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Parmenides, Plato, and Μίμησις

...ὅτι παλαιὰ μὲν τις διαφορὰ φιλοσοφία τε καὶ ποιητικῆ
 “for there is an ancient enmity between philosophy and poetry.”²

Evidence for a Parmenidean influence on Plato’s *Republic* typically focuses on content from Bks. V-VI, and the development of Plato’s Theory of Forms. This essay aims to suggest that Plato’s censorship of poetic content in Bks. II-III—particularly the rules for portraying divine nature (376e-383c)—also draw heavily upon the Eleatic tradition, particularly Parmenides’s.³ Identifying this further Eleatic influence will be enhanced by my own reading of Parmenides.⁴ This reading advocates understanding Parmenides in a more Xenophanean-vein—i.e. by taking What-Is to be an explication of the essential qualities of divine nature, and the overall poem as rejecting traditional, mythopoetic accounts of divinity.

Recognizing this Eleatic influence on the censorship of poetic content, a tension arises. For Plato infamously censors poetic styles next, concluding that mimetic dialogue may only be rarely employed, and only then in imitation of virtuous persons and actions (392c-398b). This would entail banning all poetic works relying exclusively on mimetic dialogue. Yet, not only do Plato’s own dialogues entirely consist of mimetic dialogue, so does Parmenides’s proto-dialogue. Furthermore, by so closely imitating Parmenides’s thought and language in *Republic*, has not Plato himself engaged in a type of intellectual and compositional μίμησις? Just as it would be strange to ban the very dialogue (*Republic*) which outlines and justifies Kallipolis in the first place, it would also be troubling to ban a philosophical work (i.e. Parmenides’s poem) which *Republic* is so heavily indebted to. Such a ban would also seem strongly at odds with Plato’s general reverence for Parmenides.⁵ In an attempt to address these tensions, I suggest that in *Republic* II-III, Plato’s lack of concern for banning philosophical works along with mimetic poetry should further suggest that he intends the ban to be far narrower than it first appears: as a rejection of *performative*, rather than *compositional*, μίμησις.

Parmenides’s Xenophanean-Theism:

Parmenides’s poem is traditionally divided into three main sections—*Proem*, *Reality* (Ἀλήθεια), and *Opinion* (Δόξα). The *Proem* opens with a young male (κοῦρος), describing his divinely-assisted cosmic chariot-ride to meet an unnamed didactic goddess. Upon his arrival, the poem permanently switches to the didactic goddess’s discourse. She expounds an epistemological and metaphysical discourse, aimed out outlining What-Is (an entity or type of entity which cannot come-to-be, perish, move, change, etc.). Completing her “trustworthy” exposition of What-Is, the goddess segues into an account (*Opinion*) of how mortals are mistaken about What-Is, which includes some (purportedly) “physics” passages (i.e. astronomical and cosmological activities).

The text of seems to require an overarching, unified message. Yet, the apparent disparity of the poem’s sections has failed to yield this, on orthodox interpretations. *Reality* is most commonly understood as an entirely secular, metaphysical discussion of either: (a) what the entire world is like (i.e. strict-monism), or (b) the essential nature which must be possessed by any fundamental being(s). However, these views of What-Is are quite difficult to reconcile with

the “physical” account found in *Opinion*.⁶ Even more troubling, I think, is how these approaches lack any substantial explanation for the *Proem*’s extensive mythopoetic content.⁷

I argue that the poem can be properly unified—by taking the *Proem*’s mythopoetic content seriously, and understanding What-Is to be a corrective account of divine nature. While it is true that no extant quotation from the poem explicitly identifies What-Is as “divine,” there is substantial indirect evidence for positing this attribution. First, ancient sources attest that Parmenides was a student/follower of Xenophanes, and the geographical and temporal evidence make this plausible.⁸ This intellectual heritage is actually quite likely, based upon their shared use of epic meter, in conjunction with the parallel descriptions of Xenophanes’s “Supreme-God” and Parmenides’s What-Is.⁹ Given Xenophanes’s extensive criticism of the mythopoetic tradition, and his apparent corrective on it in the description of his Supreme-God, it would not be surprising for Parmenides’s What-Is to serve a similar function—as several ancient commentators seem to hint at.¹⁰ This view of What-Is also fits well with the broader Presocratic tradition, wherein fundamental entities are commonly ascribed divine status, while holding similar qualities (eternal, unchanging, etc.).¹¹

The key textual evidence for this historical speculation lies in appreciating the long-overlooked presence of a theogony in *Opinion*. *Opinion* indisputably begins with the didactic-goddess describing how mortals have erred in “naming” two primordial forms (Light and Night), which constitute the world via mixing.¹² It is known from Simplicius that DK 12-13 soon followed this account.¹³ DK 12 introduces a cosmic-goddess, surrounded by rings of Light and Night, who controls “all things”—particularly sexual union (“mixing”- μίξις). This imagery, along with her explicit dominion over all “mixing,” strongly suggests she controls the mixing of Light/Night as well—a role confirmed by Simplicius.¹⁴ On similar reasoning, later passages about animal reproduction (DK 17-18) should also be considered under the cosmic-goddess’s control. DK 13 crucially asserts that the cosmic-goddess is the progenitor of all other deities, beginning with Eros.¹⁵ Given this, all the disparate content of *Opinion* can (and should) be tied-together into a cosmogonic-theogony.

The remaining passages from *Opinion* are most commonly associated with a “Parmenidean physics”: one about human cognition (DK 16), and the rest (DK 10-11, 14-19) which largely concern astronomical entities (Sun, Moon, Stars, Aether, Heaven, Milky Way, Olympus) and their activities. Though possible to take (at least many of) these as subjects for a physical account, they can even more readily be associated with divinity in the mythopoetic tradition. Imputing a “physics” into *Opinion*—especially one Parmenides would have endorsed—is precisely what raises interpretative tensions, since the text universally denigrates *Opinion*.¹⁶ As the text is explicitly clear that mortal views—i.e. *Opinion*—are what *Reality* is intended to correct, by framing *Opinion* as a cosmogonic-theogony in the mythopoetic tradition (*a la* Hesiod), a viable target for refutation is revealed, and interpretative tensions eliminated.¹⁷ On this reading mortals err by accepting mythopoetic explanations for the world, like those found in *Opinion*: dualistic, primordial forces being intentionally guided by a supreme controller-deity, one which causes new divinities/forces to come-to-be, and controls all other things—even thinking and reproduction. Only by accepting the account in *Reality*—that divine nature must be understood as eternal, changeless, and perfect in every way—can this error be avoided.

This view also provides a substantial interpretative function for the mythopoetic content of the *Proem*. While the *Proem's* content is never explicitly derided, the careful and intentional paralleling of its content with that in *Opinion* is telling. Just as *Opinion* calls Hesiod's theogony to mind, the *Proem's* content also invokes Homer and Hesiod, particularly in its descriptions of Tartarus (House of Night; Gates of Night and Day).¹⁸ *Opinion* introduced an unnamed cosmic-goddess near its beginning, and the *Proem* culminates with the introduction of the anonymous, didactic goddess. Both sections mention other divine beings, with lower status (e.g. Justice and Eros). An emphasis on light/night dualistic imagery pervades both sections—primordial (and certainly divine) forces in the mythopoetic tradition.¹⁹ Given the parallelism, and the clear denigration of *Opinion's* content as Parmenides's target, the *Proem* can be understood as identifying that target from the poem's inception—the mythopoetic tradition, and its conception of divinity.

Not only does this view avoid the problematic entailments of traditional interpretations (e.g. strict-monism), it provides a unified message for the poem that was sorely lacking. By linking Xenophanes and Parmenides more closely, an (early) "Eleatic" tradition emerges—a focus on challenging and correcting mythopoetic conceptions of divine nature. This can even begin to explain Plato's close association of these thinkers, as well as later accounts that aver both thinkers had focused on theological matters.²⁰ The following section outlines how this reading can also suggest a greater "Eleatic"—particularly Parmenidean—influence upon Plato.

Platonic Censorship of Poetic Content and Eleatic Μίμησις:

Early in *Republic*, an educational system for producing virtuous citizens in Kallipolis is developed.²¹ This will involve strict censorship of "musical" (μουσικός) education, beginning with restrictions on the content of mythopoetic "legends."²² These content restrictions include two broad rules for properly treating the nature of the gods—rules which closely track early Eleatic views.

The first broad rule is that divine nature is completely good, lacking any evil (R1).²³ R1 has two sub-rules. First, gods should never be portrayed as engaging in vicious activities or conflicts among themselves (R1a).²⁴ Plato's paradigm violation of R1a—Kronos's vengeful castration of his father Ouranos—closely tracks a passage from Xenophanes.²⁵ The Ouranian castration is the foundational conflict for the Titans, and Plato bans this story on the grounds of securing virtue. Compare how Xenophanes praises those who refrain from relating the "lies of our fathers" (πλάσματα τῶν προτέρων)—in particular, violent conflicts between the Titans, Giants, and Centaurs—as men who "strive toward virtue" (τόνος ἀμφ' ἀρετῆς)²⁶ While nothing specifically addresses these themes in Parmenides, taking What-Is to properly explicate divine nature would also entail that no such stories could be true.

The second sub-rule is that no evils come to mortals from gods, only good (R1b). To defend this, Socrates deploys a deductive "Argument from Omnibenevolence" in relation to "the God's true nature" (ὁ θεὸς ὧν).²⁷ From the initial premise that God must be (omni-) benevolent by definition, it would be a contradiction for any evil/harm to come from him. Two aspects of Plato's use of language suggest an Eleatic influence here. First is the rather strange shift by Plato from the plural ("gods") to a singular subject ("god" - θεός), particularly in conjunction with the direct object ("the" - ὁ). The persistence of this usage throughout the passages seems intentional and meaningful.²⁸ Plato's association of the Eleatic thinkers with the doctrine that "all is one"

might explain the singular usage.²⁹ Whatever this thesis ultimately meant, it is undeniably related to the nature of divinity in the case of Xenophanes, and *ex hypothesi*, Parmenides as well.³⁰ The second linguistic parallel is Plato's participial use. Rather than using nouns like φύσις or ἰδέα, to indicate "nature," Plato deploys the masculine nominative singular participle of εἰμί (ᾧν). The phrase 'ὁ θεὸς ᾧν' literally reads as "the God's being," but must mean something like "the essential nature of the God" here. Similarly, Parmenides regularly employs neuter-singular participle forms of εἰμί (τό ἐόν) to discuss the nature of What-Is.³¹ Furthermore, the ascription of omnibenevolence to divinity also fits better with Parmenides. Xenophanes's universal denial of anthropomorphism and criminal viciousness in divine nature could certainly suggest such a view.³² However, Xenophanes's "Supreme God" shakes (κραδαίνει) all things with its mind, implying that God is responsible for *all* things, good and evil. While Parmenides's cosmic-goddess also "controls all things," as part of *Opinion*, it is to be rejected as a flawed mortal view—and on my reading, an erroneous attribution to divinity. By denying this view of divinity, Parmenides avoids attributing the sort of global control and involvement to divine nature that entails responsibility for evil.³³

The second general rule—the divine does not deceive in any way (R2)—is also divisible into two sub-rules. The first sub-rule is that God is not a "magician," capable of changing its form/appearance, and thereby deceiving mortals (R2a).³⁴ As justification, Socrates avers that for any change, there must be a sufficient cause, either internal or external. Second, he posits that any divine being is the best in every way (πάντη ἄριστα)—i.e. perfect—by definition. Since the best entities of any kind are the least susceptible to corruption (i.e. change), as perfect beings, nothing external could ever corrupt (i.e. change) a god. Similarly, no perfect being would have an internal desire (i.e. cause) to change, since no entity desires to become less perfect, which any change would entail. Thus, given divine perfection, divinity is unchanging—i.e. there is only one form for gods, which must always be maintained.³⁵

Xenophanes undeniably preceded Plato in associating immutability with divine nature, denying any change in form or location to his Supreme-God.³⁶ And even on traditional views of Parmenides, there is a clear parallel between R2a and Parmenides's denial of change for What-Is; yet, accepting What-Is to also be divine helps tighten the parallels. There are also similarities in argumentation, as both Plato and Parmenides use a definitional premise ("currently exists" and "perfect," respectively) to argue that no sufficient cause could make their respective entities change.³⁷ Of course, there are also important differences; but even these are telling. Parmenides's approach requires arguing for the eternity of What-Is first, and then proceeds to also derive immutability of form, unity, and ultimately, perfection (τετελεσμένον).³⁸ Plato's argument runs in a reverse-parallel, taking divine perfection as the given, to deduce immutability of form. It is likely that, without the work of his Eleatic predecessors challenging the mythopoetic tradition, Plato could not use divine perfection as an uncontroversial starting point.

The second sub-rule is that the gods do not deceive mortals through their words (R2b).³⁹ Thus, unlike Hesiod's Muses, the gods never engage in deceptive speech or action.⁴⁰ Xenophanes explicitly rejects poetic stories in which the gods deceive one another, and thus he would also likely have no truck with stories of gods deceiving mortals.⁴¹ Similarly, taking Parmenides's poem to be a rejection of anthropomorphism in the mythopoetic tradition would also require that divinity not engage in deceptive behavior.⁴²

Beyond the parallels in each sub-rule, a more global case can be made for a Parmenidean influence in these passages by considering their similarity to Plato's Theory of Forms. Plato regularly uses the terms εἶδος, and especially ἰδέα, to talk about the Forms; and both terms first appear together in the requisite sense when the immutability of divinity is introduced (380d).⁴³ In fact, it would be reasonable to take these passages as developing a "Form of the God," and thus a first-pass at the broader theory. The description of divine nature in R1—particularly as the font of all goodness and nothing evil—closely parallels the nature of the Form of the Good. This is particularly evident in the Analogy of the Sun. There, the Form of the Good is the cause of, and means by which, goodness is possible in the world;⁴⁴ however, it is also implied to be divine in nature, like the Sun is.⁴⁵ The immutability of divine nature in R2a depends upon divine perfection. So, just as the Form of the Good occupies the highest hierarchical position amongst the Forms, the form of divine nature—being the finest and best (i.e. perfect)—also stands above all others.⁴⁶ R2a explicitly introduces "form" language—the gods do not change their appearance, but have only one unchanging form (presumably unseen by mortals).⁴⁷ Similarly, the Forms always remain the same and unchanging, only to be thought of and never seen.⁴⁸ This emphasis on a singular divine form—like the singular transcendent nature of each universal Form—may also help make sense of Plato's curious switch from plural to singular in explicating the "nature of the God." R2 even suggests epistemic parallels: the gods do not deceive mortals by altering appearance (R2a), or from their actions (R2b), just as the Forms do not ever deceive—they are the sole source of steady and unchanging knowledge.⁴⁹

By accepting Parmenides's What-Is to be divine, the immutability of divine nature becomes a focal theme of (early) Eleaticism. This view can also reveal a far deeper Eleatic influence within the early books of Plato's *Republic*. In fact, it allows a sort of diachronic progression through early Eleatic views to be imposed upon Plato's own rejection of the mythopoetic tradition. Beginning with explicit moralistic views of Xenophanes (R1a), Plato transitions to views likely shared by both Eleatics (R1b-R2b), while relying more heavily upon uniquely Parmenidean language, argumentation, and ontology—thus mirroring the Forms—as he progresses. However, what does accepting such an intellectual debt to Eleaticism in general, and Parmenides in particular, suggest for Plato's ensuing arguments against poetic μίμησις—especially given that Parmenides wrote mimetic poetry?

Parmenides and Platonic Censorship of Μίμησις:

While Plato's initial arguments against μίμησις seem rather straightforward at first, the scope and implications are ambiguous.⁵⁰ Socrates first clarifies that there are three types of narratives in which poetry can be performed. Simple Narrative (SN) is found in dithyramb, where an author/bard speaks as himself, never using dialogue of or imitating another character or person. Imitative Narrative (IN) is the sort found in theater (comedy/tragedy), consisting entirely of character dialogue, which when performed, require the author/bard/actor to speak imitatively, as if someone else (i.e. "in character). Epic poetry is paradigmatic of the Mixed Narrative (MN), using both SN and IN within a single work.

Poetic compositions employing pure IN, though they may delight, often resort to vicious or inappropriate imitations, arousing the passions in a manner deleterious for virtuous characters. Thus, pure IN is strictly banned from Kallipolis (i.e. no comedies or dramas allowed). As SN entirely avoids the affective perils of IN, it is judged to be the best of all three poetic styles,

and always to be preferred. However, not all μίμησις is deemed inappropriate. For it is quite appropriate that citizens of Kallipolis—especially its guardians—imitate virtuous persons and actions. Thus, MN will also be allowed, so long as the imitative aspects remain both rare and virtuous.⁵¹

It is certainly conceivable that Plato might truly wish to ban theater and traditional epic poetry from Kallipolis—after all, they do present alternative educational venues, which may very well need to be tightly controlled to insure virtuous persons.⁵² Yet, it seems quite troubling to ban philosophical works from Kallipolis—the ideal city founded upon, and for, philosophy. It is even more difficult to accept a ban on the very works the conception of Kallipolis depends upon (i.e. *Republic* and Parmenides’s poem). That the ban would include Parmenides—especially after Plato has just drawn so heavily upon Parmenides’s thought—seems especially problematic.⁵³

The first issue to consider is that neither Parmenides’s poem nor Plato’s dialogues neatly fit the triad classification of compositional styles. Plato’s dialogues are just that—dialogues, constituted entirely by the very sort of imitative character speech that seems problematic for IN. Plato does frame his argument exclusively against *poetic* styles, and Plato wrote in prose; yet, why should the (lack of) meter matter, if the danger is a composition’s mimetic qualities? As written, the compositional style of a dialogue is identical to any dramatic or comedic screenplay, in that both consist of purely mimetic “speech,” and at least *could* be performed mimetically (“in-character”). And even if a dialogue is never performed, do readers not often also “imitate” the characters on the page, in their minds if not in spoken word? On the other hand, Parmenides did write in poetic meter. It might first appear that by allowing MN—which is associated with epic poetry—Parmenides’s poem is safe. However, just like Plato’s dialogues, Parmenides’s poem exclusively contains mimetic speech—and thus presents the same dangers. Even were the entirety of the poem considered to contain virtuous imitation, the injunction to only use mimetic speech rarely would still be violated.⁵⁴ If Plato intends his ban of IN to be universal, applied to all literary works which exclusively (or even too often) consist of mimetic speech, then it seems there is no defense to be made for allowing the works of either Plato or Parmenides.

Fortunately, there are reasons to think Plato has a far narrower target in mind. First, it is simply *prima facie* absurd that Plato would ban philosophical works—Parmenides’s or his own. Second, Plato never seems to consider how philosophical works might be affected by this ban, and it is unlikely he simply failed to recognize the worry. Given this, it seems reasonable to posit that he didn’t intend for his ban to threaten philosophical works at all. This charitable approach, in conjunction with his explicit targeting of both drama and traditional epic poetry, recommends focusing on the relevant differences between these types of compositions—particularly their traditional method of delivery.

A culturally relevant distinction can be made, between mimetic dialogue that is both written and: a) intended only to be *read* silently (compositional μίμησις—CM), and b) that which is intended to be *performed* in-character (performative μίμησις—PM). Plato’s dialogues would be a clear instance of CM. While it would be possible to perform them, it simply wasn’t done, and likely never considered. However, in ancient Greek culture, epic poetry and theatre are understood essentially in terms of PM. If Plato only finds PM problematic for virtue, and his arguments only implicate it and not CM, then his own works (and other philosophical writings) are safe.

That Plato uses the term ‘μίμησις’ to exclusively target PM is supported by several considerations. First, note the aforementioned explicit targeting of poets (e.g. Homer, Hesiod) and theater (drama and tragedy)—No author/work is mentioned which were not actually performed. Precisely how Plato talks about μίμησις in this context is also notable. In describing IN, poetry is always something “spoken,” and poets/actors are only mimetic when they liken themselves to the characters in speech and action.⁵⁵ Mimetic poetry is to be “heard,” “seen,” and/or “acted out.”⁵⁶ There is no mention or hint of poetry as something silently read. This strongly suggests that is not *mimēsis simpliciter*, or even poetic compositions as written, which Plato seeks to ban. It is not reading the written word that concerns Plato. Rather, it is oral mimetic *performance*, which for Plato, is essential to poetry; people *acting* like the characters as written, and the passive audiences’ passions leading them to adopt vicious habits from such performances. PM comes too close to reality, and too readily leads the soul astray.⁵⁷

Narrowing Plato’s mimetic target to PM is certainly not a novel approach to these passages. Havelock, if not the seminal proponent, is the most influential defender along these lines in the literature; but many others have followed him, to some degree or another.⁵⁸ This approach can certainly help explain why Plato never seems concerned with the mimetic qualities of his own works, and their entailed ban from Kallipolis. Yet, it has not been explicitly noticed how this view would save other Presocratic works, such as Parmenides’s poem. Does this interpretation of the ban save his poem from it? Could an analysis of why help support an interpretation of Plato along these lines? To answer these questions, it must be determined whether Parmenides’s poem fits PM or CM.

It is a longstanding controversy whether Parmenides’s poem was intended to be performed. The primary reasoning behind imputing PM to the poem is the use of epic meter, given that style’s associated usefulness for memorization by an audience. If Parmenides’s poem were PM, then it would not be very helpful for supporting the PM/CM distinction for the ban. The poem would have to be banned, and the tensions between Plato heavily borrowing from Parmenides in early books of *Republic*, only to immediately thereafter ban that influential source, would remain—and Plato would be left seemingly unaware of banning the work of someone he so revered. On the other hand, Plato’s silence and apparent lack of concern can be taken as suggestive; a further reason to impute CM to Parmenides’s poem—at least, from Plato’s perspective. In this case, Plato’s silence would support the PM/CM distinction in the ban, since a focus on banning PM would not suggest anything be said about Parmenides. On my reading of Parmenides, the use of epic meter can also be explained—as indicating a target, rather than imitating a mode of actual delivery—without needing to cast the poem as an instance of PM. Of course, a distinction needs to be made here between what Plato *thought* about whether Parmenides’s poem was performed, and whether it *actually* ever was. It is entirely possible that both of the following are simultaneously true: (1) Parmenides did write his poem with public performance in mind, and perhaps even actually delivered it that way, and (2) by Plato’s time, it is not considered a performative work, and thus Plato did not associate it with the “live” PM works he was targeting.

¹ Jeremy DeLong (Ph.D. Philosophy; MA Classics). Jeremy's first contribution to the *Heritage of Western Greece* series—"From Ionian Speculation to Eleatic Deduction: Parmenides' Xenophanean-Based Theism"—was largely derived from his dissertation, "Parmenides' Theistic Metaphysics" (2016). This essay builds upon that project. Other publications on Parmenides include: "Parmenides," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (IEP-2016); "Rearranging Parmenides: B1: 31-32 and a Case for an Entirely Negative Doxa (Opinion)," *Southwest Philosophy Review* 31.1 (2015). jeremydelong@sbcglobal.net.

² *Rep.* 607b.

³ Cf. John A Palmer, *Plato's Reception of Parmenides* (Oxford University Press, 1999); Ian Crystal, "Parmenidean Allusions in Republic V," *Ancient Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (1996).

⁴ Jeremy DeLong, "From Ionian Speculation to Eleatic Deduction: Parmenides' Xenophanean-Based Theism," in *Politics and Performance in Western Greece: Essays on the Hellenic Heritage of Sicily and Southern Italy*, ed. Heather Reid; Davide Tanasi, *The Heritage of Western Greece* (Sioux City: Parnassos Press, 2017), 221-236 .

⁵ Consider Plato's worry in *Theaetetus* at trying to understand Parmenides properly, a thinker who is both "venerable" (αἰδοῖός), "awesome" (δεινός), and possessing "an entirely noble depth of mind" (πάνυ νέος πάνυ πρεσβύτερ). 183e-184a.

⁶ For a general summary of variant positions and their challenges, see: Jeremy DeLong, "Parmenides," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (IEP); John Palmer, "Parmenides," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (SEP).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ DeLong, "Ionian Speculation," 221-222.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 223-4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 225-27.

¹¹ For example, Anaximenes' naturalistic *aer* is described as "divine" (DK A10). Anaximander's *apeiron* is a divine being, eternal and indestructible, which "steers all things" much like *Opinion's* cosmic-goddess (DK A15). All references of the form "DK X##" refer to the standard collection of Presocratic texts, and the appropriate grouping and number for each ancient thinker therein, by: Hermann and Kranz Diels, W., *Die Fragmente Der Vorsokratiker Griechisch Und Deutsch*, 6th Edition ed., vol. 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1952).

¹² DK B8.50-61, 9.

¹³ Simplicius. *Comm. on Physics* 39, 10-20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ DeLong, "Ionian Speculation," 227-32.

¹⁷ That *Reality* is a corrective on *Opinion* is most evident at the introduction of the "naming error" (DK B8.34-41). However, the identification of *Opinion* as a mortal account, and the general denigration of mortal views, pervades the entire poem.

¹⁸ Cf. A. P. D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2008), Ch. 1.

¹⁹ Jeremy C DeLong, "Parmenides' Theistic Metaphysics" (University of Kansas, 2016), 129-34.

²⁰ *Sophist* 242d. DeLong, "Ionian Speculation," 225-27.

²¹ One might think that the ensuing censorship applies only to childhood consumption. However, the arguments regularly make it clear that the same is inappropriate for citizens of all ages, and will be banned entirely. Cf. 380b-c; 383c; 398a-d.

²² *Rep* 376c-398b.

²³ *Rep* 380c.

²⁴ *Rep.* 377e-378e.

²⁵ DK B1, B6-B7.

²⁶ DK B1.

²⁷ *Rep* 379a-380c.

²⁸ *Rep* 379a-379c.

²⁹ *Sophist* 242d. *Parmenides* 128a-b.

³⁰ Aristotle reports that Xenophanes held the entire cosmos to be one thing, which is “God.” B23; A30, *Metaphysics* 1.5 986b10-25. I remain agnostic on whether Xenophanes or Parmenides held that “all is one”—what matters here is whether Plato thought they did, and whether he held that view to be related to divinity.

³¹ The choice of the neuter participle can be understood in several ways in relation to What-Is as divine. It could simply be a logical extension of denying anthropomorphic qualities, wherein Parmenides denies the divine has any gender (a move which Plato does not follow). Parmenides could also be understood as referring to “the nature of divine being,” just as Plato must be using the participle here—and that for Parmenides, the essential nature of divinity (*qua* divinity) lacks gender, while any actual divine being instantiating that nature might contingently possess a gender.

³² DK B1, B6-7.

³³ DK B12.3. πάντα κυβερνᾷ.

³⁴ *Rep.* 380c-381e.

³⁵ *Rep.* 381c.

³⁶ DK B26.

³⁷ Parmenides is often credited as the first to develop a version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason. DK8.5-11.

³⁸ DK B8.42-49.

³⁹ *Rep.* 382a-383c

⁴⁰ Hesiod, 27. ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα.

⁴¹ DK B11-12.

⁴² One might worry about the didactic goddess’s “deceptive account” here; yet, this is not a problem, so long as the goddess is not taken to endorse the ensuing account, or mislead the youth into accepting it. It is not deceptive to didactically warn someone of how they might otherwise be deceived.

⁴³ ἄρα γόητα τὸν θεὸν οἶει εἶναι καὶ οἷον ἐξ ἐπιβουλῆς φαντάζεσθαι ἄλλοτε ἐν ἄλλαις ιδέαις τοτὲ μὲν αὐτὸν γιγνόμενον, καὶ ἀλλάττοντα τὸ αὐτοῦ εἶδος εἰς πολλὰς μορφάς, τοτὲ δὲ ἡμᾶς ἀπατῶντα καὶ ποιοῦντα περὶ αὐτοῦ τοιαῦτα δοκεῖν, ἢ ἀπλοῦν τε εἶναι καὶ πάντων ἡκιστα τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ιδέας ἐκβαίνειν. Cf. also 402c, where the forms of virtues are first mentioned, and 505a, introducing the Form of the Good (τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ιδέα).

⁴⁴ *Rep.* 509b.

⁴⁵ *Rep.* 508a: τίνα οὖν ἔχεις αἰτιάσασθαι τῶν ἐν οὐρανῷ θεῶν τούτου κύριον...τὸν ἥλιον γὰρ δηλον ὅτι ἐρωτᾷς. 517d. εἰ ἀπὸ θείων... Cf. *Phaedo* 80a-b.

⁴⁶ *Rep.* 380d-381e

⁴⁷ *Rep.* 381c. ἀδύνατον ἄρα, ἔφην, καὶ θεῶ ἐθέλειν αὐτὸν ἀλλοιοῦν, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἔοικε, κάλλιστος καὶ ἄριστος ὦν εἰς τὸ δυνατόν ἕκαστος αὐτῶν μένει ἀεὶ ἀπλῶς ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ μορφῇ.

⁴⁸ *Rep.* 479a ...μὲν καλὸν καὶ ιδέαν τινὰ αὐτοῦ κάλλους μηδεμίαν ἠγεῖται ἀεὶ μὲν κατὰ ταῦτα ὡσαύτως ἔχουσιν. 507b. καὶ αὐτὸ δὴ καλὸν καὶ αὐτὸ ἀγαθόν, καὶ οὕτω περὶ πάντων ἃ τότε ὡς πολλὰ ἐτίθεμεν, πάλιν αὖ κατ’ ιδέαν μίαν ἐκάστου ὡς μιᾶς οὐσης τιθέντες, ὃ ἔστιν’ ἕκαστον προσαγορεύομεν...τάς δ’ αὖ ιδέας νοεῖσθαι μὲν, ὀρᾶσθαι δ’ οὐ παντάπασιν μὲν οὔν. Cf. *Sophist* 78c-d, 79d.

⁴⁹ *Rep.* 477a-480a.

⁵⁰ *Rep.* 392c-398b.

⁵¹ *Rep.* 395c-396e.

⁵² Or, perhaps, to even prevent attacks on philosophy (e.g. *Clouds*), which lead to the death of philosophers (i.e. Socrates).

⁵³ The concerns with Plato’s self-censorship been widely recognized. For another essay in this collection that directly addresses this issue, see: Francisco J. Gonzalez, “The Philosophical Use of Mimesis.”

⁵⁴ Plato’s argument only expressly allows the words and actions of virtuous *men* to be rarely imitated—nothing about goddesses. One might argue that the philosopher-youth’s speech is not “mimetic,” if this character *is* Parmenides, describing his own experience. However, even this would only make a very small portion of lines “non-mimetic,” and only when the poem is read silently (or aloud by Parmenides himself).

⁵⁵ *Rep.* 393c, 395d-396b.

⁵⁶ *Rep.* 397a, 398a.

⁵⁷ *Rep.* 395c-d. Cf. Carolina Araujo’s essay in this volume.

⁵⁸ Eric A Havelock, *Preface to Plato*, vol. 1 (Harvard University Press, 2009).