of whom every possible guest in the world is a sign and manifestation. This guest is *phusis*, and it is not unrelated to what Derrida and Levinas are willing to call 'the feminine being'[16] which has a complex relationship to hospitality (and to Apollo) in early Greek religion, and therefore also to Parmenides and Empedocles.[17] Empedocles, particularly, provides us with a haptics of language by which the physical world is welcomed into the presence of thought.[18]

The extension of hospitality to the physical is a particular innovation by Parmenides and Empedocles within the culture of the early Greeks and is only available through the semantics and symbology of this culture. Paradoxically, however, the language of this very innovation opens the door to a theoretical discipline of speech that overthrows this culture, dismantling its pragmatics and reassembling its components into a new pattern. We can observe this happening with Plato, who in spite of (or perhaps because of) his antagonistic position towards hospitality uses it as a rhetorical frame for his own ontology in *Sophist*. The details of this coup d'etat show that either (1) Plato was aware of what the ontology of hospitality entailed, or (2) his ignorance hosts an irony that is profoundly interesting. In light of his dramaturgy Plato's ontology seems all the more purposeful and Derrida's deconstruction of it all the more prefigured. It serves as a kind of key to the full scope of the arguments in *Sophist*, symbolically presenting the attack upon hospitality at the heart of his

[16] Derrida 1999, p. 44. For the text see below, note 24.

[17] See below Part III.

[18] See below Part IV.

thought. The basic issue, as mentioned above[19], is that Plato violently reverses the social role of the *xenos* by presenting him as an agent of parricide. To begin, let us first recall that for the cosmic *xenos* Apollo, it is the genre of praise (*ainos*) that determines his cosmic function – and the worthiness of this praise, the longevity of the cosmos, is effectively produced by the speech-event that he carries out.[20] *Ainos* is a speech-act that – by definition – performs what it says, and the connections between this genre of speaking with the figure of the *xenos* – alongside religious structures – have been well documented by Gregory Nagy, whose rich study of the social dynamics of early Greek oral tradition is indispensable to retrieving the semantic links between Parmenides and Empedocles that inscribe them within a single purpose.[21] The *xenos* is quintessentially inscribed in the context of verbal subtlety and outright *deception* (based on his anonymous social position as well as certain structures of early Greek religion[22]) which makes it symbolically interesting that Plato specifically chooses the *xenos* to be the expositor of the doctrines in *Sophist* – where deception is to be exposed and banished. The idea of a *xenos* helping to discover a way *to guard against deception* violates longstanding cultural norms of which his anonymity in the dialogue is a vestige. The hospitality that Plato's Xenos receives from the Athenians is the setting for an attack on the ontology of hospitality itself, which is why it is profoundly significant, symbolically, that this particular *xenos* breaks convention by being the *agent* of parricide

[19] See note 10.

[20] The reproduction extends to each performance within the oral culture. For the structure of *ainos* see Part II.D.

[21] Nagy's work is especially important in Part II, but informs the entirety of this argument about the social power of the relation of hospitality in Greek thought.

[22] See below Parts III sections A, C and D.

rather than its averter. Plato's rhetorical sleight of hand, in making him the leader of the dialogue, is to (1) pay public tribute to the event of hospitality as constitutive of thought itself, or the original encounter where thought can truly commence, but also (2) to privately declare victory over the world of the early Greeks in which the figure of the *xenos* and the act of parricide are totally incompatible. For Plato to put them together, or have the former perform the latter in the presentation of his own doctrine (the inauguration of the primary movement of dialectical thought that overthrows the logic of 'father Parmenides' by bestowing a provisional existence upon non-being) is a subtle signal that a total revolution in Greek thought has happened.[23]

Could this possibly be an accident? Does Plato intend to be hostile to hospitality, or does he rather envision himself as contributing to it, clarifying it by presenting rationality as its latest extension? As a follower of Socrates he is a servant of the question, but his formalization of the Socratic *elenchos* – his effort to investigate what has been opened up, to develop a method and approach the question with the proper orderliness – inherently violates the visitor in two ways: by holding him hostage for interrogation *and* by simultaneously

[23] By using the figure of the *xenos* to *commit parricide*, there is irony on top of irony. First, Plato is exaggerating the magnitude of his crime, despite the fact that parricide was possibly the worst offense for the Greeks. As for the next irony to follow, there appears to be a fork in the road leading to two possible secondary ironies. Did Plato intend one or the other, or did he intend both? Down one road we find Plato's mock avoidance of the crime, a magnification of sarcasm about the grave suggestion that "no one among us" would dare to make. The *xenos* is the easy culprit. Down the other road is Plato's very serious implication, in choosing the *xenos* as his agent, that the thought presented in *Sophist* is destructive to hospitality, in virtue of pitting it against itself: a violence that is not satirical at all. In a parody of trepidation, Plato pretends to duck responsibility for this 'parricide' by placing it in the mouth of the *xenos*, thereby praising the immense contribution of Parmenides but also mocking the idea that his predecessor's *elenchos* is beyond reproach. This dubious tribute is more than a skilled assault upon the logic of the 'father', which Plato undertakes brilliantly within the dialogue itself. At the level of symbolism, it helps to deliver a quiet but fatal blow to the *culture of hospitality* in which this logic once functioned; the success of this secret campaign is the very possibility of yielding to dialectic.

shutting the door and refusing to let him in. Both are a subordination of absence to presence, in Derrida's terminology, as the former forces the foreigner to be present and the latter forces his absence to remain outside. This splitting of the guest is emblematic of the violence inflicted upon the question, for it allows an evasion of *aporia* – the moment of impossibility and "unlivable contradiction" that is hospitality.[24] The logic of Plato's *Sophist*, stated in the plainest terms, relieves that tension between being and nonbeing – which is truly a tension within being itself since nothing does not exist – by letting each have a share in the other, making them "the same and not the same"[25] (in the language of Parmenides) or opposites within a dialectical framework. The elimination of this tension is essentially the killing of the host whose role is defined by it, which is precisely what is depicted in the symbology of the dialogue.

If Plato is strangely unfaithful to the legacy of the question that prompts his own activity, then Derrida is perhaps stranger for wishing to repeat Plato's parricide (or at least lamenting that the assassination attempt failed[26]) and endorsing a violence perpetrated by the guest, especially given his deconstruction of Plato's founding distinction between intelligible

[24] Derrida (2002 p. 360-62) gives an excellent description of why: "Hospitality must wait *and* not wait. It is what must await *and still* not await, extend and stretch itself but still stand and hold itself in the awaiting and the non awaiting… One must not only not be ready nor prepared to welcome – for if the welcome is a simple manifestation of a natural or acquired disposition, of a generous character or a hospitable habitus, there is no merit in it, no welcome of the other as other. But – supplementary aporia – it is also true that if I welcome the other out of mere duty, unwillingly, against my natural inclination, I am not welcoming him either… If I welcome only what I welcome, what I am ready to welcome, and that I recognize in advance because I expect the coming of the guest as invited, there is no hospitality."

[25] Fragment 6, Gallop 2000 p. 61.

[26] See Derrida 1978, p. 89.

and sensible.[27] For Derrida, Plato remains within the paradigm of a totalizing logic initiated by Parmenides, but Derrida here misinterprets the implications of Parmenides' logic, which could not privilege unity[28] or totality without denoting an aggregate of some kind -- which it does not. There is only one and thus there can be no sameness – through *what* would it be same with itself? – just as there is nothing for the One to be *present to* and no way for the other to be excluded from this logic because nothing is excluded. Therefore it is not accurate to say that Plato fails to overcome Parmenidean sameness, because the privileging of sameness originates from the institution of a sensible/intelligible distinction that is the very product of Plato's repudiation of Parmenides' logic. It is a strange coincidence that Derrida makes this determination from within a discourse on hospitality, since he affirms Plato's symbology of the dialectical assault upon the logic of hospitality.

As stated above, however, this does not weaken Derrida's basic critique of Platonic metaphysics or his assessment of its influence upon Western thought. If we conceive of the Platonic *image* (or representation) as a mixture of what is and what is not, in light of his arguments in *Sophist*, then dialectic is the process of interrogation that identifies and removes verbal contaminants (non-being) within representations of the truth.[29] *Similarity*, within the metaphysics of presence, is what determines the universe of existents that will submit to this process; there can be no radical *otherness* (being and nothing are equal contributors to the

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[27] Derrida's essay 'Khora' (1995) examines the deconstructibility of this distinction as presented in Plato's *Timaeus* and will be examined further below.

[28] See above, note 3.

[29] Vernant (1991, p. 168) writes of how Plato's semantic restructuring of *mimesis* within Greek thought inevitably leads to an ontology of secularization: "Instead of expressing the irruption of the supernatural into human life, of the invisible into the visible, the play of Same and Other comes to circumscribe the space of the fictive and illusory between the two poles of being and nonbeing, between the true and the false."

universe interrogated and thus participate in a relation of familiarity). There can therefore *be* nothing foreign, since the absence that typifies the foreigner is consigned to nonexistence. Plato's dialectic therefore effectively destroys the ontological position of hospitality that so characterized Socrates' piety to the question and defined the world of the early Greeks.

This much seems to be implied in Derrida's seminars on hospitality.[30] In accord with his later explorations of the politics and intimacy of otherness, Derrida there points to the foreigner as one who initiates the question, who puts into question by being in question, unsettling the complacency of local ordering by his presence and bringing into uncomfortable proximity the limits of the law and the mysterious distance within the face-to-face encounter. *Hospitality*, as mobilized by Derrida to counter the logic of totality that determines the movement and construction of Western thought, offers shelter to all that is disrupted – that is, *other* – to the history of conceptualization; thus Derrida calls it "the exemplary experience of deconstruction itself, when it is or does what it has to do or to be, that is, the experience of the impossible."[31] One of the many surprises[32] of Derrida's so-called 'deconstruction', often depicted as a wrecking ball smashing every establishment in its midst, is the enormous sensitivity and gentleness with which it attends to the event of *welcome*. This properly means the averting of violence or intrusion that, on the level of the concept, occurs in the formalization of the thinking act. Such violations of otherness become possible, legitimate or even normalized through a binary logic, an interlocking of dominance and subordination that

[30] cf. Derrida 2000.

[31] Derrida (2002) p. 354.

[32] Caputo and Scanlon (1999, pp. 4-5) cite this tendency towards the religious, the fact that "deconstruction is structured like a religion", as an unwelcome surprise and great disappointment to those who expected it "to administer the truly lethal dose… to a still gasping deity."

predetermines every avenue of confrontation and dictates the limits of what is possible – and also seeks to dictate what is outside its limits, to master its outside in such a way that predetermines it or brings it in only to brand it with a mark and send it back out, its otherness violated and no longer troublesome.[33] What has been *sealed off* in this way, forced to play the role of *pharmakon* ('scapegoat'), can only be discerned through an act of hospitality – what Derrida calls "the deconstruction of the at-home."[34] As a practice of reading it searches for the foreigner in the text, finding sites of incompatibility or heterogeneity that are obscured or short-circuited for the sake of a larger formal framework. There is no 'method' to this, as hospitality cannot be structured; there is only the virtue of a host or attentive reader which Derrida has used to explain his way of rereading canonized texts as if for the first time, from a position of marginality that is careful not to become too 'familiar' or routinized.[35] In doing so, Derrida strives to remain at the site of a primal expulsion (or mutilation) that is foundational to the text's schematic unity, observing how it determines what is – and what is not – legible. He attempts to rediscover domestic tensions, to see what happens when the outcast is brought back in and raised to an unheard-of prominence. By testing the rigidity of the dialectical system and its ability to welcome its *other*, Derrida both elucidates the logic of hegemony and develops a lexicon for inviting the foreigner back into thought – which would offer the promise of a cosmopolitan 'city of refuge.'[36]

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[33] See Derrida (1982) especially 'Tympan'. This text even contains a reference to Persephone, the emblem of all that is abducted and confined beyond the borders of life.

[34] Derrida 2002, p. 364.

[35] From the Villanova Roundtable Discussion printed in Caputo 1997 p. 9.

[36] See Derrida's reflections on cosmopolitanism (2001) that naturally couples with his essay on forgiveness.

Thus, in reading a philosophical text or studying the origins of the call to thought, it is necessary to listen for what has been muffled or forced to submit, the inaudible and illegible trace of that 'being' whose immense patience and endurance "gives place to the opposition"[37], who situates the genres of the intelligible and the sensible, providing the ground for dialectic to begin. This hospitable one is decidedly feminine, as conceded in that singular text of Plato, the *Timaeus*, where he speaks of a third type of being, or *khora*, that receives the imprint of the sensible cosmos that is modeled after an intelligible blueprint by a divine artisan or demiurge. The profound importance of *khora* for Derrida – he calls it "a surname of deconstruction" and refuses to refer to her as an object, asking (rhetorically?) "Who are you, *Khora*?"[38] – should be understood in relation to his elevation of hospitality. For both Derrida and Levinas, hospitality is essentially feminine, though the difficulty of speaking of it in this way is felt sharply by both.[39] Since *khora* is what gives place and is

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[37] Derrida 1995, p. 90.

[38] Ibid p. 111.

[39] See Derrida's comments (1999, pp. 44-45) on *Totality and Infinity*, where Levinas "defines the welcome par excellence, the welcome or welcoming of absolute, absolutely originary, or even pre-originary hospitality, nothing less than the pre-ethical origin of ethics, on the basis of femininity. That gesture reaches a depth of essential or meta-empirical radicality that takes sexual difference into account in an ethics emancipated from ontology. It confers the opening of the welcome upon 'the feminine being' and not upon the *fact* of empirical women… we would do well to remember, even if silently, that this thought of welcome, there at the opening of ethics, is indeed marked by sexual difference. Such sexual difference will never again be neutralized. The absolute, absolutely originary welcome, indeed, the pre-original welcome, the welcoming par excellence, is feminine; it takes place in a place that cannot be appropriated, in an open 'interiority' whose hospitality the master or owner receives before himself then wishing to give it." This text resonates deeply and silently with the 'Proem' of Parmenides and should raise the question of how sexual difference is prefigured in the logic presented. Derrida also says (41) that the host is a guest in his own home. But since every act of hospitality points towards the originary welcome in which the host is himself the guest, the host experiences his hospitality, and thus his position as host, through the guest. Derrida seems to imply that if 'the feminine being' is the originary host,

characterized only by receptivity, "itself being apprehensible by a kind of bastard reasoning by the aid of non-sensation, barely an object of belief" (*Tim.* 52b) with no attributes of its own, Derrida understands it as the pure otherness of effaced feminine difference by which the masculine voice procures a platform to speak. It is therefore that 'outside' of philosophy by which it achieves a certain (though always problematic) continence. "Philosophy cannot speak philosophically of that which looks like its 'mother', its 'nurse', its 'receptacle' or its 'imprint-bearer'. As such, it speaks only of the father and the son, as if the father engendered it all on his own."[40] Since Derrida associates metaphysics, then, with a logic of the Father that circumvents and suppresses *khora*, he views the arrival of the *xenos* as the event of justice in which "the fearful question, the revolutionary hypothesis" is posed as a "challenge to Parmenides' paternal logic, a challenge coming from the foreigner."[41] "The paternal authority of the *logos* gets ready to disarm him, to treat him as mad"[42] but it is necessary to persist with the hospitality that allows such a foreign voice to be heard. This is very well – Derrida's deconstruction of what he calls 'phallogocentrism' is justified – except that it misses the traditional symbolic role of the *xenos* as an averter of parricide, and therefore attributes an unnecessary violence to the challenge his existence represents. It also relies upon a reading of Parmenides based on this very phallogocentrism, in which the Proem is

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then masculine being would be the originary guest. But since the absolute welcome can only be experienced through the guest, this determines the guest – as essentially other to the tradition of thought – is not masculine. 'Feminine being' is both host and guest – a doubleness that is not opposition but a pure otherness to itself. See above note 19.

[40] Cf. Derrida 1995 p. 126. See also his commentary in *Dissemination* on the privileging of presence in philosophy's conception of writing, which begins in Plato's *Phaedrus* with his metaphorical determination of *logos* as a son who speaks in place of an absent father.

[41] Derrida 2000, p.7.

[42] Ibid, p. 11.

discounted and the role of the goddess made irrelevant. *Khora* is simply another name for Kore[43] (no etymological connection) who in Parmenides' Poem is synonymous with the being that situates all things and is naturally willing to be divided into opposites by 'mortal' thinking (that which privileges what it can make present to itself). Plato simply presents the very first formulation and systematization of this tendency. Parmenides' logic is in no way paternalistic, and as we have argued above and will continue to argue, is inscribed in a symbology of hospitality that finds its emblem in the feminine being: *khora*. Derrida remarks:

> This *triton genos* is not a *genos*, first of all because it is a unique individual. She does not belong to the 'race of women' (*genos gynaikon*). *Khora* marks a space apart, the spacing which keeps a dissymmetrical relation to all that which, 'in herself', beside or in addition to herself, seems to make a couple with her. In the couple outside of this couple, this strange mother who gives place without engendering can no longer be considered an origin.[44]

Once Parmenides – as well as Empedocles – are allowed to present for us something *other* than the metaphysical pre-history of Platonic dialectic, their fully-formed pragmatics of hospitality becomes something of supreme value and interest for a contemporary thought attempting to articulate its relation to the other without relapsing into the privileging of sameness. We hope to present a glimpse of this poetics of hospitality and show how much of the concerns of deconstruction are prefigured in it. Not only this, but also how contemporary notions of hospitality might be extended to an original *guest* who is not recognized in Derrida's thought, who might be viewed as *khora*'s other side, as offering a sense of the

[43] A traditional name for Persephone (that means 'girl'), the daughter of vegetation goddess Demeter. Greek religion records the violence at the heart of the feminine, forcing it to be separate from itself, or double, through the story of Persephone's abduction from her mother by Hades, who takes her to the Underworld to be his queen. See Derrida's very appropriate link to Persephone in 'Tympan', as well as his cryptic eulogy of the indecipherable body of a girl at the end of 'In This Work At This Moment Here I Am' in 2007, pp. 188-89.

[44] Derrida 1995, p. 124.

essential doubleness of the feminine that was so important to the early Greeks.

The basic position we will take on Parmenides and Empedocles has already been written on, superbly, by Peter Kingsley in his recent work.[45] Given the mystical tradition that he attributes to these figures, a mystical tone in his 'exposition' is a natural result that is unlikely to find much academic support. However, we find nothing in his account that is unavoidably shocking nor impossible to be accommodated – at least provisionally – by contemporary trends of thought, as we have hoped to show by the briefest of looks at Derrida's work. Above all, we do not find it necessary to flee from the empire of the Greeks in order to find a philosophy of hospitality. We present an in-depth look at the poetics of Parmenides and Empedocles as a contribution towards bridging a gap in understanding between Greek and Abrahamic traditions, and also, hopefully, towards an understanding of how a *logos* of hospitality can fall victim to a covert restructuring that violates its essential nature in the name of clarity and wider accessibility.

For reasons that will become apparent we begin with Parmenides' student, Empedocles. Part 1 is dedicated to the ways his cosmology has been traditionally approached by scholars, whose metaphysical bias is much more clearly on display when the topic is the world-as-object. Part 2 will investigate the structure and semantics of oral tradition, the culture of performative speech within which Empedocles and Parmenides' poems must be contextualized. It is then necessary to understand how Greek religion, especially the divine feminine, works seamlessly within this performativity (Part 3) and finally how the language used by Empedocles and Parmenides required a bodily comportment completely *other* than the one inherited from dialectical tradition (Part 4).

[45] See Kingsley 2003.

The overall aim will be this: to regain a notion of how the physical world bears the mark of an original violation by the human soul, and how perception and the physical world are structured to enact a forgiveness that is only accessible through hospitality. We will compare Derrida's reflections upon forgiveness to see how they are expanded by this account.

The boundary line of the Western philosophical tradition falls directly down the center of Parmenides and Empedocles, clouding them and the nature of their relationship and generating two versions of each – which we might label as respectable and subversive, or philosophical and poetic, or citizen and foreigner. For both of them there appears to be a 'central' doctrine that is then adorned by 'poetic' flourishes that can be legitimately dismissed without repercussion by the philosopher. There is a part that may enter the school of Athens and parts that may not; from the parts with the proper credentials we reconstruct a historical alibi, reasons for association that will not recall the embarrassing details of their past – this is basically the admissions process that decides the legitimacy of their affiliation with one another. We dwell on the secondary citizenship they receive not to cast blame but to draw attention to a beautiful and ironic contrast that lies at the core of their actual relationship: within the domain of early Greek thought, *they are the masters of hospitality*. It is somehow poetically fitting, then, that as guests or captives of Athenian intellectual culture they must endure so much, being made to accept a conditional invitation that is closer to a slight than a welcome. This is why they cannot yet be considered the *xenoi* of philosophy, nor can philosophy be the place of *philoi* – for these concepts are reciprocal[46] – until they are given the hospitality to impart something from outside the normal limits. It will be necessary to recover the vocabulary and semantics for this, witnessing the associations and natural

[46] Nagy 1979 p. 288.

structure that arise, how Parmenides and Empedocles use this specific genre of the *xenos* for their own particular aims, and finally how philosophy has traditionally accommodated them, displaying a selective hospitality or rather a luxurious inattention to the tradition of hospitality that preceded – and indeed gave rise to – philosophy itself.

Part 1: A Path to the Door

A. Why Empedocles matters

Among the early Greek philosophers there is no personality more legendary and bizarre than Empedocles. The tales surrounding his life and work have elicited every possible reaction, most often a mixture of wonder and bewilderment. But despite his ability to fascinate, Empedocles occupies a fairly inert position within the history of early Greek thought, receiving substantially less attention than Heraclitus or Parmenides. This is because he does not indispensably contribute to the prehistory of reason as they do; Empedocles is an epic poet who shows little interest in arguing for his doctrine. There is no process of excavating the primary categories of being or *logos* from unknown depths; at least one commentator has declared him "philosophically unrewarding."[47] Empedocles' cosmic cycle can, after all, appear like a mere mechanism for describing the movements of nature. At first glance there does not seem to be much hidden under its surface, though the surface itself is stunningly beautiful and intricate. It is also disarmingly simple, and somehow this combination of simplicity and endless resonance draws us into a mystery that yields only to our sense of touch. Like skin, it is brushed against but not penetrated, and for this reason its potency can easily be overlooked because it is hidden in the open, within the resonance of details spread laterally and easily overshadowed by extraneous concerns. Such obstructions are abundant, preventing the historical context of his language from informing his doctrine; this cultural context must be reestablished and closely guarded from anachronistic concepts

[47] Barnes (1989) p. 308.

that have long intruded upon the world of the early Greeks. For Empedocles specifically, these have concealed his contribution to a philosophy of the body as well as the significant role of performative speech in his cosmology. Later conceptual innovations by Plato and Aristotle so dramatically altered the landscape of Greek thought that it became impossible to read Empedocles without importing a false set of problematics that must carefully be set aside.

To what end? Why must we correct misinterpretations of Empedocles? While it may be hermeneutically naive to expect an 'original' Empedocles to spring forth from any investigation, unscathed by history, we can expect a more *accurate* Empedocles to be available once certain identifiable barriers are removed. But this is not merely a historical chore; contemporary thought essentially demands a revaluation of philosophical ambition itself, an understanding of how it was originally constituted through the enforcement of limits that divide what is inside from what is outside the borders of philosophy. Recent thought has addressed this exclusion in various ways, whether as the inability to welcome, a violence of light, a tradition of disincarnate thought or the disregard of sexual difference – all of which denote an indeterminate suffering on behalf of the legislative commencement of Western thought. How and where do these limits declare themselves? Do these contemporary grievances intersect or collectively refer to a body upon which these limits are inscribed or inflicted? By returning to the early Greeks, we regain access to a record of how dialectical tradition is founded upon a primordial expulsion that determines its trajectory and set of topics throughout the history of Western thought – and it is possible to discover a violence that surpasses even that to which deconstruction testifies in its attempt to leave Greek metaphysics behind. To this end, Empedocles can be more helpful than Parmenides because

he is even more of a liminal figure to philosophical tradition – as such, it is the cleft in his doctrine, the site where the boundary falls and the surgical cut is made, that is most informative about how this tradition conceives of itself. We will examine many places where this short-circuiting occurs; initially it is important to mention a significant aspect of his language that is completely elided by the classical approach: *his strategic and comprehensive use of irony*. This is one of the first casualties of the traditional reading, a loss that reverberates throughout his work. More than any other figure in Western tradition, Empedocles operates with an awareness of the impossibility of clear and sincere communication. Language, for him, is not a representational medium for transmitting a signified content from one party to another, or making something (the truth) more present or less ambiguous to a mind that would grasp it, but is rather unavoidably active and non-neutral – and only true to its essence when it does not remove itself from the being to which it 'refers'. Empedocles' language is therefore performative, itself an event, and if it appears to describe or 'refer' to anything outside of the situation in which it is encountered, this is only because Empedocles adopts the convention of making straightforward statements in order to undermine them through irony. The actual topic of his words is the moment of hospitality in which they are received, the condition of the person hearing them that subsequently becomes the site of a revelation of irony. The verbal subtlety he employs is totally unique within Western thought and the fact that he chooses this approach exhibits his extraordinary prescience with regard to the limits of representational speech, and therefore of the philosophical tradition that follows him. It is as if he anticipates, at the very inception of Western reason, something of its basic structure and limitations and employs them in service of something else. But when his complex web of irony is lost through a selective or

anachronistic reading from within this tradition, he appears incredibly naïve to modern eyes – which is of course equally ironic given that contemporary critiques of metaphysics have criticized the hegemonic discourse that would determine him as such. What will unfold through a gradual restoration of Empedocles is the continuous encounter with what disrupts the expectations of a metaphysics of sameness[48] – in other words, it brings us into the company of the *other* of dialectical thought that demands verbal subtlety and an intricate art of hospitality. In the following section we will examine this history of misinterpretation of Empedocles in order to emphasize how absolutely covert and inassimilable to customary categories this language must be. This will also lead us to a sense of how subterranean and foreign to dialectical critique is his true affiliation with Parmenides.

B. Versatility and singularity

Empedocles defies categorization; this is the first problem faced by interpreters of his poetry. His account of reality offers no division between science and religion, nor any firm or ultimately meaningful distinctions between music, law and healing. This naturally leads to charges of naivety on his part, but this accusation is difficult because his poetry predates the developments of Greek thought that created the customary divisions among the disciplines. He cannot be viewed through a Platonic lens – much less an Aristotelean one – without a very brutal distortion of his original meaning. Certain conventions of thought must be suspended, bracketed off for the moment until Empedocles can be seen intact. Then, if desired, the judgment of history can resume, but the superiority of hindsight, the feeling that we are looking upon Empedocles from an enlightened and progressive position, must be set

[48] See above Introduction.

aside to avoid anachronism in our approach. From our much-experienced position it can be very difficult to comprehend what Empedocles actually was. He presents himself as simultaneously a physician, prophet, scientist, leader, poet and bard. Ultimately, he is something that surpasses and encompasses all these. E. R. Dodds offers a helpful description in his classic study *The Greeks and the Irrational*, calling Empedocles "a very old type of personality, the shaman who combines the still undifferentiated functions of magician and naturalist, poet and philosopher, preacher, healer, and public counselor... [T]he last belated example of a species which with his death became extinct in the Greek world, though it still flourishes elsewhere."[49] This is generally a fair statement, though to say that this 'species' became extinct in the 'Greek world' invokes some assumptions about the borders of this world that may have more basis in intellectual history than historical fact. It is important to avoid the simple assumption that the 'Greek world' was insulated from any outside influence or did not extend its influence to places we might not immediately consider Greek. For example, evidence presently recently by Peter Kingsley demonstrates the influence of Empedocles upon the Egyptian Hermetics, Gnostics and particularly the Sufis, showing how these mystical traditions preserve aspects of Empedocles' thought that the Western

[49] Dodds 1951, p. 145-6. It is interesting that Dodds is willing to label Empedocles a 'shaman' but does not mention Parmenides, Empedocles' teacher, anywhere in his work. Parmenides' journey to the Underworld in his proem is far more vivid than any shamanic material in Empedocles, though it is customarily set aside as poetic embellishment or allegory. Empedocles is somewhat expendable to the philosophical tradition, a second-tier figure in early Greek thought, but Parmenides enjoys a conspicuous immunity from such 'irrational' motivations. Is the claim to have spoken to a Goddess so much more rational than the claim to be immortal? It suggests that Dodds would like to avoid interference with the neat dichotomy of 'rational' vs. 'irrational'. Further evidence of his essentializing of irrationality is provided below by his general category of 'shaman', as it is by the final remarks of his study.

philosophical tradition does not.[50] Empedocles can be both Greek and non-Greek[51], apparently, drawing our attention to the fact of a certain hegemony of discourse that exerts a subtle power in defining the limits of the Greek world. It is important to investigate how this normalizing force was originally produced and is perpetuated in modern investigations of the early Greek world. We will return to this question repeatedly, but for the moment we note that an 'extinction' in the Greek world may only designate a shift in that culture's attention such that certain aspects of it go underground and unrecorded in the literary discipline of philosophy.

Closer consideration of Empedocles as a 'shaman' is absolutely necessary. Dodds' brief description admirably avoids the anachronisms of modern commentators, many of whom are preoccupied with the supposed incompatibilities of his doctrine. Answering Jaeger's well-known label of Empedocles as a "philosophical centaur" and description of him as "a new synthesizing type of philosophical personality"[52], Dodds counters resolutely that "any attempt to synthesize his religious and scientific opinions is precisely what we miss in him."[53] For a shaman it makes little sense to separate these domains, despite the demands that the role of 'philosopher' might place upon him. But what exactly is meant by this term 'shaman' and how does it unite Empedocles with certain practices that supposedly 'flourish' outside the Greek world? Presumably, when Dodds calls Empedocles a 'shaman' he is relying upon a general definition of such behavior, which is helpful to some extent but

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[50] See Kingsley 1995.

[51] The structure of Empedocles' patron god, Apollo, is necessarily the same - see below Part 3.A.

[52] Jaeger 2002 p. 132.

[53] Dodds 1951, p. 146.

reductive in another. We must distinguish Empedocles from other shamans because of his direct ties to the origins of Western philosophy. Certainly not all shamans could be said to introduce a new cosmological theory or play an important role in the emergence of a rationalistic culture. Empedocles' shamanism must be substantively unique, though it is important to note the specific reasons why he may faithfully be called a 'shaman'. The evidence is throughout his poetry, but we will begin where it most explicitly stated in fragment 111, a clear announcement of his role as a magician and wonderworker. He tells his pupil – to whom alone he speaks about this – that he will learn to "*bring back from Hades the strength of a man who has died."*[54] Clearly this is the essence of shamanism: to travel to another realm to recover a lost soul.[55] There are, however, major differences between our notion of 'soul' and what Empedocles refers to as 'strength', which is designated by *menos* and constitutes an important allusion to Homer's language of heroic action.[56] But like a soul, this strength must be retrieved from Hades' land of the dead. At the moment it is best to put aside any preconceptions about what this truly means, including any skepticism, until the whole of his teaching can be laid out. Fragment 111 is usually received as the pinnacle of

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[54] This fragment is translated by Inwood (2001, p. 219). M. R. Wright's commentary on fragment 111 asserts that Empedocles addresses Pausanias alone – and in the whole of *On Nature* – not because of the sacredness of such a religious function, but for the intellectual reason that there is only "a very limited audience capable of appreciating a complex philosophical argument." (p. 262).

[55] see Mircea Eliade 1964 p. 8.

[56] Dodds provides a helpful treatment of *menos* (1951, pp. 8-14) in Homer but does not seem to notice the connection with Empedocles' shamanism expressed in fragment 111. This is a major oversight because it allows Dodds to assume Empedocles advocated a 'disembodied' shamanism when in fact he (more Homerically) hopes to awaken powers through the body, such as the strength of *menos*. Hence, Dodds' erroneous later judgment that Empedocles advocated an escape from the body – a common mistake that springs from his mention of reincarnation and purification.

Empedoclean boastfulness, for additionally he claims the ability to give "*all the potions which there are as a defense against evils and old age*" as well as powers over natural forces.[57] It is certainly strange for a philosopher to offer 'potions', though the use of herbs and drugs among shamans is well documented, and of course among physicians. The word he uses here for 'potions' is *pharmaka*, which has an array of meanings within the Greek. While it could easily mean a physical 'drug', it could also more generally mean 'cure' or even 'enchantment'. On the intention behind his use of the word, we receive some helpful evidence from Gorgias, Empedocles' student, who explicitly refers to his own use of language as a *pharmakon* that is able to change the soul of someone listening. Gorgias called language "a great master, who with the tiniest and least visible body achieves the most divine works."[58] Such power was not lost on Plato, who accepted the healing effects of language but sought grounds to establish the superiority of philosophical speech over the forces of 'rhetoric'. Peter Struck puts it vividly: "If poetic language was a drug for Gorgias, Plato wants to ensure that it is a prescription drug, carefully regulated and controlled by the state."[59] "Plato's theory grows out of an anxiety provoked by an appreciation of the power of language to invoke a world – an appreciation not far removed from the idea of language as a magic spell."[60] We can reliably assume that Gorgias' view of language as a *pharmakon* is faithful to that of his teacher, Empedocles, such that the 'potions' of this shaman, as well as

[57] We will postpone a discussion of his promise of powers over the wind, rain and drought until the necessary context is in place. See below Part 4. His phrase for 'a defense against evils and old age' exhibits parallels to the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*, 193. We will explore Empedocles' connection to the god Apollo more fully in Part 3.

[58] *Encomium of Helen*, 8 (D-K 82 B11)

[59] Struck 2004, p. 53.

[60] Ibid, p. 54.

the retrieval of souls, are somehow accomplished *through* his own words. Another essential link between Gorgias and Empedocles is clarified by Peter Kingsley, who notes the particular devotion of Gorgias to the mastery of *kairos*, or 'the moment'.[61] For Gorgias, the *pharmakon* of language required perfect timing and agility, and Kingsley reveals the intrinsic connection between *kairos* and the corresponding virtue in Empedocles: *mêtis*. Both men embodied a practical cunning that could adjust instantly to any situation; in fragment 111 when Empedocles mentions the powers over nature he intends to teach, the precise timeliness of their use is indicated by the word *kairos*.[62] These few lexical considerations, which only begin to explore the wealth of this fragment, demonstrate the uniqueness of Empedocles' shamanism and the problem with Dodd's general statement that his species 'flourishes elsewhere'. Perhaps his genus, but the verbal 'technique' used by Empedocles must be considered separately from that of other shamans. On this note, there is another statement from fragment 111 that cannot yet be fully explicated, but is worth mentioning in this context: his claim to be able to "*make tree-nourishing streams which dwell in the air.*" At first glance this appears to be a continuation of the physical miracles mentioned earlier in the fragment, but when compared with fragment 3, in which he asks the gods to "*channel a pure stream from holy mouths*" so that his words may have the right effect, we can recognize how 'a stream which dwells in the air' might not only signify a timely rain to end a drought, but a vocalized *pharmakon* flowing through the air from Empedocles to his listener, delivered with

[61] Kingsley 2003, pp. 481-487.

[62] Odysseus shoots the arrow through the axe-heads; *kairos* has to do with alignment. We will return to the figure of Odysseus Part II. For a rich discussion of *metis* among the early Greeks see Detienne 1991.

the *mêtis* of a divinity.[63] This impression is confirmed by fragment 71 in which he compares his teaching to the growth of a tree.[64] Thus, his promise to teach his pupil how to "*make tree-nourishing streams which dwell in the air*" can be interpreted as conferring an ability to speak in a way that nourishes and evokes in others the truth of Empedocles' teaching. We will resume our attention to fragment 111 in due course.

Empedocles is clearly working as a healer, and this role cannot be compartmentalized alongside other roles, such as that of the 'cosmological theorist', without damaging the meaning of his original text. One simple piece of evidence, among many, is how the sense of the word *pharmakon* is lost by being translated as 'potions' or 'remedies'[65] - which suggests shamanic or magical treatments separate from his simple words. Neither translation conveys his subtle hint that *words are medicine*, if used with the proper care; this fact opens up the larger question about the true nature of the body that is to be healed by them. We will reach this issue later, but we can further support the claim that the whole of his poetry is the *pharmakon*, especially the 'cosmological theory' which he discretely provides to a single listener, by the fact that the regular usage of *pharmakon* had the important connotation of 'enchantment'. The cosmic power of Love, Aphrodite, is of course linked with the ability to enchant and wield *mêtis*, so the substance of trickery and deception runs all through his cosmological theory. Most essentially for Empedocles, this power of deception could be the

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[63] He also refers to the "*vain streams from the tongues in the mouths of many who have seen little of the whole*" in fragment 39.

[64] This connection is normally concealed due to the mistranslation of *lipuxulos* in fragment 71, the Greek word for a lack of tree-growth. For correction and commentary upon this mistake see Kingsley 2003, p. 540.

[65] Naïve materialism dominates the translation and interpretation of Empedocles. See for example G.E.R. Lloyd, (*Magic, Reason and Experience* p. 33) who explicitly contrasts Empedocles' use of words with his offering of 'drugs' (translation of *pharmaka*).

agent of healing, though of course it depended on the timing and awareness that was present – otherwise it could be the opposite. It seems as if Empedocles is saying that we cannot presume to extract deception from reality and remain healthy. Otherwise, language becomes a poison. The philosophical ambition of purity or distilled truth is itself deceptive, and when Empedocles states that the arrangement of his words is 'undeceptive' in fragment 17 it is alert us to our *illusions about deception* – specifically our belief we can escape from it.[66] Instead, deception is to be accepted and faced directly, and our bewilderment as to how to do this while maintaining our commitment to truth is precisely the condition that his *pharmakon* addresses. It is to restore a kind of health of which humans are unaware. We know already that it implies having a relation to death that recovers the true vitality and strength of *menos* that has been held back, entombed with the realm of Hades. To go further an examination of his cosmic cycle is necessary, especially in terms of its linguistic subtlety and avoidance of classical dualisms engendered by the dialectical tradition of thought.

C. Traditional Criticisms of Empedocles

Before investigating how the language of his cosmic cycle is designed to make the realm of Hades available to experience, and to speech, it is first helpful to review the traditional criticisms of Empedocles' doctrine, all of which are based upon a self-image of thought that confines language to a strictly representational role. This ideal of language is based upon a dialectic between thinker and thought, or knower and known, and more fundamentally on the dualism between reality and appearance generated by the efforts of

[66] It is often mistakenly interpreted as an attack upon Parmenides. It is actually part of a complex display of irony that is in perfect accord with Parmenides. See below Parts II.C and III.B.

rationality to describe the world without affecting it. This notion of a fixed and abstract *logos*, requiring the need for a continuous purification of language to make it maximally antiseptic and inert, allows for a profound intellectual sophistication that increases itself by constantly distinguishing its own activity from the suboordinate genre of 'rhetoric' or 'poetics.' These, by definition, have limited access to reality because they do not or cannot explain the principles of their activities. As is well known, the borders of rational thought were originally firmly secured by Plato and Aristotle to prevent conflation with the realms of medicine, song or religion. The Greek world, and hence the Western world, could never return to its prior neglect of separation between the disciplines, nor could the *pharmakon* of Empedocles truly operate as it had before.[67] From the perspective of the new discipline of representational speech, Empedocles' cosmic cycle was crude and impure. The variety of distinctions introduced by the efforts of rationality to 'stand back' from natural engagements with the world made it look like a bundle of separate categories naively tacked together. It was impossible to read Empedocles' poetry without an immediate bifurcation of its materials at every point. Far from being the case that a new subtlety had been introduced that prevented it from 'tricking' its listeners, this new tool of rationality was bluntly puritanical and extreme in its rejection of the phenomenal world. Its violent recoil from presentation in favor of *re*presentation was the only route for the intellect to have emerged forcefully enough in Western culture to avoid being swallowed up by irrationalism, but it unfortunately projected its crudity onto traditions – tremendously sophisticated in their use of 'active' language – that preceded it. Rationalism was able to establish a permanent foothold in the Western mind, requiring it to 'work through' its contact with various forms of irrationalism

[67] Thus, Dodds' assertion that his species died out.

throughout history.[68] Plato was concerned to show that true wisdom must be the domain of philosophy rather than poetry, requiring him to famously banish the poets and all 'undifferentiated' forms of speaking from his *Republic*, precluding the use of philosophical language for anything other than description or representation. The practical versatility of Empedocles' *pharmakon* was thus no longer an ideal of wisdom but began to bear the stigma of naivety, or worse, boastful charlatanry. It is in this belittling context that we encounter most contemporary interpretations of his work.

Thankfully, the once-popular trend of postulating that Empedocles had a 'scientific' and a 'religious' poem has gone out of fashion. The remarkable diversity of content in Empedocles' poetry used to seem explainable – in the 19th century and the first part of the 20th – by a shift in his attitude due to events in his life. Working from scant biographical details, many conjectures arose about which of his two poems was the 'younger' work and which was the 'older'; he was supposed at some point to have had a complete change of heart, a mid-life crisis or a desire to try something new, causing him to switch over to a more interesting topic. But such weak conjecturing could not stand up unless the details of each poem were ignored; their topics intertwine regularly despite the preponderance of 'scientific' themes in one place and 'religious' themes in another. It is noteworthy that the more 'scientific' and therefore 'philosophically valuable' of the poems, *On Nature*, is the one which contains his shamanic material. The absurdity of segregating Empedocles' work is obvious on a textual basis as well as a historical one – and it is today accepted that such

[68] Dodds (1951) notes that the apogee of rationalism in Athens subsided… even if the 'irrationalism' of the early Greeks reasserted itself after the period of Athenian enlightenment.

compartmentalizing of his themes was a habit of 19th century scholarship.[69] But the advancement in outlook only intensifies the accusation of naivety to which he was already subjected, because no longer is there a watertight division between his 'plurality' of subjects. Thus he appears as a "a philosophical centaur"[70] who appends "mere articles of faith… to his philosophical scheme."[71] Among some modern commentators, his union of science and religion is seen as primitive and self-aggrandizing, although the norm of the 'rational self' and the corresponding concept of 'aggrandizement' could only arise later, after the representational genre of speech had established its supremacy over Empedocles' *pharmakon* – or in Struck's memorable terms rendered language a 'prescription drug.' The flipside of this institutional dismissal is the patronizing 'appreciation' for his inspiring and old-fashioned 'unity of vision', which arises from the very same dualistic norm of an external world separate from a passively descriptive discipline of speaking. For example, Inwood writes: "The naïve but bracing assumptions which lie behind the thought of men like Heraclitus or Empedocles seem to be two: that there is only one reality 'out there' to be understood, which admits of no significant subdivisions; and that when external reality is understood one's life will be profoundly affected. This means that people either do or should live according to their understanding of what is 'out there'."[72] Such a clumsy dualism assumes Empedocles to engage in a two-stage deductive process: a normative judgment

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[69] Cornford is responsible for dispelling the 'watertight compartments' of Empedocles' though attributed to him in the 19th century and most recently by Burnet. Dodds helpfully drives the nail into the coffin.

[70] Jaeger, cited in Kahn 1974.

[71] Zeller, cited in Kahn 1974.

[72] Inwood (2001) p. 22.

pasted onto an objective description. Of course, the reality that Empedocles did not recognize an 'out there' as opposed to an 'in here' makes such naivety impossible; his outlook was much more nuanced that such objective materialism permits. As we will see, Empedocles' poetry is meant to lead an attentive listener to the realization that there is no 'out there' in the strict sense. But from the perspective of many modern commentaries, Empedocles is assumed to have used his rhetorical gifts to artificially infuse natural philosophy with mystical significance, an amalgam that could only appear realistic through his poetic skill and ambiguity of expression, all deliberately crafted to conceal his lack of an argument. When modern commentators seek to appraise his contribution to philosophy, they feel that a filtering process is necessarily involved.

The problem with these classical interpretations is the perennial assumption that Empedocles' use of language was a primitive ancestor of representational speech, offering a highly flawed – though beautiful – attempt to objectively describe "external reality" in order to subsequently "append" some religious values to it. Inwood's accusation of naivety is based on the assumption that Empedocles' thought process was split into two such stages, the incompatibility of which was unbeknownst to him. The appearance, then, is that his objectivity gets muddled by his desire for poetic achievement or quasi-mystical obscurity. Some commentators feel justified in suggesting that Empedocles got easily confused by trying to do two things at once.[73] But despite the appearance of a bifurcation in his intentions, it is not historically possible for Empedocles to have had the abstract aim of theorizing the cosmos from the position of a spectator, since the concepts needed to occupy this position – and indeed to find it desirable as an aim – were not fully available until Plato

[73] Cf. Kirk, Raven and Schofield 2003.

solidified them in his dialogues. Nor could Empedocles' use of 'poetic language' have been the rhetorical adornment that Plato and Aristotle made of it.[74] A confused amalgam of these two agendas is therefore highly anachronistic; Empedocles was not trying to strike a compromise between two disparate genres of speech, but was participating in a much older genre, which we will call the 'Homeric performance' or 'speech-act.'[75]

Before exploring this genre, we must examine a second accusation that Empedocles is 'inconsistent', which is more subtle than the first but able to be defused as well. A full response to it, however, would require us to develop in detail his view of the body, as well as the proper roles of Love and Strife.[76] Before these are clarified no truly effective answer is possible, but we identify this accusation in order to show the enormous philosophical difficulties that must be overcome to give a reliable treatment of Empedocles. The basic objection is that the mechanics of his cosmic cycle provide no room for the doctrine of transmigration he espouses.[77] His physical and religious doctrines appear incompatible not simply because they are intrinsically disparate areas of activity, but because his doctrine of perpetual mixture and separation of the four roots allows no other primordial substance that would be left over to reincarnate into the next life. If every person is a mixture that is eventually destroyed completely, what is preserved that could possibly reincarnate? There seems to be no place for the *daimon* – the immortal aspect of the self that Empedocles claims

[74] For Aristotle's poetic ideal of clarity, see Struck 2004, p. 52.

[75] We will examine further connotations of the word he uses to describe what he is doing (*muthos*) and the history of its changing relationship to *logos* in Part II.

[76] See below Part II.E. and Part III.C.

[77] For an example see Long, A. A., 'Thinking and Sense-Perception in Empedocles: Mysticism or Materialism?', *CQ*, N.S. 16 (1966) , pp. 256-76.

to be exiled from its divine status – despite the fact that Empedocles mentions having been reincarnated several times in fragment 117. This presents some difficulty; where is the 'soul' in his physical cycle?[78] It cannot be one of the four elements, since he says in fragment 115 that they all hate and reject the exiled *daimon*. The *daimon's* initial crime was bloodshed, for which it was clothed in "*an alien robe of flesh*" (fragment 126) and made to wander "*for thrice ten-thousand seasons away from the blessed ones*" (fragment 115). It must purify itself to return to their company. From this information, arguments have arisen as to what the substance of this *daimon* must be. Charles Kahn argues that it must be Love, since the crime occurs at the point when Love's mixture is perfect and complete. On his view, the first moment of Strife sentences the *daimon* to a long exile in which it must relearn the ways of Love and purify all Strife from its consciousness. He argues that Love is "the principle of unity and symmetry [and] implies the positive aspect of consciousness, the pattern of intelligence and sensitivity, as Strife signifies that of dullness and stupidity. Can there be any doubt as to which principle Empedocles would have chosen to represent himself – I mean, of course, his transmigrating, divine self?"[79] Kahn argues consistently that Strife can have no involvement in the immortality of the *daimon* – it must perform acts of Love only. The argument appeals to common-sense notions about the goodness of harmony and the evils of discord. However, a few quiet problems arise. First of all, the subtlety of *mêtis* that

[78] It is helpful to keep in mind that as a shaman Empedocles asserts that the soul – or more accurately, *menos* - is to be retrieved from Hades, the divinity he assigns to fire. This does not mean that the *daimon* is fire, but there is at least some aspect of itself that needs fire in order to be realized. See also the Homer *Hymn to Demeter* (235-236 237-241), which depicts the activities of the goddess of vegetation (Empedocles' choice to represent the substance of his teaching) that provide an intriguing mythical connection between the *daimon*, *menos* and fire. Cf. Nagy (1979) pp. 182-82.

[79] Kahn 1974, p. 446.

Empedocles aims to teach is not something that would resort to rigid moralistic dualisms of this kind; it would conform to the needs of the moment without relying on a stable ethical code. This is the prerogative of a healer: to use what is harmful – in the hands of most people - at the right times and in the right amounts. Secondly, what is to be restored to a human is called *menos*, which is explicitly associated in Homer with battle-rage of the heroic type, and signals a 'good' kind of Strife that must be nourished. Thirdly, Empedocles announces that there is no such thing as death; he is only conforming to convention by pretending it is real. Therefore, his attitude towards reincarnation must be something different than the common view in which a soul inhabits a body only to leave it behind when it is finished. The above discussion about the necessary role of deception in healing raises the question of whether these 'alien robes' are to be left behind or embraced.[80] Fourthly, the onset of Strife's reign suggests that the only effective action in this new world will be through Strife. To use it consciously, rather than being controlled by it or rejecting it moralistically, seems to be the mark of an awakened being. It is, after all, a necessary part of the cosmos, and cannot be rejected without rejecting the cosmos itself. This leads into the fifth problem: there is some disagreement about the translation of the words that are normally used by Empedocles to explain his exile. He is said to have been punished "for trusting in mad Strife" – but it is has been argued persuasively by Kingsley that the context of this statement shows that he is actually saying somewhat the opposite: that in his fallen condition

[80] The pervasive context of hospitality in both Empedocles and Parmenides, which will be developed in detail below, suggests that 'the guest-stranger' is to be hosted rather than rejected. We should expect Empedocles' views on the body to demonstrate accordance with the proper etiquette surrounding the arrival of the *xenos*: see below.

the only thing that he can put his trust in is Strife itself.[81] This interpretation is supported by the considerations above, as well as by its insanity and daring: we should expect nothing less of someone who declares himself a *daimon*. Since madness has such close associations with Strife, it is also worth mentioning the longstanding Greek tradition, acknowledged by Dodds, of the healing function of madness.[82] It's patron god, Apollo, has a particular but mysterious importance to Empedocles that must be explicated later.[83] Plato acknowledges the benefits of madness and its connection to the god in *Phaedrus*, where Socrates praises it as the source of our greatest blessings. The possibility that Empedocles is not expressing regret for a mistake, but rather recommending a dangerous path to liberation through Strife, seems very likely given cultural context as well as the reasons above. What is the 'substance' of the *daimon*? To hastily announce that it must somehow share an identity with Love creates serious incompatibilities, such that the charge of inconsistency by Kahn seems rather ironic. The wholehearted endorsement of Love by Kahn should inspire caution. On the issue of the incompatibility of Empedocles' physical and religious doctrines, the question can be momentarily set aside, having shown that it is much more complex than Kahn admits. The actions that will purify this *daimon* involve more than 'acts of Love', and as Empedocles hints in a few places, require an acknowledgement of Strife for his *pharmakon* of language to

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[81] Kingsley (2003): "placing my trust in mad Strife." See his discussion, pp. 431-33. Inwood's translation (2001, p. 217) "trusting in mad strife" cautiously leaves room for this interpretation, though he argues elsewhere that Empedocles clearly laments the error that led to his incarnation as a mortal, and he is saying that trusting in mad Strife is the source of all sorrows. (p. 62) Wright agrees with this interpretation, and puts forward the unambiguous translation: "having put my trust in raving Strife" (1981 p. 270).

[82] Dodds (1951) 68-70

[83] See Part II.E.. Apollo is also the prototypical *xenos* in the Greek pantheon. Burkert (1985) notes that the god arrived late and in the *Homeric Hymn to Apol*lo the god enters in a fashion that first appears threatening to his hosts, but only with the intention of joining them.

take effect. Before we may understand what Empedocles means by a *daimon*, it is necessary to comprehend what the body was for him, as well as how the intelligence he hopes to awaken is intimately linked with it.

D. The Problem of genre

We have mentioned an older genre to which Empedocles' use of language belongs. He repeatedly refers to his account as a *muthos* (fr. 114), a word that Plato used to distinguish other forms of speaking from his own and eventually came to designate 'myth', which is commonly equated with superstition, fiction or deception. While *muthos* does refer to a worldview entirely separate from rationalism, it originally had much more substance than 'a useful falsehood'. Recent studies of the early Greeks by Gregory Nagy and Richard Martin have drawn upon contemporary linguistics to refine the concept of *muthos* to mean 'speech-act'.[84] This domain of language, recognized as uniquely problematic by contemporary linguistic philosophers such as Austin and Searle, was once profoundly interwoven in the Greek world with the concept of truth, for it designated the rare situation when a word and an action were the same thing. Martin has thoroughly analyzed Homer's depiction of heroic speech to show that accomplishment on the battlefield of Troy is ideally mirrored by the ability to make successful speeches that immediately accomplish their intended effect. It would appear that for the hero *words and deeds are identical*, not only because the hero is able to follow through on what he says but more importantly because he has been granted the ability to nullify the customary distinction between them. His words *are* deeds – and vice versa, if we are to consider his actions as the substance of a song endlessly performed. Nagy

[84] Nagy (1994) argues that the etymology of Apollo's name demonstrates his intrinsic connection to the speech-act and the delivery of *muthoi*.

has very fruitfully explored the semantics of Homer's portrayal of heroic action to display the complex social organization that was enacted and fortified by his artistic accomplishment.[85] The speech-act, then, was a genre of truthful speaking that was based upon performance. As we have said above, when Plato reinterprets the basic meaning of performance (*mimesis*) in the Greek world through his introduction of a theory of the image[86], he fractures it into the separate disciplines of abstraction versus poetry (which can now only be conceived as artistic embellishment).[87] Once this split takes place, it is very easy to accuse Empedocles of conflating two separate realms of literate activity. While it may be suggested that he was too primitive to comprehend the role of the theoretical spectator, it is much more likely that this role did not interest him; otherwise he would not be accused of "appending" things to it. As we will shortly see, his use of the speech-act does not misunderstand the separation between knower and known, but rather presupposes it in order that it may be overcome by 'special' speech.[88] He is fully aware of the perspective that seeks to theorize the workings of an external world. I propose that he intentionally accommodates his message to such a scientific viewpoint, as a matter of observing human conventions of thought that he sees arising around him, but the *muthos* he offers has the deeper purpose of restoring the original sacred power of the spoken word and the health of a neglected and misunderstood body to which it is administered.

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[85] See Nagy (1999) Introduction. This truth is further supported by his argument against the idea of a single Homer (p. 5).

[86] Vernant (1991) particularly the essay 'The Birth of the Image'.

[87] Struck (2004) provides fascinating account of the evolving notion of what was considered the strength of a poetic work: from enigma to metaphor.

[88] Bakker (1997).

What has not been appreciated in Empedocles is the significance of his *orality*. Its effects upon his text have been mischaracterized as poetic indulgence, imprecision or inefficiency, but always by the textual norms of a literate culture that characteristically overlooks the exigencies of reading an oral text.[89] Empedocles lived during the crucial shift in Greek cultural transmission from orality to literacy, which occurred gradually from the 7th to 4th centuries B.C.E. and raises the interesting question about the intended relationship of a reader/listener to his text. But how is the significance of Empedocles' text, or any text, affected by its accommodation to a performative setting? It is immediately evident that the relationship depicted within the poetry itself, between Empedocles as teacher and Pausanias as learner, reactivates itself between performer and audience, or to a lesser extent the text and its reader. A directly relevant illustration of this effect is provided by contemporary studies of Homer that aim to understand the composition and meaning of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, not as the works of a single person but rather as centuries-long tradition of memory, performance and reperformance, a process that very slowly crystallized the epics into the form we know them today, which were permanently stabilized in the 7th century B.C. and attributed to the Divine Poet.[90] Since these epics do not actually represent the creative capacity of a single person but are the result of hundreds of years of interaction between performers and audiences, they record the participation of a whole culture and therefore initiate a specific engagement in the present rather than simply narrating events that supposedly happened long ago. As Egbert Bakker notes, studying the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as mere texts "may alter the peculiar relations these poems once had with the past. It turns

[89] Hershbell (1968) observes that Empedocles' poetry was meant to be recited. See also Gemelli (2008) and Kingsley (2003) on the shamanic use of repetition in spoken language.

[90] Nagy (1996), (1979) p. 5.

into a reified memory of the remote past what once was deliberate activity in the present. And it shifts the burden from the *act* of reference to the *object* of reference, from the present to the past."[91] The oral component of a text initiates a particular kind of perception in the present that interrupts the routine experience of linear time, such that the past becomes present and the present becomes the future of a heroic past that anticipates its own retelling. The story begins and ends in the present, and time's circling is carried by the performance. Linearity is suspended and the visible present becomes the manifestation, marker and flesh of the invisible and eternal.[92] Such a performance is built upon peculiar linguistic traits that enable a suspension and transmutation of the normal experience of time; there is a specific meter, vocabulary and grammar for accomplishing this feat. Empedocles himself refers to 'the circling of time' in fragments 17 and 110, the latter instance intended to convey that the experience of listening properly to him allows a continuous renewal of non-linear time: otherwise his words will 'leave' of their own accord. The particular sense of motion created by his language will be examined later; it is simply necessary at this point to recognize the oral quality of his cosmology. While there are certainly differences between with his orality and Homer's – Empedocles' poetry itself is not the result of oral transmission, though the peculiar kind of awareness it induces, we will show, can only arise from the circumstances of such transmission – and it is true that Homer's is a similar brand of speech. It is therefore possible to identify in Empedocles not only the vocabulary and semantics of epic tradition, but also numerous allusions to scenes in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Homeric Hymns*.[93]

[91] Bakker (2005) p. ix.

[92] See our discussion below (Part II.B) on the embodiment of circularity and temporality in the Homeric image of the chariot-wheel, prevalent in both Parmenides and Empedocles.

These are not mere decorations of a philosophical doctrine but crucial markers of a performance with many subtle layers rooted in the Homeric worldview and only available through familiarity with it. The tradition of allegory, which sought for wisdom concealed within the epics, is purposefully invoked so readers know Empedocles can also skillfully hide his meaning under the surface of what is normally accepted. Homer and Empedocles both rely upon the performative situation, and therefore the central issue in approaching Empedocles is not determining the mechanics of the cosmic cycle – although this must be done – but seeing how the cosmic cycle, his 'object of reference', is affected by the veil of orality in which it is given. For both Homer and Empedocles it is the *act of reference* that contains the real content; to the extent that the oral quality of his poetry is left out Empedocles is subjected to literate bias in the same way as Homer. The speech situation in which Empedocles transmits his cosmology to Pausanias is an indispensable aspect of the cosmology itself.[94] This shift in linguistic focus is enough to reorient the entire discussion of the religious significance of Empedocles' physical doctrine, which can no longer be something 'appended' after the fact. The performance of the cosmology induces a participation in cosmogenesis; it is 'special speech' in the sense of legislating reality by overcoming the normal limitations upon communication imposed by time and space, even while it seems to lay down the rules of time and space. It is a highly complex speech-act – in accordance with the Homeric sense of the word *muthos* – that does not merely *refer to* the cosmos but plays an active role in its creation and fulfillment.[95] As we have said,

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[93] We will discuss a number of these parallels in Part II.

[94] Fragment 110 is central to an understanding of this transmission and will be explicated more fully below.

Empedocles' words are not representational and the *mind* to which they are addressed is other than intellectual. In order to explore this unique sense of mind in Empedocles it is first necessary to establish the context that supports it. There is a particular lexicon with its own unique associations in the Greek, and once this is recovered some fascinating affiliations emerge between Empedocles and other early Greeks. To convey the significance of such a recovery we turn briefly to the conventional portrait of the Presocratics in order to show how it disables this vital context.

E. The Historical Narrative of Philosophy

As we continue to see, modern scholarship's neglect of this ontology of performance in Empedocles – which privileges the *object* over the *act* of reference – has led to artificial problems internal to his work. But they are external as well. Our main purpose will be to investigate the structure of Empedocles' poetry that guarantees the identity of his physical and religious doctrines, and to do this it is necessary to account for the traditional role assigned to him in early Greek thought, the story of which displays a few unfortunate tendencies. It is normally told through a Hegelian narrative of thesis, antithesis and synthesis: the flux of Heraclitus is countered by the Eleatic doctrine of monistic changelessness, which is followed by several compromises offered by Empedocles and other pluralistic cosmologists such as Anaxagoras, Democritus, and Philolaus. This triadic historical scheme has been identified and criticized by Alexander Mourelatos for painting in overly broad strokes.[96] Heraclitus, for example, has very important things to say about the

[95] Cf. Martin 1989.

[96] Cf. Mourelatos (1987) p. 127.

unity that underlies change, but this is often ignored in pursuing a contrast with Parmenides. The glance of twentieth-century historians of early Greek thought tends to group them together under "the paradigm of the debater's forum"[97], to use Mourelatos' apt phrase, reductively presenting these figures as chapters of a larger intellectual work. This grand narrative depicting the long march to the gates of reason, first told by Aristotle, has always involved an editorial process that decontextualizes the Presocratics by prioritizing what is 'properly philosophical' and relegating to the background their 'literary' quality. The terminology is backward for reasons stated above; it is Empedocles' 'orality' that is overlooked for the sake of a 'literate' discipline. This refining process, to which we owe much of our portrait of the Presocratics, projects a historical *telos* upon them that recontextualizes their doctrines as foreshadows of something greater. Aristotle was the first to catalogue the views of his predecessors, but his objectivity was outmatched by his desire to present the superiority of his own work. His success as a historian is thoroughly critiqued by Harold Cherniss, who argues that the biases in Aristotle's account of early Greek thought "must awaken extreme vigilance in all who use his interpretations as evidence for earlier philosophies."[98] Below we will examine a particular case of Aristotle's misreading which will provide an impetus for a critical rereading of Empedocles.[99] The first order of clarification must be his putative standing among the Presocratics. Investigating this will

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[97] Ibid, p. 128.

[98] Cherniss (1964) p. 189.

[99] Despite the cutting critique of Cherniss, some Empedocles scholars ardently defend Aristotle's interpretation. O'Brien (1969) pp. 17-18 challenges Cherniss' critique of Aristotle's reading of Empedocles, but his defense is based upon the misreading we will identify below, which bears upon the discussion below of the 'Sphere at rest' under the reign of Love.

allow us to perceive certain reasons why the *daimon* is so often wrongly associated with Love. Once corrected, this misinterpretation will yield to surprising new implications.

It is said that Empedocles was a student of Parmenides. His appreciation for the 'father of logic' is obvious in fragment 17 when he denies the possibility of creation or destruction in any real sense, showing that his regard for Parmenides has a direct bearing upon the mechanics of his cosmic cycle. But despite obvious reverence for his teacher, Empedocles is also typically viewed by commentators as suffering from an anxiety of influence. He is made to appear intensely committed to giving a resourceful and creative answer to the 'challenge' issued by Parmenidean logic, presumably because he is troubled by its denial of changes of the natural world. The problem with this, according to the historical narrative, is that Empedocles appears to be trying to have it both ways. If he truly accepts Parmenides' doctrine of the impossibility of void then several things must follow: total motionlessness, the lack of separation and complete homogeneity. But Empedocles does not seem willing to carry out all the implications of Parmenides' doctrine. Instead, he assigns the Parmenidean attribute of permanence and changelessness to each of his four elements, which are then mixed and separated by Love and Strife. But such a plurality of beings seems already to have been ruled out by Parmenides' logic, so Empedocles' selective usage of it makes him appear guilty of a "gross *ignoratio elenchi*"[100] – a failure to understand the demands of the position he seeks to revise. The difficult question in assessing the relationship between Parmenides and Empedocles is how damning an indictment this really is. Some commentators have called for more charity towards Empedocles, arguing that Parmenides does not provide the necessary argumentation to allay a pluralist appropriation of

[100] Mourelatos (p. 129) points out this appearance to defend him against ahistorical charges.

his logic. This argument, made by Inwood[101] and Barnes, encounters certain historical difficulties because it assumes that Empedocles engaged in the activity of critically extracting 'weaker' aspects of Parmenides' doctrine so he could insert his own arguments, while keeping the 'stronger' parts. But Mourelatos points out the "more than mildly unhistorical" role this would give Empedocles. As heirs to the philosophical tradition, he states, "[w]e recognize that some of the semantic and epistemological assumptions that generate the Eleatic elenchus are faulty and naïve. Indeed, it seems that those assumptions are so deeply embedded conceptually that only a sophisticated analysis, one that lies beyond the intellectual horizon of the fifth century, could ferret them out."[102] We will reserve comment on the 'faultiness' of Parmenidean 'assumptions' – Mourelatos' use of this term seems to undermine his overall historical point – but his observation is sound that the fifth century was not the stage for the dialectical maneuvers normally attributed to Empedocles with respect to Parmenides. Further, we might say that such criticisms of Parmenides would have likely appeared extraneous in the eyes of Empedocles. As historians of thought, it is conscientious

[101] Inwood (2001) states that Parmenides provides "no clear argument against plurality" (25) and therefore "a conscientious post-Parmenidean, such as Empedocles, need not *argue* for plurality." (26) But he traps himself by saying later on that Empedocles' "most important departure from Parmenidean *argument*, however, concerns the internal divisibility of what is." (30) And also: "Most likely, [Empedocles] just accepted that things move, in defiance of Parmenides' argument." (30) Inwood seems to want it both ways, citing Parmenides' "undefended monism" but also finding it "hard to believe that Empedocles thought through with sufficient care the implications of his doctrine, let alone that he had a well-worked-out response to Parmenides' arguments." (30) Perhaps such vacillation can be attributed to the fairmindedness of Inwood's approach, but it surely highlights the difficulty of labeling these thinkers 'reasonable' proponents of 'arguments'.

[102] Mourelatos 129. O'Brien (1969) comes to the same conclusion. Also Inwood (2001) p. 25. Empedocles is adopting the perspective of the *doxa*. See below (Part II.D) on ironic method.

to withhold judgment of Empedocles' breach of Parmenidean logic, since the motivation behind it is almost certainly not that of an academic who disagrees for theoretical reasons.

Understanding Empedocles' response to Parmenides is crucial not simply for knowing Empedocles but also for learning about the doctrine of Parmenides from his most gifted associate. This relationship has suffered certain distortions by the tradition of dialectical thought, the essence of which evolves from having two participants towards an ideal of building and sustaining a critical spectatorship of one's own thought and that of others. This tradition would like to determine how Empedocles sought to distinguish his 'theory' from that of Parmenides, comparing their presumed agreements and disagreements.[103] But it relies upon the unhistorical assumption that a dialectical contest could have existed between them; it is necessary to emphasize the historicity of the desire to participate in a public intellectual discipline. Such academic camaraderie surely existed between Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle but we cannot project it outside of its Athenian setting one hundred years into the past.[104] It has an origin and a context; adopting it as a timeless universal perspective from which to judge the sophistication of any text involves an assumption of 'normality' that is dangerously unaware of its own contingency. From a later perspective, it can certainly appear that Empedocles and Parmenides had this collegial Athenian relationship, since Empedocles makes direct reference to his teacher's doctrine while appearing to revise it in significant ways. But the concept of 'theoretical disagreement' requires a stable plane of discussion set apart from the *active engagement with language* and there is no such arena within or surrounding their thought. Their mysterious

[103] For one example of Empedocles' 'dissatisfaction' with 'Parmenides' theories', see Cornford *From Religion to Philosophy* p. 225.

[104] Kingsley (2003) very firmly makes this point.

divergence will have to be explained in other terms. As stated above, the purely theoretical stance – its Greek root *theoria* means 'spectator' – has no priority before Plato's massive literary output; it is no more likely for theoretical modification to be a part of Empedocles' agenda. He was a follower of Parmenides; this means that he fully assimilated Parmenides' doctrine without disputation.[105] Academic objection was not a category of response for him; he belongs to the genus of the *rhapsode* rather than of the dialectician.[106]

[105] See below Part IV.

[106] Inwood (2001) p. 30 classifies Empedocles' response to Parmenides as a "counter-assertion" and act of "defiance" without argumentation. "Most likely he just accepted that things move." While this portrait of an obtuse Empedocles is overly simple, it is accurate to say that dialectic is not his concern.

Part 2: Harmonics of the Guest

> "The idea inherent in *rhapsoidos*, 'he who sews together [*rhapto*] the song(s) [*aoide*]', is that *many and various fabrics of song, each one already made, that is, each one already woven, become re-made into a unity, a single new continuous fabric, by being sewn together.* The paradox of the metaphor is that the many and the various become the single and the uniform – and yet there is supposedly no loss in the multiplicity and variety of the constituent parts."[1]

A. Song at the Borders of Speech

To place Empedocles and Parmenides into the 'genus' of the rhapsode requires some clarification, since it involves a conceptualization of the Homeric performance that is made to extend beyond its original *topos* in oral tradition. There is, however, some natural flexibility to *rhapsoidos*; anthropologists can point to similar cases of recomposition, fluidity and multiformity in other oral traditions.[2] A general concept of the rhapsode modeled on Nagy's definition above will be useful for our purposes, since dialectic initially defines itself largely in opposition to Homeric performance (*mimesis*). An examination of the language of Parmenides and Empedocles shows they have more in common with the latter camp than the former. Despite the approach taken by most scholarship, it can be demonstrated that they draw deeply from the well of Homeric tradition, and not simply to flaunt its rhetorical tropes to supplement their arguments, as Plato does. They consistently and naturally employ a rich and intricate network of semantic associations and structural pragmatics from Homeric tradition, the familiarity with which is a prerequisite for heroic conduct within epic narrative

[1] Nagy 1996, p. 66.

[2] Ibid.

itself. By emphasizing prevalent themes and virtues essential to the development of Homeric narrative – e.g. the importance of *mêtis* and *kairos*[3] that prove essential to the thematic polarity of *kleos* and *nostos* – and most importantly for their relationship, Empedocles demonstrates a basic fidelity to Parmenides that matches the aim of the rhapsode: the preservation continuity through deliberate alteration.

As Nagy's description of the essence of *rhapsoidos* shows, this is not a creative process – the various fabrics of song already exist – but there is a certain mastery in the selection and implementation of a particular fabric. Empedocles expresses this constraint by his invocation of the Muse (fragments 3, 13) implying that his contribution is not of his own making, though he has some awareness of what needs to be presented. The Homeric rhapsode exerted a similar skill; despite the natural order of Homeric narrative itself – the contests of Athens saw one rhapsode succeed the next sequentially – it was expected that a rhapsode could begin anywhere at a moment's notice according to the needs of the time, which required an acute power of discernment. The weaving of a fabric seamlessly onto the present, without appearing as a stale recitation but rather a natural continuation of the events directing preceding it, was essentially a demonstration – alongside the specific guidance imparted – that the eternal song (*aoide*) was the substance of reality in all of its manifestations.

Thus, it is correct to say that the rhapsode did not have his own *domain* of expertise – Plato's attack in *Ion* is accurate in this sense – because the stitch that joins two fabrics belongs to neither side. The rhapsode operates in a between-space, performing necessary adjustments to render the present circumstances continuous with the song. Neither active nor

[3] The opening in the armor where an arrow can fatally pierce through: see Onians 1951. The symbolism of threading is also related to the loom.

passive, or rather both at once, the rhapsode's work is like the tacking of a sailboat or the zigzag of a stitch. The piece of fabric used is auxiliary, though of course necessary, and in laying out various domains or fabrics side by side the rhapsode effectively realigns the audience with an original cosmic pattern. This does not mean that the song already exists on some rarified level to be duplicated or imitated here, or that the song simply reenacts an event thought to have occurred in the distant historical past (although narrative presents it this way). In an oral culture the pattern is always in continuous evolution, such that each repetition is closer to the original than the last. The collective participation in the song's shaping over centuries of performance, as Nagy has argued in contrast with the prevalent idea that the epics of Homer came from a single author, would seem to indicate that the song is a *product* of the culture. But this is only true if we continue viewing the song as an object rather than an activity: it is better understood as an ongoing cultural practice of consolidating the many forms of cultural performance, interlacing them to form a receptacle that *implaces* any and every possible activity within an eternal set of reverberations. This wellspring of the culture integrates and attunes a diversity of musical notes to a single key; it generates and regenerates the world inhabited by individual speakers through a harmonious network of symbolism, ritual and semantics. Song thus exerts an ontological primacy over speech, providing a horizon for its ostensibly unbound activity.

With these few points in mind, we can begin to pursue how the relationship between Parmenides and Empedocles is *rhapsodic* rather than dialectical. As mentioned above it would be unhistorical to retroactively project the latter onto them, but we must still delimit their precise relationship to Homeric tradition. Clearly their texts are not the result of centuries-long oral transmission nor do they separately point to an expanded repertoire

outside the precise contribution each figure makes. It would surely be strange for a Homeric rhapsode to perform only a single section of epic once. Nevertheless, the essential nature of their rhapsody, while immersed in the language of Homer, does not require that all of its constraints be met. The basic function of a *rhapsoidos*, 'he who sews the song together', entails that the fabric used – both Parmenides and Empedocles claim a divine source for their words – is deployed as a particular *moment* of the song, a precise adjustment to the needs of the time. A *rhapsoidos* does not try to trump his predecessor, rendering him obsolete by dialectical absorption and revision.[4] His presentation occurs *alongside* as a continuation and development of key themes, and he introduces new complications and movements that may be implied in earlier verses and are, at any rate, resolved within the structure of the song as a whole. Similarly, Empedocles is not trying to 'improve upon' Parmenides, but merely to sew another fabric onto the same song – within which Parmenides, as well, is just one fabric. It is worth noting a difficulty we may encounter in using the word 'song' – that it can seem like a loose metaphor for 'beautiful language' if we insist on viewing the song as an *object of reference*. Within this mode of expression language is restricted to aesthetic representation, but it is important to remember that *mimesis* – contrary to its depiction by Plato – is something much more than a poor 'imitation' of an earlier (and superior) model.

The great challenge in approaching these figures rhapsodically will be to discover what *song* they are performing. This is no small task; while their poetry has an identifiable hymnic structure[5], an answer to this question is complex and must occur in several stages.

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[4] For the Homeric rhapsode, any alterations to the same fabric would be owing to the circumstances of oral performance, which are the property of a fluid collective and not the innovations of any particular performer.

[5] See Nagy 2006.

The first is to provisionally clear away pseudo-problems that are blocking the path, a task already underway that will continue to be necessary. The second step is the reactivation of the context that allows key elements of their language the prominence they once had. Third, the architecture of Greek religion must be provisionally laid out to reveal the direction, resonance and intensity of their specific performance, and lastly we will explore how this determines, for them, the involvement of mind with the physical world. This song of Empedocles and Parmenides brings us to a *threshold* of language where very basic limits (*peirata*) of thought may be encountered, which are as relevant now – and perhaps more so – than they were at the dawn of philosophy.

B. The Chariot

There are many possible places to begin our recovery of basic elements of the early Greek culture of performance. The most immediately evocative and far-reaching, however, is the emblem of the *chariot*. For Parmenides and Empedocles, it is an indication that they maintain a vital connection with *aoide* (song) and with each other. Empedocles asks the much-remembering Muse (fragment 3) to send a chariot of song bringing "*what is right for ephemeral creatures to hear*." Parmenides, of course, is carried by the chariot of the Daughters of the Sun, down the route of *poluphemos* ('many songs') to his destination.[6] The

[6] It is important to remember the association of both chariots with the god Apollo, who is the leader of the Muses and is also identified with the sun; it is his Daughters who lead the way for Parmenides. The word *poluphemos* is sometimes translated as 'much-speaking' (Gallop 2000 p. 49) this word is derived from *pheme* 'prophetic utterance' and lends itself to the minstrel Phemios, who at the beginning of the *Odyssey* offers a foreshadowing of events to come with his song about the return of the Achaeans from Troy (cited in Nagy 1999 p. 17). Phemios supplicates himself to Odysseus after the fall of the suitors and avoids 'black fate'. Parmenides' use of the word *poluphemos* – which is translated as 'of many songs' at *Od.* 22.376 and paired with *aoidos* - contains a subtle but important allusion to the return of the

chariot much more than a handy metaphor for the process of poetic inspiration; it brings with it a history of associations that greatly determine the course of their poetry, extending even to key concepts that may appear isolated or as purely innovative. For example, the idea of a cosmic 'cycle' in Empedocles seems to arise from a very ancient relationship between song and the chariot; Nagy's close study is profoundly revealing and worth citing at length:

> The very notion of "Cycle" had once served as a metaphor for all of Homer's poetry. I propose that the metaphor of *kuklos* as the sum total of Homeric poetry goes back to the meaning of *kuklos* as 'chariot-wheel' (*Iliad* 23.340, plural *kukla* at 5.722). The metaphor of comparing a well-composed song to a well-crafted chariot-wheel is explicitly articulated in the poetic traditions of Indo-European languages (as in *Rig-Veda* 1.130.6); more generally in the Greek poetic traditions, there is a metaphor comparing the craft of the master carpenter or "joiner" – the *tekton* – to the art of the poet (as in Pindar *Pythian* 3.112-114). Further, the root *ar-* of *ararisko* 'join, fit together' (the verb refers to the activity of the carpenter in the expression [erare tekton (Greek text)] 'the joiner' [*tekton*] joined together [*ar-*]' at *Iliad* 4.110, 23.712) is shared by the word that means 'chariot-wheel' in the Linear B texts, *harmo* (Knossos tablets Sg 1811, So 0437, etc.). Most important of all for my argument, the same root *ar-* is evidently shared by the name of Homer, *Homeros*, the etymology of which can be explained as 'he who joins together' (*homo-* plus *ar-*). Thus the making of the *kuklos* by the master poet Homer appears to be a global metaphor that pictures the crafting of the ultimate chariot-wheel by the ultimate carpenter or, better, 'joiner'. This traditional pattern of thinking matches the classification of both the *aoidos* 'singer' and the *tekton* 'carpenter, joiner' under the category of *demiourgos* or 'itinerant artisan' at *Odyssey* 17.381-385."[7]

This demonstrates as well that the actions of Love – the' joiner' in Empedocles' cosmic cycle – are inherent in the semantics of *kuklos*. These connections are quite old; it shows that Empedocles' so-called response to Parmenides does not arise merely from theoretical exigency, the need to conceptually revise elements of Parmenidean doctrine, but rather from

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xenos, therefore giving Parmenides' journey '*so far from the beaten track of mortals*' the quality of a journey home, and the reverse of an ill fate. For the connection between *poluphemos* and traditions of mystical initiation into the realm of the Underworld, see Kingsley (2002, pp. 376-77).

[7] Nagy 1996 pp. 74-75. The *Odyssey* reference is Eumaios' praise-speech that links together the speech of Eumaios protesting the unfairness of Antinous' denial of hospitality to the *xenos* Odysseus disguised as a beggar.

a differently emphasized participation in the same lexicon, based upon a collaborative purpose and alignment. He is not a theorist who uses words for a dialectical need; his immersion in the lexicon of *aoidoi* has shaped his poetry in ways that only belatedly appear to us as conceptual moves. If the chariot-wheel was a well-understood global metaphor for the whole of Homer's poetry but then served an important narrative function within that poetry, this is no accident. A wheel moves but returns to its original spot, carrying forward while constantly returning; it is emblematic of a motion that, in its perpetuity, stands still. Always in contact with firm ground, this is the precise role of Homeric song and oral tradition in general. Albert Lord has noted, "[f]rom an oral point of view each performance is original."[8] And this is formulated in a similar way by Egbert Bakker:

> The tale that presents its constitutive events as accomplished in their very performance presents itself as a request for ongoing action: "Start now the song of *mênis*, Muse." In listening to the tale, we witness the work's very creation. The Muse makes the poet remember, she has done so before, and she will do so in the future, each time that the tale is told anew.[9]

Thus, the chariot-wheel carries with it an ideology of paradox: motionlessness accomplished through motion.[10] This theme is carried through by Empedocles, who finishes his description of the constant interchange among the four roots by the enigmatic statement that from a certain perspective, they are "*motionless through the* kuklon."[11] (fragment 17) Since the *kuklos* also has traditional associations with artisanship and joining, and these for Empedocles are embodied in the cosmic entity of Love or Aphrodite – a goddess of

[8] Albert Lord, cited in Nagy (1996) p. 9.

[9] Bakker (2005) p. 176.

[10] Kingsley 2003.

[11] This is classically presented as one of his two 'Parmenidean' moments, the incompatibility of which has caused serious confusion in modern commentaries. For further discussion of motionlessness (*akinesis*) see below Part III.C.

irresistible deceptions – we may understand Empedocles to be saying that only by keeping up with the motions of deception, drinking in the fullness of each ephemeral illusion without leaving a drop behind, may the perfectly-rounded *kuklos* be crafted whereby the *aoidos* of motionlessness is finally perceived.[12] For Parmenides this irony is presented by the fact that stillness – his destination – is only reached through the terrifying speed of the chariot, its *kukloi* letting out a shrill piping sound from the pressure as they carry him straight between the gates of endlessly alternating of night and day into a realm where the truth of perfect motionlessness is revealed to him.[13] *Thus we see that apparent divergence between Empedocles and Parmenides, which is traditionally postulated because of the* kuklon*, is actually a convergence based upon the traditional semantics of the word.*[14] The Homeric lexicon reveals their hidden agreement; not only does the *kuklos* convey a tradition of song, but it signifies to them a practice of deceptiveness within that song that is nonetheless indispensable for the sake of truth. Such a conscious participation in deception and in being deceived requires a specific cunning that is exemplified by the greatest of *xenoi* in Homeric tradition: Odysseus *polumêtis*. This standard epithet for him – 'of much *mêtis*' – to which he has an exclusive claim with the narratives of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, signifies the cunning that is necessary to win the hospitality of *philoi* and to stand in for the poet himself in narrating key events of the *Odyssey*. Given its connection to *aoide* through the figure of Odysseus, it is no surprise to find that *mêtis* has an explicit correlation with the chariot. Kingsley (2003) has pointed to the episode at *Il.* 23.13 where Nestor gives cunning counsel to his son who is

[12] See our earlier comments about deception and health in Part I.B.

[13] Kingsley (2003) has written in depth about the crucial significance of Parmenides' he often dismissed proem, and more recently Laura Gemelli Marciano (2008) has added to the discussion with a close reading of the intonation of this text read out loud.

[14] Further discussion of this convergence will resume below at Part III.A.

about to race the chariot, instructing him in the necessity of *mêtis* while simultaneously invoking it in his description – repeating the word three times in succession at the start of each clause to call forth a power the Greeks regarded as divine:

> By *mêtis*, you know, is a woodman far better than by might;
> By *mêtis* too does a helmsman on the wine dark deep
> guide rightly a swift ship that is buffeted by winds; and
> By *mêtis* does charioteer prove better than charioteer.

Kingsley has provided thorough and indispensable instruction on the pivotal role played by *mêtis* in the teachings of Parmenides and Empedocles.[15] We refer to it here in hope of further supplementing the intimate association between the chariot and song within the semantics of Homeric performance. The thematic importance of *mêtis* to this association, especially its common association with the hero Odysseus – for whom the role of *aiodos* is essential – will take on a new dimension momentarily.

In light of these associations it is interesting to briefly consider Plato's criticism of the rhapsode in his dialogue *Ion*, for there he claims that the rhapsode's wisdom amounts to nothing by arguing that for every craft the rhapsode might sing about, the true experts are the craftsmen themselves. In truly subversive fashion, Plato selects the charioteer to be his prime example (*Ion* 537a). We will examine further Plato's dialectical tactic of using the artisan to catapult the dialectician-philosopher to a status above traditional Greek standards of *aristos* (see Part IV.A), but for the moment we note that his selection of the charioteer serves the function of covertly burying a tradition in which the charioteer understood his craft as occurring within a greater network of meaning, with the unique symbolic function of standing in for the movements of that network as a whole. Socrates' question to Ion is a valid one: does the singer know more about charioteering than the charioteer? The answer

[15] Kingsley 2003.

of course must be 'no', but the *rhapsoidos* does guard a tradition (*kuklos*) that instills the chariot with its ultimate identity and lexical significance, without which it becomes a shell of mechanized actions deprived of access to wisdom or any permanent cultural value. Once hollowed out, Plato is quick to reinscribe this image in *Phaedrus* with his own ideal of the philosopher at the helm. We may note finally that in his dialogue *Ion* he scrupulously avoids mentioning *mêtis* – although he quotes from the same speech in which its ubiquitous worth is so prominently praised by Nestor. It can only be assumed that an acknowledgement of *mêtis* would weaken the claim that no wisdom unites the diversity of human aims except that of the philosopher. And thus we find one of many instances where the traditional lexicon that provides intelligibility to the role of the *rhapsoidos* is dismantled through the establishment of dialectic.

C. The Xenos

The chariot is a helpful mode of entry into the richness of Homeric resonance; it seems to travel to every point on the semantic map and its continuation within the language of Parmenides and Empedocles indicates that the depth of these semantics are in play there as well. However, it is only a beginning, for the associations between song, travel and *mêtis* – which come together through the figure of Odysseus – reveal another aspect that is indispensable to both Homeric tradition and to the context in which Parmenides' and Empedocles' doctrines find their full import. This is the theme of *visitation* embedded within the cultural practice of hospitality – which displays a complex pragmatics that presides over the event of welcoming a guest from abroad (*xenos*) into a domestic space. As Nagy has shown, there is a long tradition of connecting the figure of *xenos* with song (*aoide*), such that

the poet (*aoidos*) would conventionally present himself as a *xenos* of a patron (*philos*).[16] Within epic tradition itself, the proper reception of the *xenos* is a predominant theme. One might read the *Odyssey* as a series of lessons in the proper rites of hospitality that lead to the restoration of the archetypal *xenos* – Odysseus – to his throne in Ithaca. His time among the Phaecians, for example, shows an example of those who know how to perform their duty well; they ritually refrain from asking Odysseus his story until after a feast and a performance by a *komos* (celebrating group of singers/dancers).[17] The strength of this relationship between *xenos* and song can thus be summed up: the poet identifies himself as a *xenos*, performs on behalf of the hospitality of the *xenos*, and the archetypal *xenos* Odysseus hears the *aoide* of his own exploits at Troy before identifying himself and becoming an *aoidos* in turn, taking on the poet's task of narrating a large portion of the *Odyssey* to his hosts. Within Homeric tradition those who display hospitality towards the *xenos* are known as '*philoi*', and their excellence is explicitly contrasted with the utter baseness of the suitors (*kakoi*) occupying Odysseus' home when he enters as a *xenos* to test the hospitality he will receive. Were it not for the generosity of his son and his former servant Eumaios, the disguised Odysseus would not even be allowed to sit down there. We expect to find, then, that the correlation between *xenos* and *aoide* is confirmed by those who are noble enough to exercise the duty of hospitality, as the nature of Eumaios' compliments of his *xenos* designate.[18] The best of the Achaeans and *xenoi* in the Homeric world is accompanied by song, is an *aoidos* himself and is the topic of song.

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[16] Nagy (1999) p. 232-37.

[17] Nagy (1999) notes the particular Homeric association between *komos* and *philoi* (p. 241).

[18] Ibid, p. 234.

This correlation permeates every aspect of early Greek hospitality. The paramount importance of *xenos* for Empedocles and Parmenides, which will unfold gradually, is another indication that their poetry bears the formal markings of song. Their natural use of this convention shows their deep immersion in the lexicon of Homeric performance, though it is important to acknowledge that they also raise and develop various traits of epic tradition to a new level. The first step in approaching them, therefore, is establishing the difference between their genuine powers of subtlety and the network of associations that were widely available to the early Greeks. There will certainly be an overlapping here, as the penetrating insight of these figures allows them to imbue – or intensify – the significance within customary semantic links.

We will begin with the most apparent thematic evidence; both figures utilize the event of hospitality as a setting for the transmission of doctrine by way of song. Parmenides, of course, presents himself as the unlikely guest of the unnamed goddess of the Underworld – who was commonly known to be a guest there herself. The nature of Parmenides' journey within the context of Greek religion presents a fascinating dynamic of continuous inversion between host and guest that will be examined later.[19] The ideology of the *xenos* is again invoked by Empedocles, who identifies himself as an exile from his true home and a wanderer (fragment 115). As Kingsley has noted, there is a fascinating and humorous interplay between his statement of his true intentions, on the one hand, and his observance of the convention (*nomos*) of his listeners on the other – all of which contributes to the impression of him as a *xenos* among mortals.[20] Similar to Parmenides, we see the persistent

[19] See below and Part IV.C.

inversion of the roles of *xenos* and host, as Empedocles acts as a host to Pausanias alone before asking him to become host of his words – which he describes are like *xenoi* themselves, traveling homeward and willing to carry the listener with them (fragment 110), thereby rendering him a *xenos* in turn.

As noted by Kingsley, the attribute of *mêtis* is crucial for both figures, though Empedocles displays this fact more prominently. Odysseus polumêtis provides the exemplary narrative; his unique place in epic tradition is defined by his impossible feat of winning two prizes that the genre presents as mutually exclusive: *kleos* and *nostos*. Odysseus' return home (*nostos*) restores order to the cosmos – his family, the relations among his community, the fulfillment of divine aims and agreement among the gods – but interestingly, all this seems to challenge a prevailing Homeric theme: that the hero must choose between *nostos* and *kleos* (glory). This fatal decision made by Achilles between a safe homecoming and immortal fame (*Il.* 9:413) is the key to his heroic status, and Agamemnon's homecoming proves disastrous for him, but Odysseus is able to escape these constraints and become the sole exception to universal law in the Homeric world. He is a 'double-winner': the explanation lies in his ability – which seems to function at every level of his character – to find the elusive opening (*kairos*) somewhere along the boundaries of action, such that he can achieve one thing while simultaneously escaping from the limitations

[20] Kingsley (2003) Given his deft alternation between these two roles, it should not be taken as a counterexample to Homeric convention that this *xenos* places his trust in mad Strife rather than the traditional *philoi* – and it should definitely not be taken as evidence that he regrets his association with Strife (see the discussion of mistranslations above) – but rather that Empedocles acknowledges Homeric convention through his blatantly ironic reversal of it.

that normally come with it, giving him the opportunity to also do something else entirely.[21] What is impossible for others is permitted by way of cunning (*mêtis*), which in each situation finds the point of ambiguity or reversibility that is effective in two separate realms. As a recent scholar has noted, "Odysseus gets along and survives through a Hermes-like shiftiness… The key to Odyssean rhetoric is positioning, the stance the hero takes toward his audience and his aptitude at varying this alignment."[22] He is a master performer not only at recounting events and weaving fictions[23], but of the genre of authoritative command: *muthos* (speech-act).[24] "Odysseus manages to overcome the divide between word and deed that proves daunting to others."[25] This is another feature of his legendary doubleness; it is fitting that he is able to achieve immortal fame (*kleos*) without sacrificing the *nostos* typical of the most ordinary mortal existence.

Homeric tradition presents his achievement as occurring through the thematic irony of entering one's own house as a *xenos*, a scenario that necessarily involves disguise and double-talk. Odysseus' caution is vindicated by the brutality of the suitors who occupy the place. As an exemplar of a cosmic theme, Odysseus casts light on the centrality of the relation between host and guest among the early Greeks. As an exemplar of *mêtis* for Empedocles and Parmenides, Odysseus imbues their doctrines with an eschatological

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[21] His accomplishment of firing an arrow through the row of axe-heads, finally revealing his identity to the doomed suitors, is also a combination of two qualities normally found apart: might (*bie*) and the precision of *kairos*.

[22] Martin 1989, p. 120.

[23] It is worth recalling that upon returning to Ithaca he is greeted by Athena herself and praised for his deceptive abilities.

[24] E.g. his single-handed prevention of mass desertion by the Achaean army.

[25] Martin, p. 120. Citing an observation by Adam Parry (1981 p. 24).

purpose. The restoration of cosmic order occurs only through the *xenos*, and again through the irony that *he visits his own house*. The violence to which Odysseus must ultimately resort is not his own, but the *mênis* of a cosmic sanction against the vulgarity of those who do not recognize the excellence of their guest.[26] The figure of the *xenos* is therefore veiled because it must offer, by its very nature, the opportunity for blameworthy transgression against it, which in the narrative of Odysseus is elevated to a fatal irony. Hospitality is a trial; since there was the possibility of failure and severe judgment, and because it demanded a formal alterity between host and guest, there were inherent consequences at the level of communication: it was necessary for it to be enigmatic. *Xenoi* could be of higher or lower social status, but the host was bound to grant them the anonymity by which to prove their *actual quality* through a genre of speaking specifically designated for such an occasion. Having displayed the essential relationship between the *xenos* and *aiode*, and also shown the importance of the theme of the *xenos* for Empedocles and Parmenides, we now turn our attention to a genre of speech that is crucially important to both figures, and which establishes them, in some sense, as *xenoi* within the Western tradition of thought.

D. *Ainos* and Irony

The verbal subtlety that characterizes the *xenos* is embodied in the genre of speaking specifically assigned to him by Homeric tradition: *ainos*. This word comes from the verb '*aineo*' ('to praise') and designates a poetic tradition extending beyond the borders of epic (e.g. the odes of Pindar).[27] As a subgenre of *muthos*, *ainos* governs one of the most

[26] For an in-depth discussion of the social utility of *mênis*, see Muellner 1996.

fascinating social aspects of the epic age – the exchange between host and guest – around which seems to turn the entire linguistic apparatus for assigning praise or blame among the early Greeks.[28] It frames the pragmatics of hospitality that govern the welcoming of a *xenos* ('guest-stranger') into a home or the company of *philoi* ('friends'), an event of great social and religious significance especially in the oral culture shaped by Homeric epic. Within Greek religion as well, the figure of the *xenos* provides the structure for understanding essential relationships between certain divinities, such that the appearance of any one of them in the texts of Parmenides or Empedocles invokes a chain of significations that acts in turn upon other parts of the text to add layers of meaning. Thus, the religious purpose of these texts is evidenced by the recovery of an interlocking semantics within and between them, a network that only offers itself through a reading consistent with the genre of speech employed by *xenoi* in Homeric tradition.[29]

Naturally, the religious dynamic that authorized this social practice created the ritual expectation that the guest-stranger was possibly superior in excellence to his host – a fact reflected in the Odyssean narrative. The leverage of anonymity placed a burden upon the host to display his own excellence through the quality of hospitality he provided. Insofar as he was capable, he was due a special form of praise – for performing a divine duty – and the proficiency of the *xenos* in this task reciprocally offered a subtle hint of his own quality to the host.

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[27] As Nagy has thoroughly outlined (1990) the function of *ainos* is even more elevated outside of Homer.

[28] On the bivalence of *ainos* see Nagy (1999) p. 288.

[29] We will examine the *xenos* within the context of Greek religion in section E below.

The praise of *aineo*, inscribed within the event of hospitality that provided asylum to the *xenos*, became the enigma and challenge of *ainos*. Nagy thoroughly demonstrates the links in Homeric epic confirming this as a specialized genre in early Greek social structures, and also shows its extension into the traditions of Pindar and Aesop. It was the specific aim of an *ainos* to win special patronage or hospitality for oneself without directly requesting it. If the host was truly discerning, the request would be recognized and instantly granted – and the *ainos* would thereby achieve the status of 'praise' because the noble feat of recognizing its function was anticipated by the *xenos*, from the beginning, in making his veiled request. An example worth citing at length is found at *Od.* 462-506 when the disguised Odysseus *poluainos*[30] enjoys the hospitality of his own unknowing swineherd upon returning incognito to Ithaca. He gets cold as the evening wears on but is not allowed – by law of a guest's virtue – to impose upon his host by asking directly for a cloak. Instead, at the proper time he invents a false tale about a supposed incident at Troy wherein he once interacted with the absent lord Odysseus. The swinehered Eumaios and company are eager to hear it, missing their master, and as their *xenos*/Odysseus narrates the fictional event he notes that it took place on a chilly night, 'just like this one', and a company of men led by a fictional *kleos*/Odysseus had embarked on a night expedition to scout the position of the Trojans. Unfortunately, as the *xenos*/Odysseus tells it, he forgot to bring his cloak and had to sit huddling in the cold. Observing the distress of his companion, the noble and wily *kleos*/Odysseus announces to his men that without reinforcements their position would be compromised, which prompts an eager and noble young soldier to leap up, throw off his cloak, and run back to the Achaean camp to deliver the message. *Kleos*/Odysseus presents

[30] e.g. *Od.* 12.184.

the *xenos*/Odysseus with the cast-off cloak, and thus the story ends as a tale of the magnanimity and cunning of *kleos*/Odysseus. Recognizing that his *xenos* is offering a praise speech intended to transfer those noble qualities to his current host, Eumaios offers a cloak to his clever guest.[31] This beautifully crafted speech is both an entertaining story and an intricate form of praise to the host, to whom is conferred a certain nobility and cunning by the act of substitution Odysseus intends. The wonderful irony is the risk *xenos*/Odysseus takes in displaying this *poluainos* – for which the real Odysseus was famous – thus threatening to reveal his identity by the legendary skill he has just exhibited. Of course, if his skill is this great it is certainly capable of avoiding detection, and it is all the more glorious and delightful that the risk is undertaken simply for the sake of a cloak – which, in being won, is symbolic confirmation of Odysseus' ability to veil himself.

Thus we find that praise for the early Greeks carried the important connotation of 'enigma' – a word that comes to us from *ainigma*, a derivative of *ainos*[32] - and eventually came to designate a genre of writing that contained a hidden meaning for those with the necessary discernment. Nagy defines *ainos* as "a code bearing one message to its intended audience; aside from those exclusive listeners 'who can understand', it is apt to be misunderstood, garbled."[33]

Because the semantic and social structure of *ainos* entailed a limited application – it was "made within and for a marked social group"[34] – it was dismissed by later writers as an

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[31] Cited by Nagy (1999) pp. 236-37.

[32] Ibid, p. 240.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Struck (2004) pp. 63-66.

improper genre for the communication of wisdom and deemed artistically inferior to other literary genres for not standing independently on its own. Aristotle was the first to fully develop a notion of literary criticism that excluded *ainos* from the domain of higher poetic forms, his effort motivated by a strict insistence upon universal accessibility as the criterion of truthful expression.[35] Peter Struck has shown how Aristotle's ideal of philosophical clarity commits him to a polemical stance towards poetry in general, which is to be confined to a supporting role of providing metaphors for what philosophy explores directly. In his *Poetics* he develops a theory defining the terms of its legitimate use, stating that the best kind of poetry uses *metaphor* in which "it is clear that the sense has been transferred well" (1405b4-5) but that the use of *enigma* indicates flawed expression and a desire for obscurity masquerading as profundity. Good poetry is comprised of metaphors, each of which transfers the entirety of its sense without resistance. The task of poetic interpretation is therefore redefined to be the survey of a poem's constituent parts, each a discrete case of stylistic expression that embellishes and stands in for a literal meaning; consequently a single metaphor can be studied in relative isolation from its surrounding text (which becomes a sequence of individual acts of metaphor).

On this view, the quality of a poetic text can only be judged by removing it from its historical surroundings or the criteria of a limited audience to which it was originally directed. The outlawing of hidden meanings is motivated by a disdain for 'elitism', which presumably involves a group of people who communally possess the 'key' to decrypting the text and rendering it intelligible, but guard it jealously for reasons best known to them (most

[35] He also equated *ainos* with slavishness. See Ford's discussion (2002 pp. 76-77) about Aristotle's disdain for Aesopic tradition because of its indirectness of expression – a trait necessary for a slave to avoid offending his master – and additionally for its use of animals as characters, which were subordinate by nature, like slaves.

likely to feel superior). Thus the principle that good poetry is self-sufficient; its sense should not be held hostage by a guild, nor should it make excuses that its incomprehensibility is the fault of a non-initiated reader. This attitude is unproblematic if we define poetry to be a purely literary art, but there are complications when a literary theorist such as Aristotle turns an evaluative eye towards products of oral tradition, or texts immersed in its semantics. It seems to be overlooked that 'hidden meanings' could simply exist within the semantics of language itself. There does not need to be a literary cabal withholding secrets; the ideology behind the poetry of metaphor plays on a certain stereotype to present itself as the only safe alternative. Naturally there were exclusive societies with texts designed to repel outsiders, but the richness of the Greek language, as demonstrated by oral tradition, gave universal access to a vast reservoir of meaning – interconnected concepts, traditional themes, religious allusions – far beyond what Aristotle (or any literary theorist who followed him) was willing to glean from a text like that of Empedocles, for example. The norms of literary metaphor – with its exclusive insistence on one-to-one correspondences - rendered inoperative an incredible intricacy and nuance achieved over generations of oral culture. It also denied the claim to wisdom by people familiar with the natural semiotics of language and its attending implications for human communication and conduct – as well as the legitimacy of those who naturally gravitated towards one another in an effort to preserve and deepen such an understanding.

The poetry that succeeded well in the new antiseptic vacuum of literacy was naturally metaphorical rather than enigmatic, and therefore entirely 'literary' in the diminutive sense assigned to it by philosophy. Struck characterizes Aristotle's forceful revision of poetic aims towards a 'poetics of clarity' as consistent with his "desacralizing interest" towards poetry in

general.[36] This stance determines his ambition to surgically extract the Presocratics from the semantic context that generates and frames their works, to preclude them being mistaken for *ainoi*. Hence his well-known remark that "Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common but their meter. Therefore it is right to call the former a poet and the latter a natural philosopher rather than a poet" (*Poetics* 1447b17-20). While this pronouncement has achieved a certain canonical status, retroactively inscribing Empedocles and other Presocratics as forerunners of rationalism, Aristotle's classification is clearly reductive, to put it mildly.

As we aim to show, Parmenides and Empedocles are linked by a tradition of hospitality that constantly uses the vocabulary and semantic structure of the *xenos* provided by Homeric tradition. The practice of *ainos* was so important to this tradition that its verb form *aineo* was actually used to refer to the performance of Homer by the rhapsode.[37] Aristotle's programmatic dismissal of *ainos* is the major reason why Parmenides and Empedocles, viewed by the philosophical tradition as '*physikoi'* alone, are not commonly understood to be using the genre. But recent studies have made this reality much more plausible. Alexander Mourelatos has provided a thorough reading of the third part of Parmenides' Poem, where the Goddess presents the *doxa* (opinions) of mortals, as a series of ironic gestures that subtly reference their truthful counterparts in the second part of the poem.[38] The net effect is that her deceptive cosmology is a coded message hiding but

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Common words for 'recite Homer' were *Homeron epainein*, as preserved in Plato's critique of the rhapsode (*Ion* 536d, 541e). Cited by Nagy (1999) p. 288. Ford (2002 p. 77) also records Plato's advocacy of *ainos* with the tyrant Dionysius in his *Seventh Letter*.

[38] Cf. Mourelatos 1974.

skillfully hinting at the identity of the being she has previously revealed to Parmenides at the moment of hospitality, when he first arrives. This is obviously a reverse of the standard practice of hospitality - the *ainos* usually comes first – but throughout the poem she consistently thwarts any expectation of what hospitality might mean, as if to say that mortals have only the slimmest of understanding as to what this divine duty actually entails. When Parmenides arrives as her guest, she announces that *she* 'will do the talking', conspicuously reversing the normal pattern of a *xenos* delivering an *ainos* to his host. And *she* is the unidentified one, and we might say that the cryptic being she elaborates upon in part two of the poem delivers, through her, its own *ainos* to Parmenides in the form of a deceptive cosmology in part three.

If Parmenides belongs to the *philoi* who has earned its company and hers, which he has clearly demonstrated by his journey there, he will recognize this *ainos* as indirectly offering the identity of the being she describes in part two. In short, there is an intricate mystery of inversions in the event of hospitality that frames the poem, and this encounter between *xenos* and *philotes* presents itself as the indispensable condition for the disclosure of being. We will consider this event further when the language of the *xenos* has been more fully laid out.[39] Continuing with the support provided by recent studies, Laura Gemelli Marciano offers a detailed analysis of rhythm, sound and repetition of key terms in the language in the proem, arguing that it employs these devices purposefully in order to initiate a shift in consciousness in the listener.[40] Following the work of Peter Kingsley, she offers detailed parallels in studies of lucid dreaming and hypnagogic states in which a wider reality

[39] See below, Part III.C.

[40] cf. Gemelli 2008.

can become available, arguing that Parmenides' poem properly belongs to the genre of *ainigma*, a sacred literature that is meant to describe and induce such states through its recitation. She gives explicit attention to the language of the chariot-wheels, which we have linked above with *aoide* and the symbolic function of providing stillness through motion. As Kingsley and Gemelli Marciano have noted, Parmenides' language is uniquely self-referential, designed to evoke such a state through the sounds in its description of the *kukloi* turning. Close attention to them was meant to allow admittance into inner realms of consciousness – as parallel techniques in other texts demonstrate – though the success of this *ainigma* noticeably depends upon divine aid. This necessity is represented by the skillful words of the Daughters of the Sun to the Goddess Justice who bars the gates, without which this journey could not take place, displaying another level at which the *ainos* – of one female divinity to another – is indispensable for the hospitality of a mortal by immortals.[41] With Empedocles, we see how the success of an esoteric teaching can depend on the assistance of one divinity invited by another, as Kingsley has insightfully noted about Empedocles' reliance upon the Muse's chariot of song, as well as the 'pledges' or signs that her song is trustworthy.

Further evidence that Empedocles participates in a tradition of *ainos* is indicated by his beautifully subtle act of naming the cosmic entity of mixture: Aphrodite. As is well known from Homeric tradition, her half-mortal son is Aeneas; the etymology of this name is closely related to *ainos*, as Nagy has shown.[42] Therefore, Empedocles' invocation of Aphrodite, especially in context of the generation of mortal life, immediately connotes the

[41] See also the use of the language of exclusivity through his poetry: "'the man who knows', 'soft seductive words', 'just for them'… etc.

[42] Nagy (1999) pp. 274-75.

genre of *ainos*. Additionally, the title given to the cosmic force of Love, *philotes*, suggests a host who must be offered the praise of a *xenos*. This may be the reason why Empedocles is often said to be offering a 'Hymn to Love'[43], but the reality of this praise, as with *ainos*, is that it is double-edged, intended to preserve an irreducible foreignness in the midst of an act of hospitality. The welcome of this divine *philotes* is so entirely captivating that mortals enter her halls and greedily forget they are guests there, making themselves at home and blaming the hostess when it is their time to leave. Empedocles does not refuse the invitation – "*this is the way that I too am now going*" (fragment 115) – but his acceptance of the terms of hospitality is so complete that the memory of a home elsewhere (*nostos*) stays firm (*empedos*).[44] He is able to shoulder the divine responsibility of the *xenos* who knows how to offer recognition, through an *ainos* to the Goddess, of the fact that hospitality is what guarantees the cosmic order, "*something no mortal has ever done*" (fragment 17). His poetry demonstrably follows a formal structure that entails a reciprocal recognition of his divinity by the gods.

It is not only the semantics of *ainos* but also the structures of Greek religion (examined below in Part 3) that serve to vindicate this claim. The framework of hospitality in which the doctrines of Empedocles and Parmenides appear, subtly but tellingly, demands a reevaluation of their doctrines. Beyond its use as a literary device to bolster the authority of their 'arguments', appended after the fact, the context of hospitality provides a semantics to which both consistently adhere. A closer examination of what is traditionally taken to be two disparate theoretical positions - the 'way of truth' for Parmenides versus the 'cosmic cycle'

[43] Kirk, Raven Schofield 2003, p. 290.

[44] The etymology of the name 'Empedo-kleos' is suggestive in this context.

for Empedocles – will show that both doctrines intend to simultaneously *describe and evoke an ontological truth that has the structure of the event of hospitality*. This means that the 'rhetorical' or 'poetic' context in which their doctrines are delivered are identical with the doctrines themselves, determining them as speech-acts, and more precisely as *ainoi*: enigmatic praise that initiates a reciprocal bond between host and guest. The full significance of this hospitality involves very particular sense of how the mind inhabits the physical world, as we will investigate below in Part 3.

E. Apollo

As we have seen, the institution of hospitality has an essential relationship to *rhapsoidos*; both are defined by a coordinated movement between same and other, like the thread that stitches together two separate fabrics together into a single continuous whole. We might draw further insight from this image; the real *work* is performed at the seam, best done invisibly, and does not have a stable autonomous presence of its own but vanishes in order to disclose two sides. Thus we find that the places where Empedocles from Parmenides appear to diverge are the points where they are the most coordinated. The differences, by themselves, are less important than the subtlety with which they are continuously brought back into alignment with what came before. This is the real 'content' of the song – its essential *activity* – just as what the visitor *says* is only the outermost appearance of what he *does*.

By presenting the relationship between Empedocles and Parmenides as rhapsodic rather than dialectical, we have placed primacy on their shared language rather than an object (or theory) identifiable within that language. Since this relationship is not the scene of a

dialectical conversation it is therefore characterized by a greater fluidity, engagement and loyalty than is customarily allowed by the detachment of an 'intellectual position.' By our standards it is somewhat clandestine, challenging the boundaries of 'rational' thought and appearing as a collusion with what is not properly philosophical at all. Its full significance escapes the formulations of dialectical discourse – which depends on a suspension or deformation of *mimesis*[45] - and is only available through a study of the semantics of performance they inherit from Homeric tradition. This 'stitchwork' cannot be dragged into the light and scrutinized, but neither is it truly dark and unapproachable; as it links together two diverse fabrics it disappears and reappears as it must, somehow belonging to the caesura between light and dark, to the 'place' where hospitality between them can be negotiated. As we will begin to see below, it profoundly alters the meaning and intent behind what is taken to be their 'core' doctrines.

Having laid out some of the important semantics of *xenos* we now turn to an analysis of how the *xenos* provides an axial point around which turns the entire cosmos of Greek religion. This will be a natural continuation, for the god of song is the same as the god of the thread – Apollo – and his indispensable role in Greek religion is centered upon the event of visitation and the offering of *ainigma*. The fact that Empedocles and Parmenides refrain from naming him is an indication of their profound reverence – this god is their axis.

To state the above once more: the *xenos* is the bringer of cosmic order and the event of hospitality is what allows this order to flourish or degenerate, a crux where what is praiseworthy and what is blameworthy are determined. The event of hospitality is the foundation of law, giving the *xenos* the role of legislator, the responsibility of making law not

[45] Vernant 1991.

through command but upon command, just Apollo enacts the will of his father in the world of humans through a particular enigmatic way of speaking that is understood well or poorly or neglected according to the justice allotted to each person. The name 'Apollo' has been connected with the Greek word for 'assembly', invoking the *muthoi* that prevail there.[46] He has represented the successful passage from youth to adulthood, characterized by acceptance into the political assembly and a change in status conferred by speech. In ancient Greece, the cult of Apollo seems to be a late import; it was for a time thought that the name and cult of Apollo were of Lycian origin, but this hypothesis has been abandoned.[47] Burkert has argued that his name, at least, is probably derived from the institution of the yearly assembly of the Northwestern Greeks, the *apellai*.[48] Nagy extends this argument to the Homeric noun *apeile* meaning "promise, boastful promise, threat" which is based upon the concept of the speech-act and "dovetails with the meaning of *apellai*, which designates an actual context of speech-acts."[49] Nagy thus views Apollo as the god of authoritative speech among mortals, the immediate legislative effect of his words arising from his basic function is to convey the will of Zeus, actualizing it through the *muthos* of oracle. The specific quality of his words to be simultaneous acts is consistent with his traditional effect from afar, hence his epithet 'Far-shooter' (*hekatabolos*) and his enigmatic absence within presence that resembles the tension of the *xenos'* anonymous arrival. Though no conclusions can be reached about the history of

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[46] Nagy 1994.

[47] See Burkert (1985) p. 144, and (1994) p. 50 on the theory of Wilamowitz. It is interesting that Apollo's mother, Leto, is in Lycia "elevated to the position of a principal goddess." (Burkert p. 172)

[48] Ibid.

[49] Nagy (1994) pp. 3-4.

his origins, it is noteworthy that in Homeric tradition he seems to have the role of an outsider, fighting against the Greeks in the *Iliad*.

E.1 Hospitality in the Greek Pantheon

For the early Greeks *the stability of the cosmic order depended upon the constant observance of the law of hospitality*. The pantheon of the gods is an immediate example; it presents an eternal model of harmonious interaction among discrete powers of existence whose balanced relationship sustains the cosmos. While occasional disputes seem to strain the mores of hospitality, it is these collisions, on the contrary, that provide a site where the essential divergence that most deeply characterizes hospitality is affirmed. Hospitality requires a certain tension; the court of Zeus is a 'mythical' demonstration of this. But even further, the essential importance of hospitality in Greek religion is displayed by the protective role of Zeus Xenios to all travelers and guests: the divine mandate of reserving a place at the table for the unexpected visit from the outsider. Since, in human society, these anonymous *xenoi* were likely to be scorned for lacking a recognizable social standing, the courtesy of keeping one's doors open was proof of a host's nobility and affiliation with Zeus. A true master of the house had the resources to see that anonymity was no indication of the genuine quality of someone, and prudently acted as if every *xenos* was a disguised Zeus who could bring destruction upon those who did not conform to the law of hosts.[50] For the early Greeks, therefore, hospitality presented *a test* inherent in the cosmic order itself, an aperture or threshold that must perpetually be acknowledged and never sealed. The responsibility of the host was so strong that even Zeus himself could not break it – for it was always made in

[50] This renders intelligible the god's traditional penchant for disguised liaison, often understood as mere roguishness.

his name – as displayed in Aesop's humorous and instructive tale 'The Dung Beetle and the Eagle'.[51]

It is worth quickly mentioning an additional attribute of the relationship between *xenos* and *aoide* that is provided by Greek religion. This is that Zeus Xenios, the god of the court (*Od.* 22.334) and enforcer of the laws of hospitality, is the father of Apollo.[52] Kingsley has noted Empedocles' subtle reference to other epithets of Zeus in fragment 110 when he refers to the circumstances in which his teaching can flourish.[53] Empedocles does not allude to the title 'Xenios' in his poetry, but the theme of hospitality is everpresent in the song sent by the Muse, especially in Empedocles' description of himself as a guest in this world and an exile from his true home. When he names his four roots he represents Zeus by the element of *aither* (air), an assignment consistent with the epithet 'Xenios' from the perspective of the body, since it is the constant visitation of the breath that allows life to continue.[54]

More evocative on the theme of *xenos* are the circumstances surrounding Zeus' son Apollo who actively takes on the role of guest in Zeus' pantheon. The importance of this relationship is emphasized by the recurring motif of patricide in Greek religion, which plagues the lineage of the gods until the rule of Zeus halts it – this brutal history is raised to a

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[51] Gibbs (2002) #153.

[52] Burkert (1985) p. 130.

[53] The epithets to which Empedocles alludes in this fragment are agricultural in nature because they have to do with the process of inner agriculture that Empedocles intends to teach. See Kingsley (2003) sec. 11-12, and p. 527 for his discussion of the epithets of Zeus. We hope to supplement this relationship in Empedocles with by noting the role of Demeter, goddess of vegetation, in the mysteries of initiation into immortality, as well as investigate how the semantics of plant growth are interwoven with the speech of heroic epic. See Conclusions below.

[54] We will have more to say about Empedocles' view of body below in Part III.A

thematic necessity by their relationship. For Zeus, patricide is a threat that he constantly averts, distinguishing his rightful mastery from the tyranny of his predecessors. He avoids a similar fate not simply because he uses his exceptional cunning (*mêtis*) to thwart any subversions, but *a fortiori* because he risks the repetition of history through his exceptional hospitality in the face of this very threat – unlike his father Cronos who swallows his own children.[55] The persistent danger of having male offspring becomes the stage upon which a fully mature, powerful and uncontainable Apollo can enter the Greek pantheon as a cosmic *xenos*, confirming his father's trust and commitment to hospitality and also completing the circle of exchange that guarantees the cosmic order. Apollo's threatening reputation precedes his birth; rumors circle that he "will be one that is very haughty and will greatly lord it among gods and men all over the fruitful earth."[56] His mother Leto is made to wander from one shore to the next requesting to be allowed to bear Apollo there; she only obtains consent from the island of Delos and only after promising that her son will not leave the island before building a temple there to glorify the land of his birth, bringing many visitors and wealth to a place formerly overlooked by men. The worries of Delos that Apollo will scorn the island "and overturn me and thrust me down with his feet in the depths of the sea" are quickly transformed into joy upon seeing him, and "with gold all Delos… blossomed as does a mountain-top with woodland flowers."[57] This reversal of expectations displays a

[55] To the charge that Zeus exhibits the same ruthlessness in swallowing his first wife Metis, we might respond that he (impossibly) outwits her in doing so by proposing a game of shape-changing. Thus, he already possesses *metis* inside himself, and the story is a ratification of the fact that Metis, as his wife, is promised to him, resides in him and imparts her gifts to the cosmos through him.

[56] *Hymn to Apollo*, 67-69.

[57] Ibid 135-139, and earlier 72-73.

recurring motif with the god, as Jenny S. Clay has noted: "The progress from terror to delight… constitutes the eternal response to the manifestation of Apollo's divinity. Initial fear yielding to subsequent joy will accompany his manifestations throughout the *Hymn*, and it forms an identifying feature of the god."[58] Nowhere is this more evident than the initial scene of the *Hymn* – essential to developing the argument about the hospitality of Zeus – where Apollo enters his house causing all the gods to "tremble before him and all spring up from their seats when he draws near."[59] Only his mother Leto and Zeus are unperturbed: "the Father gives him nectar in a golden cup welcoming his dear son."[60] The panic of the other gods changes to delight when he plays the lyre – they seem wholly at the mercy of his quivering string, whatever its disposition – but his father remains untrembling. His unwavering and hospitable reign is the eternal substance of the song of Apollo, whose intimidating presence is allayed by his intent to strengthen the cosmic order that hosts him, just as he announces his special role of conveying the Will of Zeus to men rather than attempting to overthrow his father as many of the gods feared.[61] The cosmic order is based on the thread linking mortals and immortals under the rule of a single justice, analogous to the string of Apollo's instrument. As a symbol of this episode of mutual recognition, it represents the constitutive role of hospitality in the cosmos of the Greeks.

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[58] Clay (1994) p. 26.

[59] *Hymn to Apollo* 3-4.

[60] Ibid 9-10.

[61] Clay (1994 p. 29) has noted the 'cosmic innovation' of Apollo in creating this role for himself. As we will see below, such ingenuity is inherent in the structure of the *xenos*, especially the divine version.

E.2 Themis (Convention)

Empedocles states that he is not permitted to use his native tongue; he depicts his situation as one where he must obey the bounds of propriety (*themis*) in speaking to ephemeral creatures, conforming to their convention (*nomos*) and expectations. His announcement of his compliance – beyond this he cannot say more – implies the presence of something inappropriate held in reserve, a non-domestic truth that must remain outside the city walls, beyond the boundaries of lawful expression. It would be a truth particular to *non-ephemeral* beings alone – and, as we can only guess through an imaginative contrast with mortal character, it would be an encounter with a changeless unyielding reality that *themis* has spared mortals the pain of knowing. But Empedocles intends to make precisely this experience available to them, breaching the limit between mortals and immortals by weaving an impossible thread that leads from one to the other without offending *themis*. No mortal can speak in this way; he needs the divine artfulness of the Muse to endow his tale with the power of double-sidedness or reversibility at every point so that it can reflect back in a pleasing fashion the expectations of ephemeral beings – while simultaneously guiding them toward something that is totally foreign to them. This is the 'mystery of reflection' that Kingsley's commentary so wonderfully brings to light: that Empedocles is constantly acting as a mirror, appearing in whatever guise is most satisfying.[62] But each of these consolations – which exist only to carry out the divine ordinance of *themis* – is designed to unravel for the sake of a wholly other divine purpose: a golden thread that reverberates between the worlds of mortality and immortality, attuning them to a single frequency. This is the purpose shared by Parmenides and Empedocles that aligns them with the divine role of Apollo, an

[62] Kingsley (2003) pp. 418-29.

association that becomes evident when their poetry is considered within religious context. Many divine names appear in Empedocles' poetry; the conspicuous absence of the name 'Apollo' can be attributed the god's particular association with the ineffable. This is appropriate considering what Empedocles is trying to do. Offering the names of other divinities actually serves to frame this mysterious absence and to invoke a specific tension that was sacred to the god – as we will show – therefore displaying further that Empedocles is concerned with the language of performance rather than representation. The essence of Apollo is "the situation where the antithesis of word and action is neutralized, in that the word *is* the action."[63] Similarly, Empedocles is much more interested in evoking Apollo than mentioning the god's name – which would obviously have a nullifying effect. There is also a profound identity between Apollo and the figure of the *xenos* – to whom anonymity is essential – which will prove instrumental in clarifying the role of hospitality within the Greek pantheon. One of the great gifts of Empedocles' poetry is that it allows this aspect of Greek religion to truly show itself, and in turn the divinities involved provide the key to understanding the more subtle references in his text. This mutual elucidation was once more readily discernible but it has been obscured by the emergence of dialectic, the linguistic structure of which is inimical to hospitality as we aim to show.

The role of the *xenos* in Greek religion is, of course, closely connected to the feature of 'accomodation' in Empedocles and allows the opportunity to illustrate one of the ways his poetry limits its own disclosure in accordance with convention, apart from the classic valorization of Love and the villainization of Strife already mentioned.[64] This, directly, is

[63] Nagy (1994) p. 7.

[64] See above Part I.C and Kingsley (2003) pp. 368-70.

the well-known tendency to separate his physical theory from his religious views, a habit that springs from the rationalistic ideal of rescuing mind from the crudity of material existence. The paradox of such an aspiration is that mind cannot accomplish this except by a thoroughgoing preoccupation with matter – as the substance that dialectic negates in its high-altitude climb – which essentially leads to materialism: the positing of physical existence as external *but not internal* to the agent of thought. These trends in the conception of the Western mind were already underway in the time of Empedocles – though not fully formulated until Plato – and it is our aim to show that the entire thrust of Empedocles' thought demonstrates his awareness of a practical need to counter these forces of disembodiment. He has great concern over the growing sickness and damage caused by alienation from the physical world – at the individual and collective level – and so his apparent stance as a *kosmotheoros* has a sharp undercurrent of parody and irony. The figure of the *xenos* in Homeric tradition uses this deceptive masking to veil an unsettling presence, thereby graciously preserving the natural order while nevertheless offering subtle hints of his origins, should his host be listening well enough – all of which requires *themis* to be cleverly embedded with something more. Empedocles is perfectly capable of playing the guest in the house of mortal conventions, even if it forces him to adopt the language of secularization and *akritomuthos*[65] that undermines his real intentions in speaking. As a *xenos* he can offer convincing praise to any company he may meet, and his accommodation is so successful that his cosmology is remembered solely for its mechanistic quality – and more for this than perhaps any other cosmology – and yet its inherently religious function is offered very plainly near the beginning when he says

[65] A word coined by Odysseus to describe the vulgarity of Thersites.

Hear first the four roots of all things:
Shining Zeus, life-bringing Hera and Aidoneus
And Nestis, whose tears water mortal springs.[66]

As a rule, very little attention is given by commentators to the religious significance of the nominal introduction Empedocles performs here, including the full sense of the activity of *hearing* that he requests from his listener. In academic literature, the perfunctory discussions of these divinities' roles in Empedocles' cosmology do little except to further the impression that he is being grandiose about very mundane happenings among ordinary physical substances. Given the convention of interpreting him materialistically – a trend that can be traced back to the influence of Aristotle, who chooses the term 'elements' (*stoicheia*) to refer to the 'roots' (*rizomata*) when referring to Empedocles – the widespread indifference to the issue of his religiosity is not surprising and certainly contributes to the historic confusion over which gods were identified with which roots. Though a matter of longstanding disagreement, it would be hard to maintain that the issue has been approached with true seriousness or interest. Academic discussion has stalled to the point where major commentaries barely bring it up, if at all, and it is somewhat troubling to see how casually it is pronounced irrelevant to understanding what Empedocles says.[67] Not too recently, however, Kingsley thoroughly documented the history of errors that began with the very first interpreters of Empedocles' poetry, which piled upon themselves and accumulated in strength and conventionality as time passed.[68] Very basically, the problem arose through the confusion over Empedocles periodic substitution of the term '*aer*' for '*aither*' and the

[66] Fragment 6.

[67] Cf. Inwood 2001, Kirk 2003, Wright 1981.

[68] Kingsley 1995.

apparent homonymy of this replacement with the name 'Hera'.[69] This slip was aided by the old tradition of calling Hades the 'chthonic Zeus', thus allowing him to be inserted into Hera's place and assigned the element 'earth'. Such mistakes were left unchecked due to a lack of familiarity with the parallels in Pythagorean cosmology and its importance to Empedocles. Kingsley's reassignment agrees with the most basic intuitions of Greek religion, the idea of a cosmic marriage between heaven and earth, and the historical epithets[70] that belong to each of the divinities involved: Zeus is air, Hera is earth, Aidoneus (Hades) is fire and Nestis (Persephone) is water.[71] Far from being a simply academic correction to our knowledge of fragment 6, these new assignments allow key resonances to emerge in other parts of his poetry and help to explain the urgency with which Empedocles introduces them at the beginning of his cosmology with the imperative 'to hear' them.

When we consider this in light of Empedocles' pledge to *themis*, the question arises whether Empedocles did not plan for such oversights to happen. After all, the proper names of fragment 6 stand in singular contrast to the regularity and blandness with which he uses the terms 'air, earth, fire, and water' throughout the rest of the poem, a fact in perfect accord with his consistent rhetorical tactic of giving one solitary clue that his words elsewhere are

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[69] This highlights the danger mentioned by Vernant in his essay 'The Society of the Gods' of relying upon etymologies of divine names and also brings us to a relevant forewarning: the belief that that our secular universe of physical substances can be directly translated, with a one-to-one correspondence, into a set of Greek divinities. Such a crude translation ignores the profound psychological differences between the worldview of the early Greeks and ourselves. Empedocles avoids this trap through his repeated assertion that mortals do not know how to perceive: thus, water, earth and other substances provide hints or manifestations of divine presence – a subtlety lost upon the aims of secular translation.

[70] The epithet *pheresbios* has a history of being given to Hera; see Kingsley 1995.

[71] These assignments, again, should not be taken as direct correspondences for the psychological reasons presented by Vernant and summarized in note 12 above.

not to be taken at face value. The classic example is his announcement that there is no such thing as death, followed by immediately adopting the mortal convention of calling it 'miserable fate' – and the bulk of commentary follows suit, predictably equating Strife with evil.[72] His two reasons for adopting this strategy intertwine: the observance of the propriety of *themis* while simultaneously offering a subtle demonstration of the ephemeral attentiveness of ephemeral beings. By giving these names only once, he creates a trap and an opportunity. The significance of the names can be ignored in pursuit of a materialistic cosmology, which is perfectly appropriate (*themis*) given Empedocles' words, but there is also an element of demonstration involved: listeners will tend to forget that the roots are *persons*.[73] The history of scholarship provides the empirical evidence. And Empedocles seeks to induce this forgetfulness and distraction by speaking so regularly and comfortably about their physical manifestations that any notion of the religious significance of his cosmology completely disappears. And yet his injunction to *first hear* them suggests that the mortal capacity for awareness of the physical world and its 'elements' will remain closed until these divinities are met and welcomed into the sphere of experience. Empedocles introduces them only once – to highlight the alertness that is needed for these divinities (and the physical world) to be truly encountered. To give us their names again would be an impiety, just as it is impolite to introduce yourself to someone more than once or to forget a

[72] Kingsley (2003).

[73] The charge of 'anthropomorphism' could equally be reversed and questioned for its efforts to 'de-cosmicize' the domain of human life. Is anthropomorphism a primitive superstitious belief, or is it woven into the structure of perception itself through the comportment of the body? We will discuss Merleau-Ponty below in Part 4§3, but for now it is prudent to remember that we cannot abstract from the perspective of the *anthropos*, and perhaps should be wary of the aspiration toward a bodiless self or the 'dispassionate' portrayal of cosmos as a dis-anthropic being.

person's name after it has been given, all of which quietly suggests that Empedocles attributes a certain inhospitality to the basic mortal condition.

His choice to call these divinities 'roots' is no accident either, especially in light of his portrayal of his teaching as a tree in fragment 71. As Empedocles' subtlety becomes more evident, it is conscientious to look at how the symbolism of *roots* gives insight into the role of divinity in Empedocles' cosmos. First let us observe the haste with which we might declare roots to be 'invisible'; on the contrary we know that they are simply packed under the dense earth. This is not to suggest that 'invisibility' is not an essential aspect of the divine, but rather that divinity *does also possess a visibility* that is regularly obscured by the horizon of normal perception, a certain blind overfamiliarity with physical existence. By using the image of 'roots' to characterize divinity, Empedocles is hinting that the limits of mortal perception are not as mortals think. The visible does not immediately run up against the invisible; rather, there is a borderland between, the domain of the roots, nourished by the encounter with darkness and the unknown, epitomizing the mystery of contact and openness to the Other – the substance of hospitality – and providing an emblem of the chthonic aspect of divinity.

Empedocles' rootedness in Greek religion allows him to use it for this very specific end: to cultivate an active engagement with the physical world, characterized by the norms of hospitality and nurtured by the fourfold companionship of Zeus, Hera, Hades and Nestis. By examining how these divinities are inherently connected with the event of hospitality, it can be understood that they together hold open a place into which the *xenos* can enter. This event is foundational to the cosmos of early Greek religion and provides the key to understanding Empedocles' cosmology as well as his relationship to Parmenides.

E.3 Hera (The Impartiality of *Bios*)

Along these lines, one of the beautiful mysteries that define Apollo is the nature of his relationship to *fertility*. Although not often a predominant theme, the god is uniquely situated with respect to the divine feminine, a fact that emerges in the details of his birth on Delos. The first interesting complication is that it occurs despite the wishes of Hera, who tries to prevent Eilithuia, the goddess of childbirth, from learning of Leto's labor, causing her nine days of fruitless suffering. The other goddesses send Iris to secretly bring Eilithuia back with her; the moment she sets foot on Delos Leto is seized by birth pangs. As the *Hymn* tells: "she cast her arms about a palm tree and kneeled on the soft meadow while the earth laughed for joy beneath. Then the child leaped forth into the light, and all the goddesses raised a cry." The newborn Apollo is attended by seemingly every goddess *except* Hera who, as the *Hymn* explains, is full of jealousy over Leto's birth of a son so faultless and strong. Hera's infamous jealousy appears later in the *Hymn's* narration of her asexual birthing of Typhaon in response to the dishonor caused by Zeus who – apart from her – gives birth to Athena from his head. Apollo slays Hera's progeny and builds a temple at the site, raising the important question: why are these offenses to Hera a prominent theme in the *Hymn to Apollo*? Clay argues that Typhaon is presented as a foil to Apollo to define him by contrast, for both are powerful outsiders to Olympus who have opposite intentions: the former to destroy it and the latter to glorify it.[74] There is an important narrative function of this balancing, but it does little to explain Hera's unwillingness to allow Leto to give birth, besides a certain spitefulness that is often attributed to her. According to Clay, she is "an avowed enemy of

[74] Cf. Clay 1994.

Zeus' cosmos" who is deeply angry about the subordination of the feminine to the masculine, represented by Zeus' power over her. Since "her lineage is as august as his"[75], indeed much more so considering the archaeological evidence, the goddess appears justifiably consumed by fury about having to defer to Zeus, positively dominated by the spiteful wish to vengefully undermine his rule. We cannot do justice to the complex history in which her character was misogynistically recast by patriarchal encroachments in early European religion, but there is some confirmation available that she was originally not shrewish in nature. In light of this, the goddess presents a problem for interpreters of the *Hymn to Apollo*, since this vilification of her seems inextricable from key thematic elements that define the god in Homeric literature. It would be too extreme, however, to dismiss her actions there as part of patriarchal campaign to defame her; there is a legitimate subscript to them that functions symbolically, without a trace of slander, making it more likely that the deeper meaning of her interactions depicted by the *Hymn* was, over time, obscured and overlaid by malign revisions to her character. There is an important significance to her removal from Apollo's birthsite, but rather than indicating viciousness of disposition, I propose that her apparent spite is just the narrative veneer of a ruthless cosmic necessity that is absolutely vital to an understanding of Apollo. Hera is *bios* (life) itself – which is based upon eternal succession, the devouring of one generation by the next, with no concern whatsoever about producing pleasant or domesticated offspring. She is no less adoring of monsters than puppies; she is raw, indiscriminate and prolific. This severe neutrality is completely at odds with the maintenance of order or permanence (the reign of Zeus), but within *kosmos* – which we might define as the most beautifully ordered organism possible – they are paired together by

[75] Ibid.

necessity and the deepest need for each other. By law she cannot sanction Apollo's birth, not only because he glorifies and fulfills his father's order, but more importantly because he represents the escape from natural constraints, a secret countercurrent within life itself that slips through every necessity it would impose upon the living – best characterized as an *impossible overcoming of infertility*.

That this function has the paradoxical sanction of the divine feminine is evidenced by the chorus of goddesses at Leto's side, which includes Themis (propriety). We recall that Empedocles also has the permission of *themis* to transgress natural limits. Hera's jealousy – the jealousy of life – is a thematically necessary because it is Apollo's nature to be an exception; consequently it is necessary for Hera to stay away and to temporarily hold back Eileithuia. This theme is underscored by the key attribute of Delos: its infertile soil. Apollo, who commonly represents "the acme of physical development"[76] among the Greeks, is ironically born not through *bios* but in a place scorned by it. The theme of impossibility is further emphasized by the details of his loving preparation at the hands of the great goddesses at his mother's side. Tellingly, it is Themis who enacts the symbolism of the god's escape from every convention. After the goddesses clothe the newborn Apollo and fasten a golden band about him, Themis pours him nectar and ambrosia to drink, after which he "could no longer then be held by golden cords nor confined with bands, but all their ends were undone."[77] This essential detail symbolizes the impossibility of encompassing or binding Apollo in any way. He is not inside the circle; while it seems more proper to place him outside, his real essence is the unraveling of the distinction between inside and outside.

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[76] Burkert 1985.

[77] Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*

This would be threatening and transgressive in the chaotic hands of Typhaon, but Apollo's nature is to suspend these bonds for the sake of glorifying and renewing them. This is the symbolism of the bow and the lyre; the loose string is reattached at both ends to a body that bends back upon itself, thereby restoring the circle while giving it a new capacity; that of doubleness and resonance, the music of being attuned with itself.

E.D Hekate (Passage)

In addition to song, this tension also enables the arrow to strike from a distance, overcoming the limitations of natural space, the laws of proximity. Two points, which appear separate from the stance of *bios*, become immediate or identical, a quality that confirms Apollo as the "God of Afar."[78] His visitation or sudden entry from the beyond characterizes all his actions, earning him the epithet *hekatabolos*, or 'Far-shooter'.[79] What is so interesting about this intermediary function of Apollo 'Far-shooter', which ensures that the will of Zeus is known to men, is that the seemingly patriarchal directive behind it is not simply permitted, but rather mandated, by the divine feminine – evidenced by the assembly of goddesses at Leto's side, including Themis, but most essentially by Apollo's characteristic epithet, *hekatabolos*, about which Burkert writes in a footnote: "[t]he puzzle is that the names

[78] Burkert 1985, p. 148

[79] Apollo's *farness* has been deemed a part of his essential nature to be contrasted with the essential *nearness* embodied by the goddess Athena. Burkert (ibid) cites the observations by Otto that seem to capture something of the relational polarity presented by these two favorite children of Zeus. They are both emissaries of their father but each has a totally different style of interaction. Athena appears at the side of the hero, offering counsel. Athena springs from Zeus' head; Apollo is born far away on Delos. The necessity of their strange births is mysterious.

hekatabolos and *hekatos* cannot be divorced from the name of the goddess Hecate."[80] This very ancient goddess, who receives from Hesiod a singular veneration – with a hint of fear – in his *Theogony*[81], is shown by Sarah Iles Johnston in her study of the Chaldean Oracles to occasionally share her function with the god Apollo.[82] It is the nature of the feminine divine to be double[83] – and within this essential divergence the permission for *passage* resides with Hekate. She often bears the epithet *kleidoukhos* (key-holder) and is also called the "Key-holding Queen of the entire Cosmos".[84] Johnston also presents a tradition tracing back to Orpheus of associating *kleidoukhos* with the number Ten, as it encompasses and produces all the other numbers. The source of this doctrine, Philolaus, was a follower of Pythagoras, who brought forth the sacred significance of Ten through his tetractys and his claim to be a manifestation of the god Apollo. There are thus several intersections between Apollo and Hekate that link them to the event of completion, encircling and passage embodied by this number. The *Hymn to Apollo* implies this symbolically, as Leto only gives birth after *nine* days of labor, with the help of Eileithuia who is offered a necklace *nine* cubits long. The

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[80] Ibid p. 406.

[81] "Zeus the son of Cronos honoured [her] above all." (412) "For as many as were born of Earth and Ocean amongst all these she has her due portion. The son of Cronos did her no wrong nor took anything away of all that was her portion among the former Titan gods: but she holds, as the division was at the first from the beginning, privilege both in earth, and in heaven, and in sea." (420-25).

[82] Especially his counterpart Helios in the magical literature.

[83] See e.v. Vernant (1991) "Feminine Figures of Death".

[84] See Johnston 1990, p. 40. She also points out that the epithet *kleidoukhos* is only shared by the deity Prothuraia, whose hymn immediately follows that of Hekate in the Orphic Hymns. Among Prothuraia's other titles is 'Eileithuia', offering that childbirth is certainly one type of passage governed by the divine key-holder – and that the impossible birth of Apollo is decided by a power of the feminine independent from Hera: the goddess Hekate.

thematic undoing of bands after the god's birth suggests the completive resolving of the situation of nine. Apollo and Hekate are not identical, although both are recognized as intermediaries between gods and mortals, allowing the performance of a service that would otherwise remain impossible. Either may stand in for the whole process, but properly they work together as different components of a single event. *Apollo is the shooting arrow and Hekate is the ether through which it passes.*[85] They form a complementary pair, such that it is not possible to speak of Apollo without invoking the power of the cosmic feminine.[86]

E5. The Impossible Leaven

In characterizing Apollo as a cosmic *xenos*, then, it becomes clear that hospitality is a gendered event, which is to be expected given its constitutive role in the Greek cosmos.[87] As we have seen, an exploration into relationships within the pantheon greatly contributes towards a symbolic language that requires a number of potencies to function. Using what has emerged thus far, it is possible to describe the roles of hospitality and Apollo in generating the cosmic order, which can shortly be transferred to our discussion of Empedocles and Parmenides. The *xenos* is a liminal figure who necessarily remains unbound by conventional logic, but paradoxically his arrival from outside the cosmic order is the vehicle for the expression of this order to be fully realized and confirmed. Without the cosmic service of Apollo, the gods and mankind would be alienated and neither could be called *philoi*, for any

[85] Thanks to Jessica Mayock for providing the term 'ether' to describe Hekate.

[86] After introducing the intersection of Parmenides' and Empedocles' core doctrines in Part 3, we will discuss how sexual difference powerfully determines their ontological view in our conclusions (Part IV).

[87] Levinas says the same (quoted by Derrida 1999).

meaningful inclusion within an assembly requires an ordered understanding of how an outsider is to be treated, possibly to win entrance.[88] Therefore, the event that founds cosmos is the successful welcome of the foreigner who acts as a leaven from outside the known economy; upon entering he stirs up a fermenting process in the cosmos, bringing it to life and to its true beginning, activating a beauty and perfection that otherwise would simply be dormant.

Before this singular arrival, the cosmos exists in a kind of stasis: a closed system. The appearance of the *xenos* is the birth of the cosmos, but not *ex nihilo* from a 'first cause'; the constituent parts are already there, indestructible and uncreatable, and seemingly in fine arrangement, functioning – but also willing to suddenly leap up in unison, as if waiting, into a single gesture of responsibility. Something insoluble and uncompromising comes in, embodying a rupture in the known world and initiating a hospitality from the cosmos that engages the whole in a singular activity and fulfillment, the way a pearl forms around a grain of sand. The *xenos* can be small and apparently insignificant, like a beggar, but the purity of his foreignness overturns everything. In the case of the oyster we have a beautiful emblem of the cosmic role of the *xenos*, but as a familiar event of nature it is unable to convey what is most essential: that Apollo and hospitality both rely upon an encounter that must always remain *impossible*.

Without this condition – which is really no condition, since we are not speaking of possibility – the uncontainable *aporia* and richness that belong to the event of hospitality and to Apollo's divine act would be reduced to mere exercise and application of rules.

[88] Nagy has shown the reciprocal relationship between *xenoi* and *philoi* (1999) p. 288.

Hospitality cannot be regimented without losing its fundamental quality of welcome.[89] It begins from an act of *invitation*, but something unanticipated must come too, otherwise it cannot properly be called 'hospitality'. In the case of Apollo, it is obvious that his delivery to mankind of Zeus' will is an intermediary function, but it is not simply a transfer of information from one party to another. Apollo's divine act constitutes a 'cosmic innovation', as Jenny Straus Clay has termed it[90], and not simply because this role did not preexist his declaration, but *a fortiori* because exercising it requires the eternal innovation of reconciling the irreconcilable. To be the bridge between two worlds, Apollo must occupy both simultaneously. He is the divinity of the chiasm or threshold between human and divine, and as such he always remains a *xenos* in both houses. But this is not to say he wanders between them like a beggar or a courier; as a full time guest among both humans and gods, Apollo's feat of bilocation serves to unify two incompatible realms through their mutual performance of the divine duty of hospitality. In their encounters with Apollo, are they truly separate?

It is therefore appropriate to call Apollo the patron of impossibility; although every divinity by nature performs a function that is impossible for mortals, each having their particular share within certain boundaries, Apollo is unique in that his function is to cross boundaries and overcome separations imposed by natural law, making things that are incompatible share the same space – or nullifying spatial logic by causing the same thing to happen in two places. Apollo presides over boundaries, specifically the boundary between

[89] The essay 'Hostipitality' in Derrida 2002.

[90] see Solomon (ed.) 1994 p. 29.

human and divine, which is why the transgression of boundaries by certain Achaean warriors in Homer's *Iliad* invokes the *mênis* (anger) of the god.[91]

E.6 The Bow

The bivalence and tension for which Apollo is known are all embodied by his stringed instrument that bends back upon itself, pulling in two directions at once. As lyre or bow it can either sing or destroy, though the apparent oscillation between these two extremes can be attributed to the limitations of narrative, which can only recount things in sequence, one thing at a time. In human affairs where contact with the god occurs, at an oracle for instance, both happen together.[92] But this constitutes no transgression: the impossible does not 'become' possible – it simply occurs *as impossible* with irruptive and inassimilable force, unsettling the ontological claim and self-sufficiency of the possible. This impossible event is the substance of reality that restores a potency to life from *beyond the borders of life*, thus bringing it into the presence of death. By its very nature, hospitality calls upon death since it always invokes the ultimate passage across borders. The house of Hades epitomizes welcome, never refusing a visitor, and the impossibility of experiencing one's own death runs parallel to the impossibility of the true alterity implied by genuine hospitality. Hospitality is death; they form a single *aporia*. The persistent denial of one's own immanent death can be attributed to the impossibility of making the familiar and the strange present to

[91] We will discuss the implications of this anger, and its relationship to the *mênis* of Demeter, in our conclusions. See Muellner (1996) for Apollo's reaction to the status of *daimoni isos* momentarily attained by Diomenes and (fatally) by Patroclus.

[92] Hence the tradition of Apollo Oulios presented by Kingsley (1999) p. 57. According to the double meaning of this epithet, Apollo was known by Parmenides and his followers to be the *destroyer* who *makes whole* – who heals by destroying and destroys by healing.

one another, for death epitomizes the descent into unfamiliarity. It is accomplished through the mystery of hospitality, which is why Hades is the exemplary host. We will have more to say about Hades in due time, but for the moment it is relevant to note his connections to Apollo through the sun. Hades is the assigned the element 'fire' by Empedocles, which is strange considering the reputation of the Underworld for darkness and invisibility. As the double of Zeus, however, it is appropriate for the event of hospitality to be duplicated and curiously inverted; Hades is the host whose company no one seeks. Empedocles has provided a beautiful puzzle in calling fire by the name 'Aidoneus'; Kingsley has offered some insight into this by noting the common early Greek belief that the sun's home was in the Underworld.[93] The mysterious association between Hades and Apollo – who is connected with the Helios, the sun, in Greek religion – creates a profound mystery involving the hospitality of light by darkness, an inscrutable tension embodied by Apollo himself that was often called in esoteric literature the 'midnight sun'.[94]

To say a few final words about Apollo's bow: as a symbol it epitomizes the essential nature of religion (from Lat. '*re*'+ *'ligare*' = 'to bind back'). Every aspect of the god involves the renewal and affirmation of original bonds. There is always the shock of paradox, a sense of impossibility only intensified by an absolute simplicity. However, in this binding back it is still a mystery what performs the binding, and to what we are rebound.[95] For Empedocles and Parmenides, the renewal of bonds, in accordance with the function of the god Apollo, only occurs through a purposeful awareness of the integration of *phren*

[93] Kingsley 1999, 2003.

[94] For a discussion of the Underworld as the place where opposites unifty, see Kingsley (1999) pp. 68-69.

[95] This question is taken up more fully in the Conclusions.

(mind) with the physical world, through the senses. It is to this topic of embodiment, re-envisioned as an event of hospitality and willing guesthood, which circumscribes and lends purpose to the logic of Parmenides and the cosmic cycle of Empedocles, that we now turn our attention.

Part 3: The House of *Phren*

A. 'Mind' for the early Greeks

If Empedocles and Parmenides are immersed in the pragmatics of song such that their words have the structure and character of a speech-event – and we have examined the various ways this aspect of their language is neglected by contemporary scholarship (Part 1) – then it is necessary to investigate the doctrines classically attributed to them in terms of this structure. What then appears is that the Empedocles' divergence from Parmenides is *ainetic* and meant to evoke an event of hospitality to which both are equally dedicated. This hospitality is an *aporia* situated at the borders of Western dialectic – or more accurately, it is this *aporia* that situates the distinction by which dialectic is able to function, such that this non-place has primacy over the inside and the outside of philosophy that are constituted through it. The problem at the border, in its essence, is never the 'result' of an intractable conflict or dialectic between two separately existing parties on either side – the border is instead that 'place' which by dehiscing or diverging from itself generates the two opposing sides, which exist always as derivations or complementary resolutions of the tension of the original border-being. This ontological necessity not only provides a set of political and social challenges when it comes to understanding cultural identities at the border, and it also comes into play at the origins of philosophical rationality. The borders of philosophy are secured through the dialectical exchange between being and nonbeing – as Plato establishes in *Sophist* via his overturning of Parmenides' logic – but the opposition between being and nonbeing is itself subsequent to the original tension inherent in Parmenides' logic of *what is*, which is neither 'being' nor 'nonbeing' as dialectic understands them (and also

simultaneously both). The essential dehiscence of this original 'border being' (before it becomes defined as the dialectically problematic space between two secondary pseudo-beings) eludes a metaphysics of presence[1] and all norms of representation – and therefore its *logos* is preeminently performative rather than descriptive. Just as with any performance or speech-act, the usual antithesis between word and action is neutralized – or more accurately, the tension that gives rise to this antithesis is preserved so that the act of reference is not separate from the object of reference. Thus, language is not smuggled outside the house of being in order to describe its exterior – language, for Empedocles and Parmenides, plays the foundational role in the exchange of hospitality by which this house is truly constituted and assured its ontological status.

The speech-event to which both contribute is the encounter between same and other mediated and generated by hospitality. This encounter is irreducible and opens infinitely into the mystery of the divine, which despite (and indeed owing to) the multiplicity of forms by which it manifests, is ultimately one. This encounter is the same *aporia* to which Socrates brought Athens with his *elenchos* of questions. There can be no general aporia; it is always singular, the only member of its genus, with neither beginning nor end. Nevertheless, there is a route that language can take to avoid banishing *aporia* – which the logic of dialectic cannot avoid – and which will even cultivate it; this is what the *logoi* of Empedocles and Parmenides seek to do. The stunned speechlessness of Socratic *aporia* is the inevitable result of surprise; Empedocles utilizes language to weave this *aporia* into the fabric of ordinary perception (or rather to reveal its original place there) thereby allowing it to stand behind and enrich the full array of human actions, including thought and speech. The divine intelligence

[1] see Introduction

that is manifest through this encounter is associated by Empedocles with the god Apollo, and he uses the early Greek '*phren*' to refer to it. This is a wisdom that safeguards the hospitality between human and divine – in accord with Apollo's role – and it is important to show how the doctrines of Parmenides and Empedocles converge upon this aim. They are both concerned with oneness, but for both this oneness is only manifest through the tension of hospitality.

We say this much by way of preparation for a textual argument that the convergence of their 'main' doctrines does exist and demands they be understood as teachers of hospitality through a speech-event. First, however, it is necessary to quickly introduce the distinct intelligence that for the early Greeks enabled this to take place, which admits refinement to the same degree as dialectic and has the structure of the capacity for *welcome*. If it is typical in early Greek oral tradition to say that nothing escapes the divine *phren* of Zeus, it is because his 'mind' has the power to extend hospitality simultaneously to every being in the cosmos, giving each of them the chance to (wisely) accept or reject this welcome. Though the figure of the king epitomizes this specific ruling intelligence, *phren* does not exclusively belong to him alone but refers to the specific intelligence of each being, divine or human, who shares in his hospitable rule by accepting a place at his house. Apollo, as the cosmic guest, is essentially a teacher of hospitality – though he does not teach his father but rather vindicates him – whose enigmatic interaction with mortals has the function of increasing *phrenes* (the word is pluralized in their case to indicate that its dependency or participation in the divine *phren*) so that they might be more capable of reproducing the event of hospitality that inaugurates and actualizes cosmos.

Without acknowledging the sense of *mind* Parmenides and Empedocles inherit from rhapsodic tradition, it is impossible to appreciate their unique implementation of early Greek hospitality. The fascinating polyvalence of *phren* – which Homer conventionally uses to convey psychological activity, as Shirley Sullivan has thoroughly laid out – precludes an English equivalent.[2] It is best left in the Greek; translations inevitably fail to convey its range and wide network of semantic associations, resulting in a tragic short-circuiting of meaning in any text where it occurs. Viewing the translations of this word in Presocratic scholarship provides another indication of how greatly their doctrines are distorted within the history of philosophy.[3] While there is an essential mystery to *phrenes* for the early Greeks, the cultural semantics within which this was relevant and intelligible is rendered off-limits by Plato. The inaugural philosophical schism between the intelligible and the sensible subordinates the material domain in which this intelligence would reside. Throughout Homeric tradition, *phrenes* are explicitly associated with the chest cavity[4], which is experienced as the threshold where this intelligence could emerge, be encountered and welcomed in its exteriority by the person who received it. The movements of this 'mind' necessarily occur within a mode of hospitality – between a 'self' and a 'something' that is not the self – and are spoken of in oral tradition as occurring directly through the physical sensation of the body. The relation to the body as the sheath or sign of an *other* is peculiar to the early Greeks (only noticeably cultivated in the doctrines of Empedocles and Parmenides)

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[2] See Sullivan (1988).

[3] This is demonstrated well by Kingsley (2003).

[4] As R. B. Onians (1951) has described in his impressive study of the biological ancestry of abstract concepts among the early Greeks, the *phrenes* of a person were typically understood to be situated at the bottom of the lungs and directly below at the diaphragm.

and far from implying that the mind was once more *integrated* into its physical surroundings, this particular comportment is based upon the irreducible *foreignness* of physical existence, experienced as the testimony of a visitor. This specifically esoteric hospitality toward *phusis* endows the physical body with a level of virtue and erudition exceeding the already favorable view of the early Greeks, for whom the body was "a coat of arms" that "through emblematic traits presents the multiple 'values' concerning the life, beauty, and power with which an individual is endowed, values he bears and which proclaim his *time*, his dignity and rank."[5] For Empedocles and Parmenides, this is taken further: the body is the seat of the *phrenes* that, through their attentive hospitality to the *ainos* presented by constant motion of perception, invite the cosmic guest into experience and therefore prompt the experience of a certain eternal mercy[6], or immortality. We will examine the precise ways that Parmenides' and Empedocles' core doctrines overlap, and how this determines for both of them that *eternity is only to be sought for through engagement with materiality*. It was necessary to postpone the investigation of early Greek embodiment up to this point so that the framework of hospitality – its language and religious connotations – could be brought to bear upon it.

B. *Sphairos*: the 'Shape' of Mind

Both Empedocles and Parmenides speak of *phren* as having a shape, although both are aware that this comparison can be misleading. But because spatiality is an essential aspect of existence, it can be helpful for the purposes of explanation. The *sphere* is offered as the shape most befitting for *phren* because it implies no excess or deficiency. But given

[5] see Vernant (1991) p. 36.

[6] See Conclusions

this association we encounter a problem that is well recorded by academic debate, and it presents an opportunity to demonstrate Empedocles' use of *ainos* in positioning himself with respect to Parmenides. As mentioned above[7], this relationship has been the source of many misunderstandings owing to the common perception that Empedocles is responding *intellectually* to Parmenides, modifying his predecessor's doctrine in fundamental ways. The *sphairos* (sphere) that appears in the poetry of both Parmenides and Empedocles has always seemed to be an obvious point of intersection, but closer scrutiny reveals that on Empedocles' part, the *sphairos* is enmeshed in a complex display of irony that is meant to disguise their true association.

As can be recalled, Empedocles' cosmic cycle is as follows: the four roots begin from a state of separation, naturally desiring to remain in their pure state, but Love's seduction mixes them until nothing is left separate and they are blended into a perfect sphere that is reminiscent of the Parmenidean One. Strife immediately takes over, gradually liberating them from their bondage until they are fully sifted back into their pure form and the cycle can begin anew. A debate has arisen about what exactly is happening when they are in that state of perfect mixture under Love. Many have viewed this as the 'Parmenidean moment' when Empedocles is offering a fleeting tribute to his teacher.[8] The identification is deeply problematic, however, and we have waited to address it until this stage in order to

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[7] see above Part I.E.

[8] Denis O'Brien (1969, p. 244) states: "The sensible world and Parmenides' One… cannot coexist, but in Empedocles' system alternate in endless succession." And KRS (2003, pp. 295-96) also: "When the four roots are completely united by Love throughout their entire extent, they give rise to the Sphere, which … Empedocles 'hymns as a god'. His description of it… is indisputably modeled on Parmenides' verses… His sphere differs from Parmenides' in its mortality; perhaps he implies that Parmenides' conception of perfection is sound, but is mistakenly represented as a general condition of existence."

have certain resources at our disposal: the subtlety of *ainos* and a familiarity with certain attributes and themes that belong to the nature of the god Apollo, who can indeed be designated by the *sphairos* but only insofar as precise conditions are maintained.

The perceived compatibility between Parmenides' sphere and Love's sphere rests upon a flawed reception of Parmenides' doctrine. The changeless and motionless sphere of Parmenides' fragment 8 has always seemed in the eyes of commentators to have spatiality. "To be but not to be extended in space is a possibility of which Parmenides seems not to have been aware… This is the point at which Plato made a crucial advance. Plato's Forms are the first example of a being freed from space."[9] This 'decisive answer' of Plato that snaps the bonds of Parmenides once and for all, founding a space in which the mind can freely move apart from the restrictive logic of the Goddess, is ostensibly foreshadowed by the 'response' of Empedocles to his teacher – which appears to some scholars as an attempt at compromise and a half-step towards the long-awaited sophistication of Plato. But as we have argued above, this grand historical narrative holds water only if we grandly oversimplify early Greek thought. The accusation that Parmenides is bound by 'spatiality' is interesting for reasons that parallel the apparently 'temporal' preoccupation of Empedocles in his cycle. Both are caricatures that perfectly reflect the attributes and limitations of mortal thinking that each figure reminds his listeners of diligently.[10] As a closer look will show, Parmenides' sphere is not a spatial being, and Empedocles cycle is not merely the endless alternation of two extremes in the past and the future, but rather their eternal simultaneity in the present: a

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[9] O'Brien (1969) p. 240.

[10] Empedocles states, concerning mortal views on death, "*What they say is for them quite right, and I myself conform to their convention.*" (Fragment 9) Parmenides, at the end of the his trustworthy discourse, warns the listener is will now be necessary to "*listen to the deceptive* cosmos *of my words.*" (Fragment 8, line 52)

powerful tension that signifies and evokes the reality of Apollo. A single 'moment' within this 'cycle' – Love's sphere – cannot be conflated with the whole of Parmenides' being.

Parmenides describes the one route of being as completely actualized, without deficiency or surplus of any kind because this would necessarily involve the reality of non-being – which is not allowed to exist. There can be no freedom to create or to destroy; *being is eternal and motionless*. As the *elenchos* of Parmenides' unnamed Goddess states:

> *And how could it be that being could be at some*
> *later time? How could it come into being?*[11]

The problem since Parmenides has been that since there is no room for change, the world as we perceive it cannot be real. This has long seemed an unacceptable outcome of Parmenides' logic, which O'Brien attributes to Parmenides' inability to imagine being without spatiality. Thus, since being must have a monopoly on spatiality – how could some of it be outside being? – there is effectively no 'space' or 'room' for the sensible world; it must be relegated to non-being. The indictment is based upon the comparison between being and "*the bulk of a sphere neatly rounded off from every direction, equally matched on every side*."[12] According to O'Brien, Parmenides' one being "retains shape and probably bulk and thereby extension."[13] This creates an incompatibility with the sensible world that is not resolved until the 'decisive answer' of Plato; Empedocles presumably attempts an unsatisfactory resolution in which they alternate. However, the single difficulty with this interpretation of Parmenides is the Goddess' clear statement that being must be totally of one kind and continuous with itself; it cannot be divided from itself because this would involve

[11] Fragment 8.

[12] Ibid.

[13] O'Brien (1969) p. 239.

placing it next to non-being, which is tantamount to conferring existence upon non-being. Being cannot be divided. Space is inherently divisible. Therefore Parmenides' sphere is not a spatial being; the Goddess is only using the sphere as an analogy because the mind can easily grasp it as the shape that is most complete and fully actualized. But since the concept 'shape' implies an inside and an outside, being cannot have a shape because there is nothing outside of it. She is permitted to say that being is *like* a sphere, but this can only be a comparison that succeeds in some ways and fails in others. A complementary analogy would be to say that being is *like* a single point in space that has no shape or extension, and also incapable of movement because there are no other points relative to it. The problem with taking this latter image in isolation is that we lose the sense of fullness; it is very hard to imagine all of being contained in a single point, and our spatially recalcitrant minds will insist upon a single point as deficient.

Thus, from Parmenides' side, we can dispel the notion that accepting the reality of the *sphairos* entails the rejection of the sensible world of spatiality – which consequently renders inadequate the traditional portrayal of Empedocles as offering a compromise by placing Parmenides' *sphairos* at a single point in his cosmic cycle. This interpretation dates back to Aristotle, who deduced that the motionless Parmenidean sphere could only occur at the crucial moment when Love's work was complete, just before Strife began to reverse it. But the conceptual entity commonly understood as 'Parmenides' sphere' is not consistent with the conditions of Parmenides' logic, and therefore what is thought to transfer over to Empedocles' doctrine is an intellectual fabrication. That said, it can easily be made to resemble Love's sphere, but given our above discussion of the subtlety of *ainos* it is best to be cautious in this regard, especially as Empedocles explicitly associates Love with

deception.[14] Continuing his display of respect for propriety, he is offering a specious correspondence that allows us to safely presume that the rest of the cycle is his modification of Parmenides' doctrine. The sphere of Aphrodite is a very attractive decoy, and there is a certain humor in how Empedocles has so earnestly warned his listeners to "*watch her with your consciousness! Do not sit there in a daze* (tethepos) *staring blankly with your eyes*!"[15]

Behind the compelling phantom embodied by Aphrodite there awaits an unnoticed second sphere, one that receives little attention but which perfectly matches the authentic Being of Parmenides. Just as with so many other vitally important themes in Empedocles' poetry, it is presented almost in passing, a singular exception to the bulk of everything else he states: one more example of his graciousness in providing every opportunity to be led off track. It is impossible to know the details of the way his original fully intact poem accomplished this aim, but the available fragments display a profound genius in the ambiguity of their overlapping descriptions. This second sphere is hinted at only in fragment 134:

> *For [it/he] is not fitted out in [its/his] limbs with a human head,*
> *nor do two branches dart from [its/his] back*
> *nor feet, nor swift knees nor shaggy genitals;*
> *but it/he is only a sacred and ineffable* phren
> *darting through the entire cosmos with swift thoughts* [noema].

[14] An association not lost on Inwood; see (2001) p. 36.

[15] Fragment 17. When Parmenides says that mortals are dazed, helpless in their chests, he is perhaps referring to the daze of Patroclus just before Hector kills him. The word for 'daze' (*taphon*, a variant of *tethepa*) is the same used by Homer (Il. 16.791) when Apollo knocks off his helmet and *ate* seizes Patroclus in his *phrenes*, making him stare ahead blankly on the battlefield before a fatal blow kills him. Thus by Empedocles' use of the word *tethepos*, he invokes in passing, with an amazing skill and economy, not only a vital link with Parmenides but also an archetypal punishment for provoking the *mênis* of the god Apollo – and connects it to the submission to Aphrodite.

This final line of this fragment recalls the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* in which the god is said to travel swiftly to and from Olympus 'like a thought [*noema*]'. The swift limbless being depicted here already resembles a sphere, and this likeness is increased by comparing the overlapping description in fragment 29&28, which shares the second and third lines of the above fragment but which continues in a different way:

> *...but it indeed is equal <to itself> on all sides and totally unbounded,*
> *a rounded sphere rejoicing in its surrounding solitude.*

Fragment 27 overlaps with fragment 29&28 by keeping this last line, but substituting a different line before it:

> *…Thus it is fixed in the dense cover of harmony,*
> *a rounded sphere, rejoicing in its joyous solitude.*

Despite minor alterations these fragments overlap, raising the important question of whether the topic has remained the same in each instance. Ammonius has asserted that in fragment 134 Empedocles is actually describing the god Apollo, though certain commentators have marginalized this claim and argued that all three fragments refer to Love's sphere alone.[16] The term 'harmony' in fragment 27 is synonymous with 'Love' in Empedocles' poetry; given the overlapping of the fragments it would seem to transfer its subject matter across the span of all three. Yet Ammonius equates fragment 134 with Apollo and "in the same way also about the totality of the divine in general", adding that "[b]y means of the word 'sacred'

[16] Wright (1981) acknowledges the statements of Ammonius in passing, but only to say that "a connection between Empedocles and Apollo is lacking" (255), and move on quickly to associate fragment 134 with the others, saying that Love's sphere "is a god, comprising the four roots, which have been brought together by Philia in balance, joy, and stillness… The [sacred *phren*] is surely to be connected with it, as the similarities between this fragment and [29&28] show… The [sacred *phren*] would be that which now remains of the sphere-god after the shattering of its unity and rest by Strife." Wright agrees with S.M. Darcus ("Daimon Parallels the Holy Phren in E.," *Phronesis* 22, pp. 175-90) that "the sphere of Love is one of the stages of the Holy Phren's activity" (255) but rejects the possibility that both sides of the cycle are involved in its intelligence – "that half his thinking is concerned with hate" (255) – along with Aristotle [*Metaph.* 1000b5].

[Empedocles] hinted at the cause which is beyond the intellect."[17] This description of an Apollo who combines sphericity with the freedom to dart through all things helps unfold our discussion of the god's attributes in Greek religion, especially his relationship to Hekate, who encircles the cosmos and provides the keys for passage through it, and also the symbolism of his bow which undoes the ends of a circle only to attach them to a steady frame, closing the circle but creating the power of instantaneous travel, whether of song or an arrow. By asserting that this portrait of Apollo applies to the divine in general, Ammonius conforms to the tradition that the god is an intermediary or a stand-in for the divine, and also confirms that *phren* for the early Greeks referred to the point of sacred interlacing between the human and divine minds. This is the sense in which it is 'beyond the intellect', since it preserves a space of tension where a radical and wild otherness may present itself to thought. The ambiguity created by these three overlapping fragments perfectly exemplifies the rhetorical tactics condemned by Aristotle, but as we can see, it provides demonstration of the rationalistic tendency, eliciting this perspective in order to subtly point to its limits.

C. Stillness and Motion

The testimony by Ammonius that fragment 134 refers to Apollo is a very helpful confirmation of what should be obvious from the text of the fragment itself: that this *phren* is the sacred tension brought about by the entire cycle (*kuklon*).[18] This 'holy mind' is absolutely dependent upon Strife – an attribute that commentators have been reluctant to attribute to the divine. Tracing the roots of this bias leads back to an important section of

[17] Ammonius, Commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* CIAG 4.5, 249.1-11. Cited in Inwood (2001) pp. 140-41.

[18] See our earlier discussion of the chariot-wheel in Part II.B.

Empedocles' poetry that has been subject to longstanding distortions by prevailing scholarship, providing an explanation of why the Apollonian sphere is not traditionally recognized. The problem begins with Aristotle's misreading of Empedocles (at *Phys.* 250b26-251a5) that assumes an alternation between rest and motion in the cosmic cycle. The context of Aristotle's citation is his investigation into the causes of the motions of physical bodies, which requires him to find a principle for why a thing leaves the state of rest. He argues in passing that Empedocles is unable to give an explanation for this shift but simply states that it happens automatically, and the perpetual alternation of his cycle is therefore deprived of a causal first principle that would govern the relationship. Aristotle argues that any reversal in movement requires a period of rest, to which he attributes Empedocles' use of the word '*akinetoi*' in fragment 26. He characterizes the cycle as an alternation between the roots' movement and the sphere at rest: the roots move to join the sphere, the sphere sits there for a while, and then they disperse so the process can repeat. Aristotle's view is explicated further by O'Brien, who argues that "the period of unity and rest under Love lasts for as long as the period of plurality and movement under Strife."[19] O'Brien equates the alternation between Love and Strife with the alternation between rest and movement, arguing that in the fifth century rest was associated with unity and movement with plurality.[20] "Love then is the cause of good things, of unity, of harmony, and thereby of rest. Strife is the cause of evil, of hatred and separation, and thereby of movement. Their power, and so the length

[19] O'Brien (1969) p. 1. Some commentators have argued that Aristotle is ambiguous about the existence of a second rest period until total Strife, or that he has misread Empedocles in assuming only one rest period. O'Brien forcefully attacks these interpretations in appendix 1 of the above text.

[20] Ibid pp. 38-39.

of their rule, is equal."[21] The attraction of this formula lies in its simplicity and its reassurance of familiar moral norms. It is helpful to review the section of Empedocles from which Aristotle's interpretation arises (fragment 26):

> *Thus insofar as they learned to grow as one from many,*
> *and finish up as many, as the one again grows apart,*
> *in this respect they come to be and have no constant* [empedos] *life* [aion]*,*
> *but insofar as they never cease from constantly interchanging,*
> *in this respect they are always motionless* [akinetoi] *through the cycle* [kuklon].[22]

Aristotle and O'Brien argue that '*akinetoi*' refers to Love's sphere at rest, but it eliminates the sense of the whole passage to assign motionlessness to only one place in the cycle. Empedocles clearly means to contrast the ephemeral quality of ceaseless motion, that which has "no constant life", with the motionless eternity (*aion*) that becomes evident through this very ceaselessness. This *akinesis* is not separate from motion but constitutes its fulfillment that becomes apparent only when motion is not interrupted. Yet this is exactly what Aristotle does by proposing intermittent periods of rest and motion. His 'motionlessness' is therefore something very different from that of Empedocles. By artificially separating these principles in order to find a third term, he forces Love and Strife into a dualistic opposition, producing a straw-Empedocles that is very easy to knock down from a theoretical perspective. But if the roots are 'always motionless', as fragment 26 states, then there is no justification for saying that they are sometimes motionless, sometimes not. The paradox Empedocles presents here

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[21] Ibid p. 103.

[22] Translated by Inwood (2001, p. 231). I have amended the translation at the end. Inwood has '*akinetoi kata kuklon*' say 'unchanged in a cycle', but *akinetoi* is better translated to reflect a lack of motion rather than a lack of change, in order to more explicitly contrast with the constant motions of the roots. Thus, 'motionless' has been substituted. The paradox of this motionlessness is better conveyed, also, by the temporal dimension of the preposition 'through' rather than 'in', as this accords with the translation of '*allassonta diamperes*' as 'throughout change' by Kahn (1960 pp. 23-24), who argues that this phrase is intended to be an oxymoron.

– which the negative prefix 'ἀ' of '*akinetoi*' serves to emphasize – is that *akinesis* actually refers to a stillness that cannot be separated from motion, which exists not in spite of but *because of* the constancy of motion, as the culmination of *kinesis*. It is therefore a misinterpretation for Aristotle to claim a rest period in the middle of the cycle because not only does '*akinetoi*' not refer to such a thing, but even more strongly, such a rest period would make *akinesis* impossible. Since this erroneous but forceful misinterpretation imputes a state of rest to the sphere joined by Love, it creates the false impression that Strife has a purely antagonistic relationship with permanence (*aion*) in the cosmic cycle.[23] The workings of Strife, as a result, appear as a grim accompaniment to reality rather than its integrating aspect. But even commentators who do not subscribe to Aristotle's misinterpretation of '*akinetoi*' have labeled Strife 'evil', since there are many other places where Empedocles seems to say this. However, if Strife truly is the force of 'evil' then it is very interesting for Empedocles to make it an agent of rest and permanence. Empedocles' poetry is often depicted as a hymn to Love, but as fragment 28 illustrates there can be no *akinesis* without Strife.[24]

Motionlessness is a significant Parmenidean attribute; there is nowhere for the one being to go, and the perfect balance of the sphere makes it the best shape to represent this state of completion. But with Empedocles, we find motionlessness is displaced from the prominently displayed sphere of Love; it is transferred to the cycle as a whole. There are a

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[23] As we will soon see, *aion* has an essential association with the body for both Homer and Empedocles. Its paradoxical intimacy with the mortal body under the reign of Strife is often overlooked, and obviously contradicted by its association with evil by O'Brien.

[24] We may hear an echo in Heraclitus: "It rests by changing." (Fragment 52) Empedocles' move to make this Sphere a fleeting rather than a permanent condition is casually attributed to his "Heraclitean spirit" in KRS (2003) p. 285.

number of important implications and resonances that draw support from this, which must, in a sense, be reintroduced into this new context. First it is helpful to recall that Empedocles' relation to Parmenides (and the lexicon they share) is best understood in terms of the genre of the *rhapsoidos* (as explored in Part 2) which would indicate that Empedocles viewed his contribution as agreeing with that of his predecessor *through* its divergence from it. This is a genre of performance rather than description; the succession of performances does not imply a duplication of content, but rather a continuation of a specific act through a new medium or fabric. There will therefore be traces of the contents of the former performance in the new performance, but reassembled into a different ordering that nevertheless skillfully enacts a continuation of the former performance: a tribute by way of divergence. Since we characterize the aim of these performances as the enactment of reality through the agency of hospitality, an unfolding of the particular wisdom (*sophos*[25]) that belongs to the host, we may understand both Parmenides and Empedocles as offering *ainoi* that – properly received – initiate the encounter of hospitality that is raised to the level of theophany and cosmogony. Empedocles, in addition, is offering an *ainos* to his teacher, whose doctrine must host the embellishments and divergences of its successor. That this role corresponds deeply with the cosmic function of Apollo is testimony of the already noted[26] importance of this god to Parmenides and Empedocles. Empedocles evokes the tension that defines Apollo through the constancy of turning back on itself by Love and Strife in his cycle – which becomes the expression of a bivalent being – thereby manifests his paradoxical presence 'from afar'. Empedocles' cycle reaches motionlessness by the constant turning back on itself that occurs

[25] Nagy 1999 p 240.

[26] Cf. Kinglsey 2003.

between the One and the Many. This tension or reversibility is what gives place to the separate possibilities of One and Many – we might also call it the *border* or limit between them or the experience of hospitality and *aporia* that would occur there. This border could also be conceived as the receptacle of the cosmos, since it is what gives home to the full set of possibilities inherent in its tension, brought into being as oppositional pairings generated by the resolution of this tension.

One such pair is motion and stillness; Empedocles' attribution of swiftness to the divine *phren* of Apollo in fragment 129 is coupled with the implication of successive fragments that it has the shape of Parmenides' *sphairos*, together with the implication that *akinesis* belongs to it rather than to Love's sphere. Thus Empedocles intends that the *phren* of Apollo, while darting all through the cosmos, be *motionless*: an omnipresence that is constantly arriving to itself from afar as a *xenos*.

Empedocles' doctrine qualifies as an *ainos* because it is meant to provoke a certain hospitality. Because the motionless, stable reality to which Empedocles *kuklon* leads is associated with the god Apollo, this hospitality is intended to be the event or *phren* that constitutes cosmos (as described in Part 2.5a). Because this hospitality is realized by way of the tension between the immoveable sensation of *prapides*[27], on the one hand, and the ceaseless motions in which the external world is perceived, on the other, it means that *phren*, for Empedocles, can only exist through the tension generated by the materiality of *phusis*. The connection with *phusis* is furthered by the fact that Empedocles signifies 'the substance' of this hospitality in terms of plant growth. What conclusions may be drawn from this? What is the purpose of such hospitality? Without reconsidering the powerful relationship

[27] This word is used interchangeably for *phrenes* in frs. 110 and 132.

between Apollo and the feminine (Part 2.5b-d), there would be no answer for why this hospitality is to be extended, other than its founding role in the cosmic order. But in light of this relationship, there appears another role for this hospitality: as a response to a cosmic sanction that is engendered by the founding act of cosmos, an original transgression without which there could not be a cosmos. If the oneness to which the doctrines of Parmenides and Empedocles lead is only possible through the twoness of hospitality, it is because this twoness is the body of sexual difference that – in virtue of being split, as the locus of a transgression against the unity of being – carries the burden of alienation. Intrinsic to the feminine is a cosmic sanction that is only lifted or forgiven through the offering of hospitality. It does not matter that in Greek religion the cosmic *xenos* is Apollo – behind him there is the body of the feminine that constitutes the very (im)possibility of hospitality. We will find some conclusions to our inquiry into hospitality by considering its relationship to forgiveness, and say why sexual difference is an essential structural concern for this relationship.

Conclusions: Hospitality, the Feminine and Forgiveness

Based upon the details and implications of genre, this dissertation has aimed to show that Empedocles and Parmenides have a greater solidarity than is normally perceived, since the dialectical approach to their writings omits the rich semantic and symbolic network that situates their 'arguments'. To do this, I have relied heavily on the work of Gregory Nagy, whose close study of the oral composition of Homeric epic have revealed it to be primarily a social achievement rather than the artistic achievement of any single poet. The concern for this distinction disappears at least as early as Plato's arguments in *Ion*, where he unleashes his famous magnet analogy upon the *rhapsoidos*, depicting the singer's activity as the last and weakest in a chain leading back to the original genius of Homer. Plato's stance on the 'authorship' of Homeric epic is dictated by his well-documented campaign to shift the signification of *mimesis* from 'performance' to 'imitation' – which supports his ontology of resemblance – thereby undermining the poet's claim to wisdom by devaluing it as a mere copy of a copy.[1] Against this view, Nagy has shown that epic poetry was composed in performance across generations of rhapsodes to reach its final literary form. In the process, this activity produces a rich and subtle linguistic network in which content and theme are inseparable, a resource that illuminates every act of expression within the culture. I have offered various examples of how Empedocles and Parmenides draw from it in a coordinated effort that is indispensable to the meaning of their doctrines. This context also clarifies the nature of their relationship; Empedocles preserves Parmenides' doctrine not through repetition but through variation. This is precisely how the genre of the *rhapsoidos* works, not

[1] See Vernant 1991, Nagy 2002.

only to revise and intensify the tradition as a whole, but also in the competitions in which rhapsodes would perform successive movements of a single song.[2] This happened in accord with a model of *repetition* that was nothing like Plato's notion (in which a sensible copy reproduces an intelligible reality that is ontologically prior) but is rather reminiscent of Deleuzian repetition in which 'the original' is the latest iteration of a series. Rhapsodic repetition could not happen within a mode of privileging sameness; the spontaneity of revision in performance requires a valorization of difference, and the rhapsodic genre itself may be viewed as an accumulation or potency of this regard for difference.

This leads to the other side of my endeavor, which is to investigate how the anachronistic abridgement of the joint contribution of Parmenides and Empedocles – part of which involves its being parsed into the separate categories of monism and pluralism – is an expression of certain priorities that are necessary to the commencement of Western thought, are determinative of its trajectory and which constitute the limits of discourse with respect to what is deemed 'outside' of philosophy. This question is more open to debate, though it must be conversant with their disabled lexicon and its roots in an oral culture of performance and subtle allusion[3], and consequently aware of how its exclusion affects the reception of their doctrines and therefore determines the *form* of the original impetus to think. As mentioned above, Plato's *Sophist* is the major site whether the battle against Eleatic hospitality and its logic is waged (Plato specifically refers to this as 'armed combat') and won, but only in the sense that Plato is able to successfully transfer certain 'contents' of

[2] See Nagy's study of the Panathenaic festival (2002) in which he considers the evidence that Plato envisioned his *Timaeus* as besting the contributions of all rhapsodes in honoring the goddess Athena.

[3] The allusive power of epic poetry has only very recently begun to be recognized by classicists and owes a great deal to Nagy's work. See Nagy 1990, p. 2.

Parmenides' *act* of reference into a new genre wherein they are now only approachable as an *object* of reference. This is the birth of ontotheology. The critique of this mode of thought by contemporary philosophers is essentially an intuition of what has been lost in this transfer, though this critique emerges independently from the consideration of orality in the texts of Parmenides or Empedocles.

It is reasonable to expect that recovering this functioning lexicon would assist in the aims of deconstruction, since, after all, it is Derrida's claim that Plato's intelligible/sensible distinction inflicts an originary violence and exclusion that a postmetaphysical philosophy must learn to overcome.[4] In addition to correcting impressions about Parmenides and Empedocles, this lexicon provides a set of conceptual tools that help to address the question of what, specifically, has been violated and excluded. This can only be done by reinserting the doctrines of Parmenides and Empedocles where they truly belong and witnessing how their thought takes shape in the absence of restrictive dialectical distinctions. In turn, this helps to gain perspective on the full import of Plato's inauguration of a metaphysics of presence that is based upon the privileging of sameness over difference and the determination of *logos* as representation. Contemporary critique of 'logocentrism' is advanced by correcting the misimpression that it began with Parmenides; we have already examined the hints provided in Plato's dramaturgy that the assault upon otherness begins with dialectic.[5] Derrida's philosophical work is to bring attention back to the border between presence and absence, before they are situated as opposites and the latter is subordinated to the former.

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[4] For Derrida, Plato's reception of Parmenides initiates a schematic that, while profoundly fruitful, ultimately has a finite number of possibilities that history will eventually exhaust, bringing philosophy back to a question of its origins and limits.

[5] See Introduction.

This is precisely the encounter of hospitality that is guarded by the oral culture of the early Greeks. Plato's institution of dialectic effectively abolishes the otherness of being and nonbeing, whereas the logic of Parmenides preserves their irreducible and aporetic alterity.

In his later work, Derrida turns to religion. There is already a current of religiosity in Continental thought that is traceable back to Kierkegaard[6], but Derrida's thought is indispensable to the 'religious turn' that represents a fundamental shift in contemporary thought.[7] Derrida's reflections upon religion exhibit his characteristic concern for preserving *tension*, to be immobilized yet trembling from the pull of incompatible forces; he is constantly awaiting what is beyond the horizon of the present, totally other and foreign to the set of possibilities that are governed by a logic of the same. This involves a deep commitment to what might be called a '*sacred* hospitality'[8], an original piety without dogma that risks a 'religion without religion' that follows directly from the philosophy of deconstruction. The responsibility for holding oneself up to such risk Derrida finds to be undeconstructible. He is forever welcoming without rest; the subject of his call is forever poised between presence and absence: a prayer for the impossible. There is an eternity between the call and the answer, and the call is somehow already the answer. It is however as futile to attempt a summary of Derrida's thought as it is to try to summarize a performance; the effort inordinately destroys it. I can only hope to gesture in its direction,

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[6] See the very helpful introduction by John D. Caputo in his anthology *The Religious* (2002), where he lays out some landmark texts in Continental religious thought and provides examples of how the religious turn is expounded in contemporary discussion.

[7] For a discussion of this 'turn' that should not be confused with *re*turn, see Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*. See also Caputo and Scanlon (2001) who remark that "deconstruction is structured like a religion" in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*.

[8] See Derrida 2005 p. 375, where he remains committed to thinking this hospitality in terms of Abrahamic tradition.

and not without a certain trepidation for the injustice of such a highly abbreviated treatment, especially since I want to propose that this sacred hospitality has severed its own roots by so resolutely casting out the Greeks and forming itself according to Abrahamic tradition alone. In a few concluding remarks, which can really only be a beginning of a longer conversation, I would like to suggest some ways that Derrida's conception of hospitality (specifically where it overlaps with forgiveness) is powerfully enriched by the lost orality (its symbology, semantics and performative structure) of Parmenides and Empedocles, such that the context nourishing their doctrines – banished by dialectic – generates interesting questions involving the nature of this hospitality and how it may be further developed. It will perhaps represent an opening of a door.

How may we contribute to this discussion that is so vital to Derrida's later work? This is possible by examining how its structure is affected by emphasizing the role of the feminine within it.[9] If there is any such thing as an 'essence' of the feminine, it lies somewhere untouched by the historical failure or neglect of dialectic to account for its internal tension or indeterminacy. I hope to point to how this necessity informs the strange dynamic between hospitality and forgiveness by invoking a powerful narrative that touches every aspect of the Greek cosmos, preserves the intimacy of the encounter between life and death and enriches the significance of hospitality for the Greeks every bit as much as the relationship between Zeus and Apollo. This is the well-known story of Demeter and her daughter Persephone, which contains a fertile mystery of hospitality, profound grief (*akhos*), divine wrath (*mênis*) and the joy of reconciliation. It also characterizes the nature of the

[9] I have already mentioned above (see Introduction, note 39) that Derrida is willing to characterize the exemplary *host* in terms of the feminine. In what follows I hope to show that it is equally necessary to conceive of the *guest* in these terms as well, as provided within the religious structure of Greek hospitality.

feminine as *split*, subject to an unforgivable transgression that renders it absent to itself, burdened with a painful longing (*thumos*) to return to itself that reaches from one end of the cosmos to the other.[10] When Demeter finds out that her daughter has been violated by permission of Zeus, she removes herself from the divine community and makes herself an anonymous guest (*xenos*) among mortals. With invincible rage (*mênis*) she pledges to destroy the gods (who require the prayers of mortals) by destroying mortals (who require the sustenance of vegetation). The social significance of *mênis* for the early Greeks has been recently investigated by Leonard Muellner, who shows that it has the basic structure of a cosmic sanction performed through the anger of a wronged individual who thus refuses solidarity with the group (e.g. Achilles' removal from the rest of the Achaeans), inflicting great damage until this *mênis* has been propitiated.[11] What is most interesting about Demeter's time among mortals is (1) how the symbolism involved suggests that the perfection of hospitality is (again) acknowledged by the Greeks as the means to immortality and eternity, and (2) how there is a mysterious doubling of events between mother and daughter that suggests an identity between Demeter and Persephone that unifies them into a single feminine entity.[12] The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* depicts both as wronged guests, and

[10] Parmenides specifically refers to the powerful reach of this longing (*thumos*) in the first line of his Poem and identifies it as what allows him to transgress the limits of mortality to reach the eternal. For an excellent discussion of *thumos* in Parmenides see Kingsley 2003.

[11] See Muellner 1996 p. 8.

[12] One aspect of this doubling involves Demeter's strange decision (as a disguised nurse to a royal family) to take on the task of making their infant son immortal by covering him each night within "the *menos* of fire". We recall that for Empedocles, the shamanic act of retrieving the *menos* of "a man who has died" in fragment 111 (see Part 1.B above) explicitly echoes this association, as Hades is assigned the element of fire. Another aspect of the mysterious doubling involves Demeter's hiding of the seed (307), causing famine among humans, and the correlative event of Hades sneaking a pomegranate seed into the mouth of

this figure of the wronged guest establishes the cultural role of the host as a figure of blame.[13] Forgiveness (or the respite from *mênis*) can only be offered by the guest (*xenos*), a prerogative that helps account for the social and religious importance of the performance of hospitality among the Greeks.

Before applying this narrative of the transgressed feminine to Derrida's reflections upon hospitality and forgiveness, I will give brief evidence of its resonance within the texts of Parmenides and Empedocles, configuring them as a speech-event that intends to repair the injustice this narrative depicts and soothe the *mênis* of Demeter. An important indication is that Empedocles depicts the success of his *muthos* in terms of plant growth in fr. 71, which meant to echo the resumption of fertility following the joyful reunion of mother and daughter. The term he uses for wealth (*plouton*) in fr. 132, referring to the richness of his teaching, also appears at the end of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (489), where it is personified as a 'guest' set by the goddess to mortals who are initiated into her mysteries. Turning to Parmenides, we find that his encounter with the unnamed Goddess beyond the borders of life suggests that he makes this journey on behalf of Persephone, who is kidnapped by the 'Host of Many' while playing in a beautiful meadow (*leimona*, 417) filled with flowers that are 'a marvel to see' (*thauma idesthai*, 427). The meadow opens up underneath her; the sexual connotation of *leimonas* in the Greek has been noted[14], thereby

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Persephone, thereby ensuring that she must return to him. In other words, the punishment for the abduction of Persephone is mysteriously identical to the condition on behalf of which the punishment occurs – as if Demeter's hiding of the seed (Hades is the realm of the hidden, the invisible) places it directly into her daughter's mouth, thereby ensuring a new cycle of *mênis*.

[13] See the mention of Hades above, Part II.E.5.

[14] See Vernant 1991 p. 104, where the use of this word is also noted in the context of Odysseus listening to the enchanting song of the awful Sirens (*Od.* 12.158).

linking this word with the goddess Aphrodite. The phrase '*thauma idesthai*' is prominently attached to the goddess of love in the *Hymn to Aphrodite* (90) where the poet describes her irresistible captivation of the mortal, Anchises, who she has decided to mate with and who is consequently willing to pay the price of going to Hades for sleeping with her; in Empedocles we find what seems to be a deliberate allusion to the kidnapping of Persephone by Hades when he refers to "*the divided meadows (*leimonas*) of Aphrodite*" (fragment 66). Empedocles also refers to the cosmic mixture accomplished by Aphrodite as *thauma idesthai* in fr. 35. The implication of this beautiful and terrifying thematic overlapping of meadows, marvels and death (which is only available through the breadth of oral tradition that sustains these allusions) serves to suggest exactly what can be gathered from Empedocles' doctrine itself: that the motions of the physical world (*phusis*) are flawlessly captivating, drawing us into the horrifying trap of death (followed by another birth, and another death again and again, *ad infinitum*), and yet to the extent that we are familiar with the constancy of this motion and follow it intentionally – per fr. 26, the associations of which were explored in Part 3 above[15] - we encounter something motionless and eternal that is a profound blessing (*olbios*[16]) and may be equated with divine mercy: a relief from terror and *mênis* that is inherent in *phusis* itself. This is the *phren* of Apollo that is enacted by the hospitality of Parmenides and Empedocles.

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[15] see above Part III.C and note 24.

[16] Nagy (1990 p. 244) has shown the semantics of this word suggest the elusive wealth of the sage who transcends death. It appears in Empedocles fr. 132 in context of the cultivation of attention to *phrenes* or *prapides* (which he uses interchangeably):

> *Blesssed* (olbios) *is he who obtained wealth* (plouton) *in his divine* prapides,
> *and wretched (*deilos*) is he to whom belongs a darkling* (skotoessa) *opinion* (doxa) *of the gods*.

Apollo is the most direct indicator of this narrative's relevance. His close association with Hekate[17] - the intermediary between Demeter and absent Persephone – considered together with his characteristic attribute of *tension* and his cosmic role as an emblem of hospitality, suggests that (despite remaining unmentioned within the *Hymn to Demeter*) as the 'god of afar' who accomplishes an impossible presence in absence, Apollo is structured to bridge the distance instantaneously, and the extremities of this act correspond to the split between Demeter and Persephone, the tension inherent within the feminine for which a certain retribution is owed. The fact that Demeter's *mênis* takes the form of a threat to the link between gods and mortals, the very domain secured by Apollo, is evidence that his activity is meant to innovatively and impossibly counter and soothe the *mênis* of the transgressed feminine – a good reason for the chorus of goddesses who attend his birth in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.

Although we have moved very quickly through the richness of this Greek mystery of hospitality and mercy in relation to the feminine, it is enough to indicate that Parmenides and Empedocles have situated 'mind' within a framework that is consistent with many themes and concerns of post-deconstructive hospitality. This is significant because (as mentioned in the Introduction) Derrida very decidedly begins from and remains within the heritage of Abrahamic religion in investigating such concepts. But the call to hospitality itself begins from the very heritage that Derrida rejects as irredeemably metaphysical, and therefore his discussion of hospitality overlooks resources this heritage can provide. For Derrida, hospitality and forgiveness intersect at a certain tension point: forgiveness is an act of hospitality in that the host shows forgiveness by letting in the guest. But there is also an

[17] See above Part II.E.4.

equally important sense in which the host never shows enough hospitality, and his lack of preparation or welcoming is something for which he must ask forgiveness from his guest.[18] Eleatic hospitality exhibits tension, but this tension is located within perception itself as an awareness of the simultaneity of motion and motionlessness. This hospitality precedes that of Derrida in that it occurs on the level of the senses, transforming perception into a cosmic service. Within the structure of experience itself is a call to hospitality, and spatiality is only possible because of an original transgression that this hospitality seeks to mend. The challenge of integrating these two accounts of hospitality and forgiveness, the one Greek and the other Abrahamic, awaits further attention will have to unfold under separate scrutiny. Deconstruction contains a trace of a much more ancient hospitality, and the nature of this border between them requires an extended conversation that will hopefully benefit from the foundations provided here.

[18] Derrida 2002, p. 380-81.

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