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Chloe Balla (University of Crete)♦

ZENO AND ANTILOGIC*

Abstract. This paper sheds light on Plato's representation of Zeno in the *Phaedrus* as a master of antilogic. It examines the evidence in the *Phaedrus* drawing attention to a certain *distribution of labour* between the followers of Palamedes, who practice antilogic, on the one hand and those of Nestor and Odysseus, who practice logography, on the other. I suggest that the reason for which Plato prefers to associate Zeno with antilogic rather than Protagoras, who might strike *us* as an obvious choice, is that the former, unlike the latter, would serve the purposes of his *Socratic apologetics*, removing from his teacher the reputation that Aristophanes' *Clouds* had bequeathed him. This reading ties in with and draws support from Zeno's remarks concerning the nature of his book in the *Parmenides*, a dialogue that Plato intends us to understand as a prequel that—again along the lines of an apologetic agenda—claims Socrates' philosophical pedigree establishing his ties with the Eleatic tradition.

Keywords: Antilogic, writing, rhetoric, sophistry, logography, Socratic apologetics.

1. Introduction

Did Plato consider Zeno as a sophist? Why is it that in the *Phaedrus* Socrates associates him, presumably disguised as the Eleatic Palamedes, as an expert in antilogic? How is the account of the *Phaedrus* related to that of the *Parmenides* in which, as an older contemporary of Socrates, Zeno trained

♦ Address for correspondence: Gallou Campus, Department of Philosophy and Social Studies, University of Crete, Rethymno 74100, Greece. Email: balla@uoc.gr.

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Plato's teacher in that skill? Did Plato intend his *Parmenides* as a *prequel* to dialogues that establish his portrayal of Socrates? Did Plato's intention further involve the demarcation between those who, presumably like Protagoras, used the practice of *antilogia* in order to instill to their students the skills that would allow them to address large assemblies from those who, presumably like Socrates and Zeno, used it, in a more private way, to exercise their reasoning on any subject? In what follows I will attempt to answer these questions or at least to reconstruct some of the evidence that allows us to understand Plato's representation of Zeno.

2. Text and context

In the *Phaedrus* Plato talks about an Eleatic Palamedes, whom he describes as an expert in ἀντιλογική (antilogic), and attributes to him the skill of making *the same things appear to listeners similar and dissimilar, one and many, and again at rest and in motion.*[1]

This reference to the Eleatic Palamedes occurs a few lines after Socrates has proposed a new understanding of rhetoric as an art that leads the soul through words,[2] addressing people, not only large groups in court or other public occasions but also privately and dealing with any kind of matter, regardless of its importance. Socrates' new account of rhetoric sounds strange to Phaedrus, who remarks that he is rather familiar with the practice of the art that concerns courts or other speeches at the assembly. Phaedrus' surprise is hardly surprising. Even if Phaedrus was unable to produce offhandedly a definition of rhetoric,[3] he was, like any of his contemporary Athenians, naturally puzzled by Socrates' attempt to dissociate it from the public sphere, in which, as Plato himself had shown in the *Gorgias*, lay its practitioners' normal field of interest. I would like to suggest that by expanding the field to include public and private matters Plato in the *Phaedrus* wants to show how close his teacher Socrates was to a certain conception of a *rehabilitated* art of words or rhetoric[4] and at the same time how he differed from its ordinary practitioners. For, unlike Socrates, the latter reduced the art to a series of written manuals—described as *Arts*—paid no attention to the individual soul of the addressee and dealt only with seemingly important topics, confining themselves to what looked plausible, without, as Plato is going to suggest, making any claim to the truth of the matter. For Socrates, by contrast, knowledge of the individual interlocutor is an essential part of dialectic—a practice that makes no serious use of writing and, again unlike rhetoric, aims at truth. Moreover, it seems that for Socrates the

[1] LM R3/A13 [= Plato, *Phaedrus* 261d].

[2] Plato, *Phaedrus* 261a7–8: ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων.

[3] Or demarcate it from other practices and techniques like antilogic and eristic, let alone from philosophy and dialectic. Even if Plato, pace E. Schiappa, *Did Plato coin* rhêtorikê*?*, did not coin the term *rhêtorikê*, its definition was probably far from clear.

[4] From Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.31, we may infer that Socrates was regarded, presumably among other experts, as a practitioner of λόγων τέχνη, the art of words or arguments.

search for truth may start from conversations on *prima facie* mundane, trivial matters, often with ordinary people.[1]

In what follows, I propose to show how the invocation of the Eleatic Palamedes fits the distinction between *ordinary* practitioners of rhetoric and Socrates.

3. Palamedes vs Nestor and Odysseus

Scholars have taken the invocation of the mythic warrior Palamedes in *Phaedrus* as a reference to Zeno, whose paradoxes were in fact dealing with the technique Socrates associates with antilogic.[2] But in order to understand the significance of the parallel in the context of the *Phaedrus*, we need to cast Zeno's characterization as Palamedes within a broader analogy that Plato draws between various Homeric heroes and rhetorical practices. This analogy is introduced a few lines earlier, when Socrates talks about the arts of Nestor and Odysseus, whom Phaedrus readily recognizes as allusions to professional rhetoricians like Gorgias, Thrasymachus and Theodorus.[3] According to Socrates' account, those who follow the lead of Nestor and Odysseus are his contemporary logographers: their teaching relies on written set-speeches, known as *Arts*, that their prospective students consult or imitate. Plato's *Phaedrus* is our earliest and most valuable—though likely rather biased—source of information about the currency of such handbooks. Phaedrus' rehearsal of Lysias' epideictic speech on love in the beginning of the dialogue is an obvious allusion to this practice, which throughout the dialogue serves as the foil to Socratic *dialectic*. Towards the end of the dialogue, Socrates comes back to the difference between written and oral speech and argues in favour of the latter.

By contrast, Gorgias, Protagoras, Prodicus, Hippias, and Thrasymachus, major sophists that we describe as *canonical* and whose contribution to the study of form and style was presumably recognizable, are cited as contributors to what Plato downplays as a type of rhetoric that is virtually reduced to logography—the type of rhetoric that he associates with Nestor and Odysseus. Zeno, on the other hand, is mentioned—or alluded to—as a contributor to the rehabilitated type of rhetoric that Socrates envisages. Thus, unlike the followers of Nestor and Odysseus, who rely on and imitate written texts—Phaedrus reciting the text of Lysias in the beginning of the dialogue who is an obvious case in point—the followers of Palamedes—or rather the followers of Palamedes as Socrates envisages them in the present context[4]—are expected to have knowledge of what each thing the speaker talks about really is. For, in order to be

[1] On Socrates' interest in such mundane topics, see Plato, *Gorgias* 491a, Plato, *Symposium* 221e & Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.37. For further discussion of the evidence regarding Socrates' association with laymen, see R. Sobak, *Sokrates among the Shoemakers*.

[2] See Plato, *Phaedrus* 261d.

[3] See Plato, *Phaedrus* 261b–c.

[4] For the purposes of his argument, Plato sets aside *professional practitioners of debate* like Protagoras, or the Aristophanic Socrates, whom—with the hindsight of his distinctions in the *Sophist*—he would consider as mere impostors.

effective, the orator who uses his skill of ἀντιλογική will need to have knowledge of his subject matter: *Could someone then that doesn't know what each thing is ever have the art to lead others little by little through similarities away from what is the case on each occasion to its opposite? Or could he escape this done to himself?*[1]

A negative answer to the above questions—which is the answer Socrates expects to receive—leads in turn to the following *aporia*: what are the implications of Socrates' requirement concerning the knowledge possessed by the *antilogikos* for his assessment of the technical practice of debate that many of his contemporaries would likely associate with Protagoras?[2] This question becomes more perplexing once we notice that, despite Protagoras' obvious expertise in ἀντιλογίαι, Plato in the *Phaedrus* presents him as a mere logographer and prefers to mention Zeno as a thinker that Socrates' interlocutor would recognize, under his disguise as Eleatic Palamedes, as an obvious champion of ἀντιλογική.

The most obvious answer to the above question could be that Zeno was, already among his contemporaries, considered as the father of ἀντιλογική and that he introduced a skill that was later developed by and was associated with its most famous expert, Protagoras. That answer seems to tie in with the testimony of Plutarch, who mentions Zeno as Pericles' teacher in antilogy[3] and presents Protagoras as an associate or friend with whom Pericles practiced argumentation on opposite sides regarding a putative court case. In this account, a more philosophically inclined intellectual like Zeno introduced an art of reasoning and argumentation that was originally implemented in the study of *loftier, ontological* subjects—evidence for such implementation can be found in the Hippocratic treatise *De Natura Hominis*, which interestingly also alludes to Eleatic thought—and was then borrowed or, depending on one's point of view, hijacked by sophists who focused more specifically on the practical applications of argumentation, notably at the people's assembly and popular law-courts.

One problem with this account is that it relies on several distinctions that post-date the thinkers on whom they are supposed to apply. It is unlikely that the terms *antilogic, eristic* and *dialectic* as well as the distinction between sophistry or rhetoric on the one hand and philosophy on the other, or that between a more practical as opposed to a more academic professional orientation, were used by fifth century intellectuals.[4] Focusing on the case of antilogic, it seems more likely that the adjective ἀντιλογικός was originally used as a term of abuse. It is also possible that Plato coined the term ἀντιλογική to describe what he thought of as a *buffer zone*, or even an interface, between philosophy and sophistry; and that his interest in establishing and demarcating this *buffer zone* was dictated by what we may describe as an agenda of Socratic apolo-

[1] Plato, *Phaedrus* 262b5–9, tr. A. Nehamas & P. Woodruff.

[2] Many sources, including those that cite *Ἀντιλογίαι* as a title of a book written by him may suggest that Protagoras should be the most obvious example of an expert and possibly also a pioneer in the skill that Plato in the *Phaedrus* describes as ἀντιλογική.

[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Pericles* 4.5.

[4] See M.-Y. Lee, *Skills of Argument* & A. Nehamas, *Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic, Dialectic ...* .

getics. For even if Plato had thought of Aristophanes' representation of his teacher in the *Clouds* as an exaggeration, members of the audience of the play would probably see no difference between Socrates' teaching practice and that of Protagoras.[1] It is thus tempting to see Plato's attempt to *anchor* ἀντιλογική to Eleatic thought as part of his effort to distinguish the man who shaped his own philosophical vision from various self-proclaimed teachers of *logoi* that many of his contemporaries would recognize as sophists. One difficulty that this anchoring needs to face is to square its *narrative*, according to which the origins of ἀντιλογική can be traced to Eleatic thought, with the bulk of evidence showing that people like Protagoras were considered as experts in a particular type of argument that was based on the juxtaposition of opposed speeches. But the difficulty is removed once we appreciate the subtlety of Plato's move. By pointing to a new understanding of ἀντιλογική that departs from the practice that his contemporaries were likely to associate with Protagoras, Plato introduces a new quasi-philosophical pedigree for the art that, as readers of the *Parmenides* will find out, shaped Socrates' intellectual formation. Critical for this departure is Plato's introduction in the *Phaedrus* of a wedge between an art of *logoi* that is based on the technology of writing and one that is geared to oral communication.[2]

4. Talking philosophy

From the dialogue's beginning to its very end, Plato draws attention to the inferiority of an education based on writing. Plato probably downgrades Protagoras' *Ἀντιλογίαι* to the status of handbooks, τέχναι, or *Arts*, composed by professional logographers. In the section of the dialogue that is devoted to the criticism of the so-called *Artium Scriptores* Socrates mentions Protagoras among a list of others for his contribution to sophisticated vocabulary and as a champion of ὀρθοέπεια, correctness of words;[3] by the same token, in the *Sophist* Plato cites Protagoras as the most obvious example of someone who teaches antilogy by means of a written handbook.[4] So, Protagoras is a typical representative of a style of rhetoric that aims at logography, which, unlike the ἀντιλογική that Plato champions, is confined to the more mundane or *practical* ends that pertain to law courts and political assemblies. Zeno, by contrast, is associated with a rehabilitated kind of ἀντιλογική, which pertains to *everything that can be said*, not only in the public but also in the private sphere and which presumably—and critically for the economy of the dialogue—does not rely on written texts that form the basis of logographers' teaching. As we shall see, this representation of Zeno ties in with some evidence in the *Parmenides* concerning his writing practice.

[1] For the ambiguity in Plato's representation, see C. C. W. Taylor, *Socrates the Sophist* & C. Balla, *Intended Ambiguity in Plato's* Phaedo.

[2] For an entirely different reading of Zeno's representation as a father of antilogic in the *Phaedrus* and its connection to Plato's *Parmenides*, see F. Ferro, *The Eleatic Palamedes* ... .

[3] See Plato, *Phaedrus* 267c3.

[4] See Plato, *Sophist* 232d–e.

In the *Parmenides* Socrates is presented as a very young man who has just heard Zeno reading from his book. Zeno points out that he wrote the book when he was still a young man. Once it was written, someone stole it and reproduced an unauthorized copy of it.[1] So the author never had the chance to decide whether he wanted his work *to see the light*. It is instructive to consider Zeno's remarks in the *Parmenides* against the background of the criticism of writing in the *Phaedrus.* Plato presents Zeno as an intellectual who uses writing not only to record his arguments but also to revisit them, for instance by sharing and discussing them with Socrates.[2] More importantly for our present purposes, Plato also draws attention to Zeno's ability to distance himself from those arguments that, as he says, were written in the spirit of contentiousness that marks young age. Zeno's remark echoes a passage in the *Republic* where Socrates compares adolescents who taste *logoi* for the first time with puppies, who *love to tug away at anyone they come across and to tear his argument to shreds with theirs* and hence *can't find any other use for it except ἀντιλογία*.[3] Socrates further suggests that those who abuse *logoi* use a style of refutation that they borrow from others in order to demolish people's positions. I take this qualification as one more reference to the contrast between a kind of proper use of elenchus that was presumably practiced by Socrates and its abuse by those who, in a spirit of eristic contentiousness, imitated the form of such practice. Likewise, in the *Phaedo* Socrates turns on the contrast between φιλονικία (eristic contentiousness) and φιλοσοφία (philosophy) and suggests that those who practice ἀντιλογικοί λόγοι without mastering the art of *logoi* lead people to μισολογία, hatred of *logoi*[4] (*Phaedo* 89d–90c). It is interesting to note that Zeno mentions[5] φιλονικία as his motive for writing his book but also as a reason for his reservations about its publication.

Zeno's attitude about writing drives home the most salient features of its criticism in the *Phaedrus*: the first is that, unlike the case of oral speech, the ideas writing produces can acquire a life of their own:

> *When it has once been written down, every discourse roams about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn't know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not. And when it is faulted and attacked unfairly, it always needs its*

[1] See Plato, *Parmenides* 128e1–2: καί τις αὐτὸ ἔκλεψε γραφέν.

[2] On the importance of the value of ἐπανόρθωσις, correction or adjustment of a text that is supposed to record an earlier discussion in the context of the *Theaetetus*, see E. Kaklamanou & M. Pavlou, *Reading the Proemium ...* , p. 423.

[3] Plato, *Republic* 539b, tr. R. Waterfield.

[4] See Plato, *Phaedo* 89d–90c.

[5] See Plato, *Parmenides* 128d7 & e2.

> *father's support; alone it can neither defend itself nor come to its own support*.[1]

In the context of the dialogue Socrates' remark allows the reader to realize, in retrospect, that Lysias speech, recited by Phaedrus in the beginning of the dialogue, was intended as just such an example: a work that, had it not been for Socrates' scrutiny, which revealed its deficiencies but also turned it into a springboard for a fruitful conversation, would have instilled in Phaedrus' soul an ill-founded account of love. But writing can be put in good use, provided we realize its limits and treat it for what it is: a playful activity, that intrigues the reader to reflect on its contents in a critical way. We may think of Socrates' reaction to Lysias' speech in the *Phaedrus* as a case in point. The provocative argument that served the purposes of epideictic oratory becomes the springboard for a conversation that culminates in the philosophical allegory of the charioteer. Triggering a philosophical discussion was probably not part of the agenda of a logographer like Lysias. But it may well be part of the agenda of an Eleatic thinker like Zeno, at least as Plato represents him in the *Parmenides.* Unlike Lysias, who is missing from the dialogue scene, Zeno, the author of the book out of which he recites his own arguments in the beginning of the *Parmenides*, is present. So not only is he able to assist his speech like a father would assist his child;[2] he is also ready to expose his arguments to scrutiny and refutation. Moreover, the manner in which such an exposition takes place, is not the manner that marked the spirit of contentiousness in which the text was originally written. For another important idea that Plato introduces in the *Phaedrus*[3] and implements in the *Parmenides* is the positive role that *logoi*, written but also oral, can have when they are used not in the context of an eristic contest but rather in that of a friendly playful activity, a παιδιά, a game through which the interlocutors can train their skills in argumentation. The status of this activity is still considered as a second-best when it is compared to a *real* situation (in the context of writing the latter would amount to oral speech). At the same time, the language of athletic training that Plato introduces in this context marks a departure from a polemic attitude toward the use of *logoi*; besides Socrates' account of the dog-like behavior of young men in the *Republic*, we may also think of the metaphor of παγκράτιον, a contest in wrestling where any move is permitted.[4] That *earlier* attitude toward the use—or rather abuse—of argumentation gradually gives way to a positive account that turns on the metaphor of play. Plato uses the vocabulary of γυμνάσιον

[1] Plato, *Phaedrus* 275d–e, tr. A. Nehamas & P. Woodruff.

[2] See Plato, *Phaedrus* 275e.

[3] See Plato, *Phaedrus* 276d–e. See also Plato, *Timaeus* 59c.

[4] The title of Protagoras' *Περί πάλης* [*On Wrestling*] seems to be an allusion to this practice—reflected also in his *Καταβάλλοντες* [*Overthrowing Arguments*].

(bodily exercises) to underscore the value of proper training in *logoi* for philosophical education.[1]

The metaphor of bodily training further alludes to, and also drives home, the importance of a teacher as well as of a group of people who will engage together in fruitful, *noble rivalry*. One distinction that marks off Plato's educational outlook from that of a professional sophist concerns the role of the intellectual disposition of the individuals who enter the training. Showcased in Socrates' account of the class structure of the *Republic*, this idea is also reflected in the language Plato uses to describe as well as to hint at the exceptional endowment of some of his characters. We may consider the vocabulary Parmenides uses to refer to the skills that are required by the individual who will understand the core of his teaching:

> *Only a very gifted man*[2] *can come to know that for each thing there is some kind, a being itself by itself; but only a prodigy more remarkable* [ἔτι δὲ θαυμαστοτέρου] *still will discover that and be able to teach someone else who has sifted all these difficulties thoroughly and critically for himself*.[3]

It is tempting to think that Parmenides' allusion to such a prodigy ties in with a broader hidden agenda, through which Plato attempts to underscore his own intellectual contribution to a philosophical enterprise that is anchored not only to Socrates but also, through him, to Zeno and the Eleatic tradition. The dramatic date of the dialogue allows Plato to introduce the idea that, regardless of any superficial similarity that allowed Aristophanes and his audience to associate Socrates' practice with Protagoras' implementation of ἀντιλογία, the man who in fact introduced him to this practice—conceived, as we shall see, in its broadest sense—was not an *ordinary sophist* but a distinguished Eleatic thinker. So I am assuming that Plato intends Parmenides' allusion to an exceptional prodigy as a placeholder for Plato himself, who would be born a couple of decades after the dialogue's dramatic date; and that he further wants to show that it was because of Parmenides that Socrates, the intellectual who presumably influenced his career more than anybody else, had the opportunity to receive, very early in his intellectual development, some sound methodological advice.

Socrates agrees with Parmenides that knowing *that for each thing there is some kind, a being itself by itself* demands an exceptional nature; and he is able to understand the detrimental consequences that the negation of this sentence would have for dialectic.[4] Asked, however, by Parmenides what he is planning to do with philosophy, presumably in spite of his difficulty to understand being

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[1] It is tempting to bear in mind that the term γυμνάσιον gradually acquires the meaning of philosophical school. For an early example see Plato, *Gorgias* 493d4–5. See LSJ *s.v.*

[2] ἀνδρὸς πάνυ μὲν εὐφυοῦς, literally: *a man with an exceptional nature*.

[3] Plato, *Parmenides* 135a–d, tr. M. L. Gill & P. Ryan.

[4] See Plato, *Parmenides* 135b8–c3: Διαλέγεσθαι. As M. L. Gill [in: Plato, *Parmenides*, tr. M. L. Gill & P. Ryan, *ad loc.*] points out, the word could instead be translated as *discourse* or untechnically as *conversation*.

properly, Socrates confesses that he does not think he has *anything clear in view*. To which Parmenides replies:

> *Socrates, that's because you are trying to mark off something beautiful, and just, and good and each one of the forms too soon* [...] *before you have been properly trained* [πρὶν γυμνασθῆναι]. *I noticed that the other day too, as I listened to you conversing* [διαλεγομένου] *with Aristotle here. The impulse you bring to argument is noble and divine, make no mistake about it. But while you are still young, put your back into it and get more training through something people think useless—what the crowd call idle talk. Otherwise the truth will escape you*.[1]

It is in this context that Parmenides endorses Socrates' training under Zeno, Parmenides' own follower, and urges him to exercise his skill in developing opposite hypotheses.[2] The inquiry to which this introduction leads is described as a *strenuous game*.[3]

5. Plato's Socratic apologetics: The *Parmenides* as a prequel to the *Phaedrus*

We can see how the methodological remarks of the *Parmenides* allow us to reconstruct a portrait of Zeno which in turn sheds light on his association with antilogic in the *Phaedrus*. As we have already noticed, the allusion to Palamedes is part of an analogy between, on the one hand, famous Homeric heroes and, on the other hand, some well-known representatives of rhetoric. Thus, Palamedes/Zeno becomes the counterpart on the one hand of Nestor, who corresponds to Gorgias and Thrasymachus, and on the other hand of Odysseus, who corresponds to Theodorus.[4] Scarcity of evidence prevents us from working out the details of the analogy.[5] But, given the discussion of sophistic *arts* that follows in the dialogue, it seems safe to assume that Plato wishes to reserve the domain of antilogic for Zeno and thus to dissociate it from *usual suspects* like Protagoras. By doing so Plato claims for his teacher a quasi-philosophical pedigree that protects him, albeit retroactively, from the negative implication of his Aristophanic persona, anchoring his practice on the venerable Eleatic tradition. Furthermore, Socrates *rehabilitates* antilogic considering it as a practice found

> *not only in the law courts and in the Assembly. Rather, it seems that one single art—if, of course it is an art in the first place—governs all speaking. By means of it one*

[1] Plato, *Parmenides* 135c–d, tr. M. L. Gill & P. Ryan.

[2] See Plato, *Parmenides* 135e–136a.

[3] Plato, *Parmenides* 137b3: ἐπειδήπερ δοκεῖ πραγματειώδη παιδιὰν παίζειν.

[4] See Plato, *Phaedrus* 261c.

[5] See H. Yunis [in: Plato, *Phaedrus*, (ed.) H. Yunis, *ad loc.*].

> *can make out as similar anything that can be so assimilated, to everything to which it can be made similar, and expose anyone who tries to hide the fact that that is what he is doing.*[1]

The emphasis on the ability of antilogic to present the same things as both similar and not similar to one another takes up the earlier description of the skill of Palamedes, who, according to the same text, was able to make *the same things appear to listeners similar and dissimilar, one and many, and again at rest and in motion.*[2] We may think of various occasions in which that skill would be put to practice by sophists like Protagoras or Thrasymachus.[3] We may further assume that, compared to the latter, Zeno's art would not so much be geared toward practical issues—the kind of issues that an orator would most likely encounter in the context of a deliberative or a forensic speech—but would probably deal with more abstract or theoretical questions, e.g. of the kind that later would be labelled as ontological. We may place the latter under the heading of epideictic speech and think of Gorgias' *On Not Being* as a case in point. Zeno's arguments would also fit that description. But we may further think that Zeno, unlike the other sophists, is at least exposed, but even committed to the kind of inquiry into truth that his teacher Parmenides championed. Moreover, unlike the *Artium scriptores*, that is, professional sophists who used writing to promote their argumentative skills, which could occasionally deal with *lofty* Eleatic questions, as in the case of Gorgias' *On Not Being*, Zeno appears less eager to publish his arguments, as he realizes that they had been written in the contentious spirit that characterizes young age. Zeno's remark is in line not only with what Socrates says elsewhere on the abuse of antilogic, but also with what he says in the *Phaedrus* about the distance that separates the book from its author and the positive role writing can play once the author and presumably also the readers realize that its use is restricted, falling short of the serious intellectual enterprise that can only be achieved orally. In the same way a playful activity may be modelled on but still falls short of reality.

The expansion of the subject matter of antilogic ties in more closely with the nature and content of Zeno's paradoxes, which did not focus on any special field of knowledge but rather dealt with questions that govern and apply to any kind of being, such as similarity, plurality, rest and motion. Zeno's arguments can be thus described as preliminary exercises in the study of being *qua* being, which is *officially established* by Aristotle but anticipated by several earlier philosophers, including, besides Plato, various other members of the Socratic circle as well as the Eleatics. It is very likely that Eleatic thought lies behind, and hence triggers, the very arguments that Plato and various minor Socratics

[1] Plato, *Phaedrus* 261e, tr. A. Nehamas & P. Woodruff.

[2] Plato, *Phaedrus* 261d, tr. A. Nehamas & P. Woodruff.

[3] See C. Balla, *Politics in Theory and Practice.*

set out to develop.[1] It is also likely that Plato's allusion to the Eleatics allowed him to disguise references or criticisms to his *fellow-Socratics* or even to members of Plato's Academy. Thus, in the case of the *Phaedrus*, it is tempting to draw a connection between Zeno's ability to discern similarities and dissimilarities to Speusippus' interest in the topic, as this is reflected in the title of his non-extant treatise *Ὅμοια* [*Resemblances*]. On the other hand, by crediting Zeno with a method that *governs anything that can be said*, Plato allows us to envisage a study that combines and rehabilitates what Phaedrus would misleadingly treat as his two main and distinct areas of interest: logography and natural science.

Throughout the dialogue that bears his name, Phaedrus is presented as closely linked to the physicians Eryximachus and his father Acumenus. Phaedrus invokes Acumenus as an authority for his exercise routine: a walk outside the city, in the countryside.[2] In fact, Phaedrus' conversation with Socrates takes place under the shade of a plane tree. Far from indulging to the *super-natural* powers of this *locus amoenus*, however, Phaedrus is presented as a follower of a new kind of lore. Thus, instead of thinking of the story of a nymph abducted by Boreas, he is clearly attracted to what Socrates would describe as *wiser* explanations, which are likely to play down traditional myth and treat the abductor Boreas as a mere symbol for the wind that bears the same name, the North Wind.[3] Socrates, however, is unwilling to share Phaedrus' enthusiasm for this kind of *rationalization*. The first and most explicit objection he raises is that he considers this interest as a waste of time, when he compares it with his commitment to the pursuit of self-knowledge. *Prima facie*, the contrast Socrates draws can be seen as one between scientific discourse and traditional wisdom: his own preference in the latter is introduced as a consequence of his obedience to the Delphic oracle. Later in the dialogue, however, this more traditional perspective gives way to an account that combines natural science with an unprecedented account of the soul as a self-mover. Cast in mythical form, this account anticipates the new kind of non-reductionist perspective that Socrates had envisaged in the *Phaedo*, in the course of his criticism of the *physicists*. With the hindsight of the *Timaeus* we can see how the world–soul becomes part of Plato's conception of a natural science that avoids the shortcomings of his predecessors, that Socrates had revealed.

Of course, the idea of a non-material self-mover, along with the distinction between proper and subordinate causes, which dominates Socrates' criticism in the *Phaedo* and eventually marks Plato's departure from ordinary natural science, has nothing to do with Zeno. But there is another aspect of Socrates' criticism against the physicists in the *Phaedo* that allows us to draw the connection with Eleatic thought. The latter aspect of Socrates' criticism concerns the

[1] For the intellectual ties between Socratic and Eleatic thought, see further A. Brancacci, *Socraticm and Eleaticism* ... .

[2] See Plato, *Phaedrus* 227a.

[3] See Plato, *Phaedrus* 229c–d.

rather mysterious *riddles of predication* that he describes as problems his contemporaries were unable to resolve. It seems very likely that Socrates' reference to the *riddles of predication* in the *Phaedo* has nothing to do with the Eleatic tradition, but rather targets certain members of the Socratic circle, described in the text as the ἀντιλογικοί.[1] This may be the reason for which Socrates in the *Phaedo* makes no reference to an art of ἀντιλογική—an art which the *Phaedrus* introduces as a distinctively Eleatic contribution.

Considering the context of the *Phaedrus*—which includes Socrates' effort to set Phaedrus on the right track, with respect to his interest not only in logography/rhetoric but also in natural science—the allusion to Zeno allows Plato to point to two directions at once. In the case of rhetoric/logography, Zeno marks a departure from the *written* text, but also from the *narrow, practical* scope that characterized professionals subscribing to the style of Nestor or Odysseus. But Zeno's practice also introduces an aspect of the study of coming to being and passing away that, as Socrates in the *Phaedo* had pointed out, natural scientists were likely to miss. Setting aside the eristic spirit that marked the attitude of the ἀντιλογικοί in the *Phaedo*, Zeno's art, expanded to include anything that can be said and combined with the proper attitude toward argumentation—the contentiousness of the ἀντιλογικοί now gives way to the notions of παιδιά and *exercise*—becomes a useful tool for anyone who wishes to understand the problem of coming to being and passing away.

6. Conclusion. Zeno and Socrates. Questions of historiography

It is time to take stock. I have tried to show a number of different ways in which the allusion to Zeno in Plato's dialogues serves his broader philosophical agenda. I have argued that Plato wants his audience to think of Zeno as a borderline case between philosophy and sophistry who somehow influenced Socrates during his early youth. That debt, established in the *Parmenides*, which functions as a prequel to many other dialogues,[2] then explains why Socrates' practice of elenchus and antilogic, differed from similar practices found among ordinary sophists. Unlike the latter, neither Zeno nor Socrates developed contentiousness, neither of them relied on written texts, neither of them focused exclusively on questions of practical politics, while they both seemed committed to a vision of reality that involved a robust conception of being.

One question that remains unanswered is to what extent Plato's character Zeno matched his historical counterpart. The preceding discussion has shown how the allusions to Zeno in the *Phaedrus* and his portrayal in the *Parmenides* tie in with and indeed serve Plato's philosophical agenda and how they rely on distinctions and vocabulary that fit this agenda. The chronological distance that separates Zeno's lifetime from Plato's as well as Plato's underscoring of the distance that separates the dialogue that is supposed to have taken place between Zeno and Socrates in the *Parmenides* from the time in which it is supposed to

[1] See C. Balla, *Sailing Away from Antilogic.*

[2] See S. Rangos, *Chance Encounters and Abrupt Endings ...* , exploring the importance of the chronological priority of *Parmenides* in the context of the third Thrasyllan Tetralogy.

be recorded may be marks of the author's intention to challenge the historical accuracy of his account. But it is also likely that some distinctive features of Zeno's teaching led Plato to present Zeno as a borderline case between philosophy and sophistry. Inventive like a sophist, a disciple and possibly a beloved of the venerable Parmenides, Zeno, like other intellectuals of his time, could receive a substantial fee for his teaching.[1] We may reasonably assume that Zeno's reception in the history of philosophy often depends on Plato's representation; but Plato's *Parmenides* is not the only source on which subsequent authors rely. As John Dillon suggests,

> *at a number of places in his* Commentary on Parmenides, *Proclus seems to show knowledge of a treatise of Zeno of Elea's which is not derivable from the text of the* Parmenides, *and the inference seems possible that he has access to a document, whether genuine or otherwise, purporting to be the original book of Zeno*.[2]

According to Dillon, at least part of the material of that book, which contained forty *logoi* against the hypothesis that *beings are many* was originally derived from a genuine source.[3] Another independent source that deserves our attention is Plutarch's *Life of Pericles.* As a Platonist, Plutarch must have been familiar with Zeno's representation in the dialogues. But he is also familiar with other sources that describe the Eleatic thinker as a keen supporter of Pericles and indeed as one of his teachers. In his account of Pericles' education, Plutarch mentions Zeno after Damon and before Anaxagoras. He says that Zeno shared Parmenides' interest in φύσις (nature), but that he also developed a refutative practice which *locked* his interlocutor into an *aporia* by means of antilogy.[4]

One striking feature of Plutarch's list of Pericles' teachers is the absence of the name of Protagoras. We may take this absence as a sign of Plutarch's influence from Plato and suggest that the idea of Zeno as the man who exposed Pericles to antilogic is inspired from the account of the Eleatic Palamedes in the *Phaedrus.* To support this suggestion, we may further consider that the *Phaedrus* is also the dialogue in which Plato mentions Anaxagoras as a teacher of Pericles.[5] The prominent position in which Plutarch places Anaxagoras in his list of Pericles' teachers may be taken as a sign of his reliance on Plato's text. But Plutarch's account of Anaxagoras is not confined to Plato's testimony. In

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[1] See Plato, *Alciabiades 1* 119a [= LM P11]: [...] *Pythodorus, son of Isolochus, and Callias, son of Calliades, became wise and famous because they had each paid a hundred minas to Zeno.* See also Olympiodorus, *Commentary* ... 91–92 & G. Vlastos, *Plato's Testimony* ... , p. 155; cited and discussed by H. Tell, *Plato's Counterfeit Sophists*, pp. 43–44. For Zeno and Parmenides as lovers, see Plato, *Parmenides* 127b6 & LM P5 [= Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai* 11.113 505F & Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* ... 9.25].

[2] See LM 29A15/D2 [= Procl. *In Prm.* p. 694, 23]. See also LM 29A12/R2 [= Plato, *Parmenides* 127e], LM 29A13/R3 [= Plato, *Phaedrus* 261d6] & LM 29B1–3/D5–11. See also J. Dillon, *Proclus and the Forty* Logoi *of Zeno*, p. 35 & M.-Y. Lee, *Skills of Argument*.

[3] See J. Dillon, *Proclus and the Forty* Logoi *of Zeno*, p. 38.

[4] See Plutarch, *Life of Pericles* 4.5.

[5] See Plato, *Phaedrus* 270a.

fact, Plutarch's praise of the primary role that Anaxagoras gave to intelligence seems to ignore Plato's criticism in the *Phaedo*, according to which Anaxagoras had failed to show the causal role that Nous was supposed to play in nature. So even if Plutarch, who is a Platonist himself, is aware of and uses Plato's dialogues as his sources, he also consults other authors. In the case of Zeno, it is likely that his source is the sceptic Timon of Phlious, a disciple of Pyrrho.

It is possible that Timon read Plato's *Parmenides*, but that he also had access to independent sources that allowed him to single out Zeno as ἀμφοτερόγλωσσος [*double tongued*], commending his ability to argue for opposite conclusions. Just like Plato in the *Phaedrus*, Plutarch also attributes the practice of ἀντιλογία to Zeno rather than to Protagoras; Protagoras is then cited, in a different chapter of the *Life of Pericles*, as someone with whom Pericles spent a whole day discussing the different answers one could provide to the question of responsibility.[1] Plutarch's *distribution of labor* between Zeno as the man from whom Pericles learned the skill of ἀντιλογία and Protagoras as an associate of Pericles with whom he had the opportunity to discuss different arguments concerning the different causes of an act—javelin, thrower, people who were responsible for the games—is particularly striking: for, seen from the perspective of Protagoras' interests, the different arguments corresponded to likewise different speeches, that he would most likely consider as ἀντιλογίαι. And yet Plutarch—just like Plato in the Phaedrus—does not associate Protagoras with the practice of ἀντιλογία but rather Zeno. I have suggested that Plato in the *Phaedrus* intentionally downplays Protagoras' association with the practice of ἀντιλογία and prefers to anchor it on the more venerable Eleatic tradition. It is conceivable that Plutarch then draws on the *Phaedrus* or that he combines the *Phaedrus* with Timon's evidence concerning Zeno and that he possibly has access to further sources that suggest the connection between Zeno and Pericles. In the latter case, we will have to assume that there was an independent tradition that recognized Zeno at least as a *sui generis* teacher of argumentation. This tradition is probably reflected not only in Plato's representation in the *Parmenides*—which seems to assume a widespread or established image of Zeno as a successful master of argumentation—or in Zeno's description as an outrageously expensive teacher but also on Aristotle's account of Zeno as the inventor of dialectic.[2]

Piecing together the evidence, we may suppose that Zeno was an exceptional intellectual, a close follower of Parmenides, whose skills were recognized by his contemporaries. Like many other 5th-century intellectuals, it is possible that Zeno received substantial pay for his training. On the basis of this practice some of Zeno's and certainly Plato's contemporaries may have regarded him as a sophist, a charismatic intellectual who attracted young men who pursued an

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Pericles* 36.5 [= LM D30].

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* ... 9. 25. See also Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* ... 8. 57 [= LM R4 & Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations* 7.7]. Perhaps there is something to be learned from the fact that Aristotle's conception of Zeno as the inventor of dialectic occurred in a lost dialogue bearing the title *Sophist*. I thank Spyros Rangos for drawing my attention to this point.

intellectual identity. As we have seen, Plutarch considers Zeno as a teacher of Pericles, while the author of *Alcibiades I* mentions the names of other Athenians who *became wise and famous* because of his teaching. One of these Athenians, Pythodorus, is the host of Parmenides' and Zeno's visit to Athens; the occasion in which, according to Plato's *Parmenides*, Socrates was exposed to an Eleatic exercise in argumentation.

I have argued that, regardless of the historicity of the event he recounts in this dialogue, Plato wishes to establish an intellectual connection between Zeno and Socrates: both are presented as masters in argumentation, which often, and quite *naturally*, involves comparison and juxtaposition of opposed theses. But instead of using the ability to produce speeches in favor and against a given thesis as a sign of their superiority—a practice that could lead to the kind of *misology*, alienation from *logoi* or arguments Socrates castigates in the *Phaedo*—Zeno and Socrates are rather committed to the pursuit of *right answers*. So instead of thinking of *antilogic* as an end in itself, they both appreciate its value as a tool toward the study of truth. From Plato's perspective, Socrates' association with Zeno provides him with an answer to those who, influenced by his Aristophanic persona, would identity his teacher with any other ordinary sophist. The comparison of the latter kind of intellectuals to Nestor and Odysseus and their contrast to the Eleatic Palamedes allows Plato to establish a wedge between two distinct traditions, to associate the former with logography and to underscore the value of the latter as a practice that, relying on oral dialogue and missing the eristic spirit that marks ordinary training in arguments, addresses and educates the soul of the interlocutor in the profound way that marks true philosophy. At the same time, Socrates' and Zeno's *orientation* toward philosophy allows Plato to draw a further distinction between a preliminary practice that turns on an exceptional competence in argumentation and a higher sphere of knowledge that is the distinctive mark of Platonic philosophy.

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