PARMENISCUS' JOURNEY: TRACING RELIGIOUS VISUALITY IN WORD AND WOOD

JULIA KINDT

But what is "social energy"? . . .
We identify energia *only indirectly, by its effects:*
it is manifested in the capacity of certain verbal, aural, and visual trances
to produce, shape, and organize collective physical and mental experiences.

—Stephen Greenblatt (1988)

There is no innocent eye, seeing is an active and not a passive process.

—Hans Gerhard Kippenberg (1985–86)

Introduction

The fifth book of Semus' *History of Delos* (Δηλιάς), dating perhaps from the late third century B.C.E., features a certain Parmeniscus from the city of Metapontum in southern Italy, a man distinguished by birth and wealth. Parmeniscus had consulted the oracle of Trophonius in Lebadeia (Boeotia), a consultation that involved descending into a cave. One of the well-attested effects of the oracular procedure at this institution was the (temporary) loss of the ability to laugh, and Parmeniscus was affected by this very symptom when he resurfaced from the cave.[1] He referred to another, even more prominent, oracular institution in search of a remedy. The priestess Pythia at the Delphic oracle, when approached concerning this matter, responded, εἴρῃ μ' ἀμφὶ γέλωτος, ἀμείλιχε, μειλιχίοιο· δώσει σοι μήτηρ οἴκοι· τὴν ἔξοχα τῖε ("You, implacable one, ask me about soothing laughter; the mother will give it to you at home. Honor her greatly").[2] Parmeniscus returned to Metapontum, but still did not regain the ability to laugh. Had the oracle deceived him? A little later he happened to travel to the sacred island of Delos, where he much enjoyed all the marvelous things the island had to offer. He also visited the temple of Leto, Apollo's mother, expecting that

For Richard Gordon, on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday.

1. A detailed eyewitness account of the mantic procedure of the oracle can be found in Pausanias 9.39.5–40.2.

2. Ath. 14.614b. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Classical Philology 105 (2010): 252–64
 0009-837X/10/10503-0003$10.00

the statue of the goddess would be worth seeing. When he realized that the statue was nothing but a misshapen block of wood he burst out laughing. He understood the meaning of the oracle and, cured from his malady, he honored the goddess greatly.

Unfortunately Semus' *History* has not survived. His account of Parmeniscus has come down to us only indirectly, via the third-century C.E. author Athenaeus, who included the episode in his *Deipnosophistae* (Ath. 14.614a–b), a loosely conceived collection of learned tales and fragments of earlier authors. A critically inclined mind might, of course, point out that the story, as told by Athenaeus, shows suspicious signs of literary fashioning. Above all, Parmeniscus' adventure follows the set pattern of human misinterpretation of divine language well known from oracle stories in Greek literature. It also features the revelation of the meaning of oracular ambiguity in a not entirely unexpected twist, a topos that features prominently within the oracular genre. Is this perhaps just another etiological story that explains a given dedication, as Felix Jacoby and others have suggested?[3] The inventory of the Letoon of the year 156/5 B.C.E. mentions a bronze plaque dedicated by a certain Parmiscus, generally believed to be identical with the Parmeniscus of our story.[4] Moreover, the historicity of Parmeniscus is also attested by Diogenes Laertius (9.20), who describes him in passing as a Pythagorean philosopher.

Athenaeus' account has something interesting to say about Greek perceptions of the divine because of, and not despite, its narrative shaping. As Robert Darnton has pointed out in another context, historical storytelling, like all storytelling, "sets the action in a frame of reference; it assumes a certain repertory of associations and responses on the part of its audience; and it provides meaningful shape to the raw stuff of experience."[5] The way in which Athenaeus has framed and presented Parmeniscus' experience of the divine, it shall be argued here, grants us an invaluable glimpse into Greek representations of divinity—in both word and wood. Athenaeus' account shows us that religious visuality is not limited to the physical act of "looking on," but is part of a much broader spectrum of "reading" divine images. At the same time, the story encourages us to expand our definition of the religious gaze. Religious visuality is not necessarily always ritual-centered visuality, as some scholars have argued. It can also encompass what I shall call "cognitive visuality."

THEORIA AND THE GREEK RELIGIOUS GAZE

To start, let us look at the end of the story: Parmeniscus gazes at the statue of the goddess Leto and, rather unexpectedly (παραδόξως), bursts into laughter. Ján Elsner and others have recently established the existence of a specifically religious way of viewing in the ancient world.[6] This religious gaze,

3. Jacoby 1923, 1358.

4. See *IDélos* 1417 AI, 109–11. Bruneau (1970, 211 n. 3) and Romano (1980, 203) identify the Parmiscus of the bronze dedication with the Parmeniscus of Athenaeus' account.

5. Darnton 1984, 78.

6. Elsner 2007. See also Elsner 1995, 88–124; Platt 2002; Hutton 2005.

according to Elsner, is oriented toward the ritual function of material artifacts, such as cult statues. This ritual-centered way of "looking on" is different from other, competing forms of visuality, most notably, perhaps, from the traditional subject of Greek art history, the naturalism of classical mimesis. Religious visuality is not primarily concerned with the aesthetic quality of objects and artifacts; its main focus is on their function in religious ritual. Religious gazing applies whenever a viewer finds himself face-to-face with a material object (a sanctuary, a temple, a statue) that lends itself as an entry point to religious and/or mythological reflection. It features prominently in Pausanias' *Description of Greece*, for example, which is an account driven by the desire to ground the Greece of Pausanias' present in a mythical and divine landscape of past glory through a focus on material objects.[7]

But religious visuality also features in a more institutionalized form, as a central aspect of what Andrea Nightingale has recently referred to as the "cultural practice" of *theoria*.[8] In his survey of *theoria* Ian Rutherford has sketched the semantic spectrum of this complex concept.[9] *Theoria* and related words (such as θεωρός and κατὰ θεωρίαν) could be used in different contexts to refer to "a type of festival or show," "being a spectator at a festival," "a sacred delegation," "a consultant at an oracle," "an official sent out to announce festivals," and "a state official." More general uses include "sightseeing" and "exploration." The core meaning of the concept, however, seems to revolve around a key set of elements: *theoria* typically involved travel (the theoric journey), a sacralized mode of looking at a specific object or of watching a theoric event, such as religious games, and, possibly, the return home and the reentry into society with a report of the things perceived and learned.[10] There are three typical purposes of *theoria*: to visit a religious festival, to consult an oracle, and to undertake a journey for one's own instruction. While the first two forms can be carried out by an individual or by a public delegation, the last form exists only as a purely personal experience, of which Solon's travels after his reforms at Athens are an obvious example.[11]

Athenaeus does not explicitly refer to Parmeniscus' adventures as *theoria*. In fact, the concept of *theoria* is not mentioned at all, and the verb *theorein* is used only in regard to Parmeniscus' activity at Delos prior to entering the temple of Leto. But Athenaeus' account features, even highlights, key elements of *theoria*: the travel to special religious sites, such as oracles and temples, and the gazing on a religious object (the statue). Of course we do not hear whether Parmeniscus originally traveled to Trophonius on state business, or whether his question concerned religious or other matters, but in Athenaeus' account it is certainly a deeply private concern that drives

7. See Elsner 1995, 125–55.

8. Nightingale 2004, in particular 40–71. On *theoria* see also Rutherford 1995, 2000, 2001. On the larger topic of religious pilgrimage (including *theoria*) in the Graeco-Roman world, see the collection of Elsner and Rutherford (2005).

9. Rutherford 2000, 134–38. Rutherford's account effectively supersedes various older attempts to outline the meaning of *theoros* and *theoria* (see Bill 1901; Buck 1953; Koller 1957).

10. Nightingale 2004, 40–44.

11. Hdt. 1.29. On Solon's *theoria*, see (among others) Nightingale 2004, 63–64.

Parmeniscus to visit Delphi and later Delos. Athenaeus' account of Parmeniscus can therefore be read as a sequence of multiple acts of personal *theoria*.[12]

Parmeniscus' first trip to the oracular institution of Trophonius initiates, even necessitates, further contact with the divine. The oracular response he receives at Delphi seems at first to send him back home, but it is not until he has traveled a third time, to the sacred island of Delos, that he reaches full insight and closure. Parmeniscus' three acts of *theoria* are linked to each other in a complex triangular relationship of cross-reference and causation. The first two encounters with the gods share the formal identity of oracle consultations. But it is only when he faces the statue of Leto that his ability to laugh, a form of expression that he has lost as a result of his first encounter with the divine at Trophonius, is restored. In an explosive act of parallel causation his newly regained ability to laugh brings with it insight into the meaning of the Delphic oracle.

But there are also differences between Parmeniscus' three encounters with the gods. The first two journeys are intentional acts of *theoria*, carried out to gain specific information from the gods. The third, the one that brings final insight, happens "by chance" (κατὰ τύχην; Ath. 14.614b) and without his having a specific question in mind. Specifically, the way in which this third encounter with the gods features in the story contributes to the scholarly debate surrounding the problems involved in distinguishing between sacred and secular *theoria*.[13] Parmeniscus' final journey to Delos starts off as a case of secular *theoria*, directed toward the pure enjoyment of the island's touristic sites. Rather unexpectedly, it turns into a form of religious *theoria*, when Parmeniscus gains insight into the poetics of divine representation (in both word and wood) and, in doing so, into the inscrutable ways of divinity. The story shows that what defines religious *theoria* is not necessarily where it unfolds, nor on what kind of objects it is focused, as Rutherford and others have argued.[14] Rather, it is defined by a certain form of (religious) visuality, which is distinguished from other (worldly) ways of looking on.[15]

STATUES AND THE INQUIRY INTO DIVINITY

Statues of Greek gods and goddesses are intriguing elements of Greek religious discourse. Housed in the temple of their respective divinity, they represented this divinity in various ritual contexts associated with it. Sometimes they were even considered to be identical with it. Once they were ceremoniously installed in their *naos*, they could become the focus of intense prayer and worship.[16] Some statues enjoyed offerings of food and drink

12. Rutherford (2000, 138–39) refers to Athenaeus' text in passing as an example of a story that reports the viewing subject's response to sacred objects.

13. See more on this below (with references).

14. See Rutherford 2000, 139; 2001, in particular 43–44.

15. At the same time religious *theoria* is also enacted and embodied in the most worldly and visceral of activities, namely, laughter (see below).

16. See Johnston 2008 on the ritualized animation of statues.

in their temples and on the altars outside. Others even received specially fabricated garments. Every now and then some statues also left their homes, in order to be carried through their host community in a sacred procession.

As Deborah Steiner has pointed out, a statue served "as a vessel, a potential or actual container" for the god or goddess it embodied.[17] This conceptualization of the divine figure, however, has a profound impact on the production and representation of statues as well as on their handling in ritual procedure.[18] In particular, it raises the all-important question concerning the relationship between the statues' surface (form) and their divine "content." Cult statues of gods and goddesses came in a variety of forms and styles, negotiating the tension between exterior/form and interior/content in different ways. The act of imagining and creating a material representation of the divine in the human sphere was itself part of the Greek inquiry into the nature of divinity.

The most fundamental point of reference in this material(ized) discourse on the nature of the divine is, of course, humanity itself. One of the most interesting differences between different types of statues representing the Greek gods is the extent to which they did or did not resemble the human body.[19] While it is tempting to see a strict chronological transition from fairly simple Archaic *xoana* (cult statues carved out of wood) to more complex anthropomorphic sculptures of the Classical and later periods, crafted out of marble, bronze, and ivory, this would be to simplify the complex semiotics of divine representation in Greek religious discourse.[20] While *xoana* were, even in ancient times, considered to be representative of an early stage of sculptural representation of the Greek gods, they were never fully replaced or superseded by the artistic workmanship of later periods.[21] Iconic modes of representation coexisted with more simple, semi- or aniconic sculptural representations of the Greek gods.[22] The Archaic *xoana* in particular enjoyed a special ritualistic status during the Classical and Hellenistic periods because of, and not despite, their archaizing qualities.[23] New wooden *xoana* were crafted during the Hellenistic period that explicitly imitated the simplicity of the Archaic *xoana*.[24]

Classical scholars have thus come to see different types of sculptural representations of the Greek gods as competing statements concerning the nature of divinity.[25] Semi- and aniconic statues with their cruder and less naturalistic form highlighted the discrepancy between divinity and its material represen-

17. Steiner 2001, 79.

18. Here and below, see Steiner 2001, 79.

19. See Vernant 1991b, 35–36, for the interesting suggestion that Greek anthropomorphism did not imitate the human body, but in Greek thought "the human body reflects the divine model as the inexhaustible source of a vital energy."

20. In particular, older scholarship has argued for such an evolutionary scheme of Greek sculptural representation. See, e.g., Richter 1949. See Donohue 1988 and Spivey 1996, 29, for criticism of such a perspective.

21. See Donohue 1988 for a comprehensive century-by-century account of the significance of *xoana*.

22. Donohue (1988, 5) defines the worship of aniconic sculptures as "the veneration of objects that represent but do not purport to show the appearance of deities."

23. Steiner 2001, 81–82. See also Donohue 1988, 6–7.

24. See Donohue 1988, 7.

25. See the excellent account of Gordon (1996) and, more recently, Steiner (2001, in particular 103).

tation in a much more immediate fashion than iconic accounts of divinity. They virtually compelled the viewer to acknowledge the vessel-like quality of the statue and the very fact that humanity can engage with divinity only in a mediated fashion. "Concealment and containment . . . form two dimensions of the single enterprise: in assuming a form or body not his or her own, the god simultaneously masks and contains an untenable force."[26] Form and content did not cohere. The aniconic statue revealed the presence of divinity, but it did so not by imitating the human body, but via a "container" that, through its crude form, captured and communicated the insurmountable gap separating the human from the divine sphere.

By contrast, iconic sculptural representation of divinity negotiated the tension between material form and divine content along different lines. The point here was to externalize the divine essence that the Archaic *xoanon* sought to conceal and to make it represent the otherworldliness of the divine.[27] The literary sources describing iconic sculpture abound in words expressing the shining radiance of artistic workmanship. Materials such as gold, silver, bronze, and marble were used to bring out the otherworldly quality of the gods in the very fabric of their cult images.[28]

In the fifth century B.C.E., this form of religious imagination and artistic workmanship saw its culmination in the famous chryselephantine statues, which featured golden robes draping the ivory bodies of the divine that were fabricated around a wooden core.[29] Statues like Pheidias' acclaimed Zeus at Olympia (430 B.C.E.) and his Athena Parthenos on the Acropolis (440–430 B.C.E.) did not just aspire to imitate the human bodily form, they frequently exceeded it not just in size (a feature also of many older *xoana*), but also by turning the divine statue into something more perfect and gleaming than the human body. The *agalma* of the god or goddess was both a dedication to divinity and a representation and an evocation of it, "glorious gifts in which the gods must also delight."[30]

What does Parmeniscus see when he enters the temple of Leto? Of course we cannot know. Although the Letoon at Delos has been excavated by the French, the wooden statue of the goddess had perished long before. But perhaps we can at least get an idea if we look more carefully at what remains of the temple and its owner. Cult statues, like the one of the goddess Leto at Delos, were not just stashed away in some dark corner. They were typically placed on a pedestal in the middle of the *naos*. Excavations at Delos have revealed the foundations of the base on which Leto's statue was placed, and from these foundations, which measured from 2.50 to 2.90 meters, we can infer that the statue was probably considerably larger than life-size.[31]

26. Steiner 2001, 81. See also Vernant 1991a, 153–55.
27. Steiner 2001, 104.
28. See Gordon 1996, 13; Vernant 1991b, 36–45.
29. Burkert 1985, 91.
30. Burkert 1985, 91. This gleaming quality is sometimes also captured in white paint in depictions of statues on vases; see Schefold 1937, 66.
31. Romano 1980, 204. It is, of course, also a possibility that a second pedestal with a much smaller statue was placed upon the foundations.

Moreover, the very temple inventory of the Letoon that mentions Parmiscus' dedication (*IDélos* 1417 AI, 100–117) also provides a variety of information on the cult statue. From the inscription we learn that Leto was indeed made of wood, that she was clothed in a linen chiton and mantle, and that she was wearing sandals. We also read that she was seated on a wooden throne featuring tortoiseshell and ivory inlay.[32] Intriguingly, the inventory refers to the statue as an *agalma*. In the account of Athenaeus, however, her aniconic features are highlighted. All we hear about the statue's appearance is that she was "just a misshapen piece of wood" (ξύλον ἄμορφον). Is Semus setting up the reader (who might know the statue by sight or by hearsay) just as much as Parmeniscus, his main protagonist? All we can say with certainty is that for the purpose of the story it seems to matter that Leto's "looks" are, quite literally, presented as disappointing.

EXPERIENCE AND EXPECTATION

When Parmeniscus crosses the threshold of the temple of Leto and looks at the statue of the goddess, he enters a distinctly religious space. But in Athenaeus' account he does not seem to find what he expected. The shape and quality of the larger-than-life statue seem to direct Parmeniscus' gaze to its crude materiality, rather than to its role as a representation of divinity. The aesthetic dimension of the statue (or rather, the lack of it), at least at first sight, seems to deny it any role as the focal point of religious discourse. Parmeniscus expected to find an *agalma*, a glorious and dazzling representation of Apollo's mother: νομίζων τῆς Ἀπόλλωνος μητρὸς ἄγαλμά τι θεωρήσειν ἀξιόλογον ("He expected that the statue of Apollo's mother would be something noteworthy," Ath. 14.614b). What he found instead was an unsightly statue that alluded to the human bodily form, the wooden origins of which were still all too visible: ἰδὼν δ' αὐτὸ ξύλον ὂν ἄμορφον παραδόξως ἐγέλασεν ("But when he saw that it was just a misshapen piece of wood he unexpectedly burst into laughter," Ath. 14.614b). In depicting the clash between Parmeniscus' expectation of the divine and his experience of it, Athenaeus' account reflects the tension between traditional aniconic and later iconic representations of divinity.

Elsner has rightly pointed out that "viewing the sacred is a process of divesting the spectator of all the social and discursive elements which distinguish his or her subjectivity from that of the gods into whose space the viewer will come."[33] Religious visuality unfolds in and defines a distinctly religious space in which the experiences and expectations of everyday life are temporarily set aside to enable a more immediate encounter with the divine, an encounter that follows its own (religious) rules and regulations. "Ritual-centred visuality denies the appropriateness of . . . interpreting images through the rules and desires of everyday life."[34]

32. More information on Leto's possessions appears in later epigraphic evidence: for example, that her *himation* was adorned with purple dye in the third century B.C.E. (see Romano 1980, 203).

33. Elsner 2007, 23.

34. Elsner 2007, 25.

Parmeniscus' experience at Delos, as told by Athenaeus, highlights the very moment of "divesting" as a precondition of experiencing the true nature of the divine. The story hinges on the sudden, almost explosive transition Parmeniscus undergoes from a state of ignorance to a state of insight and learning. Parmeniscus first appreciates the island's attractions from a purely aesthetic point of view. The word used to describe his gaze prior to entering the temple of Leto is *thaumazein*, "to wonder, to marvel at." When Parmeniscus finally enters the temple, he extends this aesthetic visuality to the statue of the goddess. But the statue of Leto does not provide a trajectory for the aesthetic gaze. It redirects this gaze back to the viewing subject. The surprise springing from the apparent drastic mismatch between his expectation of the divine statue and its actual manifestation triggers Parmeniscus' laughter. In doing so it prepares Parmeniscus for the transition from an externalized gaze, focused on the surface of things and on the ornamental, to a much deeper religious visuality, based on an aesthetics that appreciates the vessel-like quality of the statue. The purely external appreciation of aesthetic qualities turns into a deeper, more penetrating and complex vision focused on the quality of divinity, in particular of divine representation. This form of *thaumazein* does not precede the form of understanding reached through *theoria*, but is part of the theoric gaze.[35] Parmeniscus' laughter, we can suspect, changes in quality as it becomes self-reflective.[36] It starts off as a naïve and unreflective response to the apparent crudeness of divine form. It turns into an astonished appreciation of the complexities of divine representation as Parmeniscus understands the meaning of the oracle.

What is interesting about Athenaeus' account is that it draws direct and multiple links between representations of divinity in word and in wood. The story directly juxtaposes the ambiguous oracle Parmeniscus receives at Delphi with the statue of Leto and its way of signification: the temporary breakdown of divine representation (the statue) brings about the revelation of divine meaning (the oracle). The story highlights the visual aspect of *theoria* as a cultural institution, but at the same time, it draws our attention to the very fact that religious visuality extends far beyond the physical act of gazing. For oracles, too, draw on elements of pictorial signification. In the metaphors and other tropes they use as carriers (vessels) of their meaning, oracles make use of images in much the same way as divine statues do.

The link between the semantics of both types of imagery is reflected through the perception of the viewing subject. Parmeniscus responds to both representations of divinity in the very same fashion. His encounters with the divine are driven by his expectations concerning the nature of divinity, in particular of divine representation in the human sphere. Parmeniscus expects oracles to speak in human language. Human language is characterized by the attempt to minimize ambiguity in order to maximize success in information

35. On *thaumazein* as part of *theoria*, see Nightingale 2004, 261.

36. Halliwell (2008, 5) speaks of the "double-sided character" of laughter in Greek thought and literature "at the interface between . . . body and mind, between instinct and intention." In Athenaeus' account, laughter appears likewise as a double-sided gesture that accompanies, even instigates, the transition from a state of ignorance to a state of insight.

processing. Except, perhaps, in poetic language, which explicitly draws on polysemy, in the human sphere, ambiguity is nothing but a semantic possibility prior to its realization in actual speech. The fact that Parmeniscus is not yet ready to engage in this other type of visuality that is, at least to some extent, disengaged from personal circumstance, is nicely expressed by the very fact that he can conceive of the "mother" featuring in the oracular response as referring to his own mother only. Religious visuality involves a much broader and more detached way of "reading" images.

Just as Parmeniscus expects the oracle to speak in plain human language, he assumes that divine statues represent divinity in human form. Both expectations are frustrated in the end. Parmeniscus' first response is to suspect deception (οἰόμενος ἐξηπατῆσθαι, "he believed that he had been deceived," Ath. 14.614a). This suspicion is typical of those mortals in Greek thought and literature who cannot (yet) read the poetics of divine representation.[37] Jean-Pierre Vernant speaks of the "inevitable tension" that all forms of divine representation must introduce: "The idea is to establish real contact with the world beyond, to actualize it, to make it present, and thereby to participate intimately in the divine; yet by the same move, it (the divine idol) must also emphasize what is inaccessible and mysterious in divinity, its alien quality, its otherness."[38] Parmeniscus does not yet understand the subtle balance between identity and alterity that every divine representation must strike to remain a meaningful mediator between the human and divine spheres. Parmeniscus eventually learns to adopt a much deeper gaze, which penetrates the surface of verbal and material images in order to capture what lies beneath.

In visualizing Parmeniscus' change of perspective the story draws attention to larger questions concerning the identity of divinity and its representation in the human sphere. It is significant that Parmeniscus learns that the gods are and are not like mortals by gazing at two images that both challenge and support the anthropomorphism of the Greek gods. The oracular reference to Leto as Apollo's mother confirms the idea that the pantheon, indeed, is structured in parallel to the human sphere, with its family and other relations. Parmeniscus' subsequent encounter with the wooden statue of Apollo's mother, in contrast, seems to relativize the notion of anthropomorphic gods by drawing attention to the image's (wooden) materiality.

In making the connection between imagery crafted in word and in wood, the story encourages us to compare both forms of divine representation.[39] Plain oracular language and iconic sculptures of gods and goddesses provide a way of representing divinity that emphasizes the likeness between the human and divine spheres. Both forms of divine representation are oriented toward humanity as the ultimate point of reference for the visualization and imagination of the divine. Ambiguous divine language and the semi-iconic representation of divinity, in contrast, direct attention to the fact that divinity

37. See, e.g., Croesus' complaint at the Delphic oracle in Herodotus 1.90–91 and the Chorus' suspicions toward the Delphic response in Euripides *Ion* 685.

38. Vernant 1991a, 153. See also Vernant 1991d, 314–17.

39. Vernant (1991a, 154) argues that Archaic idols are not images *stricto sensu*.

is and is not like humanity. According to the same logic, unintelligible sounds and utterances and the aniconic representation of divinity finally emphasize alterity and the insurmountable gap that exists between gods and mortals.

It is significant that the breakdown in the iconic sculptural representation of the statue brings about the insight into the ambiguous meaning of the oracle. In juxtaposing both forms of divine representation, Athenaeus' account turns around much more than the simple point that images represent divinity in a way that may look surprisingly different from first sight. Parmeniscus' encounter with the gods defines religious visuality as a complex way of engaging with the divine, which interacts with humanity in different and changing representations.

Through its narrative appropriation of the religious gaze, Athenaeus' story reflects on the very semantics of religion as a discourse of "making sense." The subject's gaze on the divine statue becomes itself a trope for reflection on the nature of divinity and its relationship to humanity.[40] Parmeniscus' encounter with the divine turns into a commentary on the modalities of religious visuality.[41] By referring to generally recognized religious authorities like the Delphic oracle, the story also gives a certain kind of authority to the religious statements it makes in this respect.

RELIGIOUS VISUALITY AS "RITUAL-CENTERED VISUALITY" AND "COGNITIVE VISUALITY"

Elsner has recently defined religious viewing as a ritual-centered form of visuality.[42] Religious gazing conceives of sacred objects, such as altars and cult statues, by appreciating, even insisting on, the role these objects play in religious ritual. In other words, the religious gaze captures predominantly those qualities of altars and cult statues that are significant for the part they play in religious ritual; other information pertaining to these objects that is not relevant to the way in which they feature in ritual, such as their aesthetic qualities, is left out. Elsner has further explored the ways in which religious gazing features in Greek literature. He has shown that the narrative structure of a text itself can follow (and hence describe) the physical act of gazing. A prime example is Pausanias' description of sixty-nine altars at Olympia, which closely follows the liturgical order of the Elean sacrificial procession and which highlights those features of the altars that are relevant for their role in ritual.[43]

Athenaeus' account, however, suggests that religious visuality should not be limited to ritual-centered visuality. In fact, ritual is conspicuously absent from Parmeniscus' multiple encounters with the divine. We hear nothing

40. It is interesting that this story is built around Parmeniscus, a philosopher, as *theoria* (albeit more frequently in its civic form) was widely appropriated in philosophical discourse as a trope for understanding and learning (Nightingale 2004).

41. On the debate concerning the problematic distinction between sacred and secular in Greek culture, see below.

42. Here and below, see Elsner 2007, 1–26.

43. Paus. 5.13.8–5.15.12, discussed by Elsner 2007, 13–19.

about the ritual procedure that ultimately causes the inability to laugh at Trophonius or that generates oracular responses at Delphi. Nor do we learn anything about the kind of purifications, sacrifices, and prayers involved in the worship of the goddess Leto at Delos. Instead, the story focuses on the impact of the statue on the viewing subject, in particular on the gap between its form and content that Parmeniscus needs to bridge. The structure of Athenaeus' narrative turns entirely on the change of perspective Parmeniscus undergoes as he learns to appreciate the nature of divinity: his original expectation of divine representations that remains unfulfilled, his interpretative disengagement from his own personal circumstances, and his insight into the versatility of divinity and divine representation. In Athenaeus' narrative at least, religious visuality is represented as a mental (cognitive) activity and not as a mere extension of ritual. Religious gazing, we can conclude, should encompass both cognitive visuality and ritual-centered visuality—without, of course, assuming a strict duality between the two.

In tracing Parmeniscus' change of perspective, the story makes an interesting point about the problematic relationship between the sacred and the secular dimensions.[44] One area in which this distinction is currently discussed is with regard to *theoria* and Greek pilgrimage more generally.[45] Is it possible to distinguish sacred from secular (purely recreational) sightseeing? Rutherford suggests that whenever the places visited were religious centers we should speak of "sacred sightseeing."[46] He further argues that the kind of objects viewed may also help to differentiate sacred sightseeing from the secular variant. Religious objects were prime foci of religious travel. For Rutherford their presence can hence serve as a prime marker of *theoria* as sacred sightseeing: "Because the viewing of them took place against the background of a network of religious assumptions it can be described as a religious activity."[47]

The passage from Athenaeus, however, complicates the story. It shows that neither the presence of religious space nor that of religious objects is a necessary indicator of religious viewing. Parmeniscus employs both types of visuality, religious visuality and another, more worldly, kind of viewing (which, for lack of a better word, one might want to call secular), spatially within strictly religious contexts such as the Delphic oracle and the temple of Leto. Moreover, he extends both types of visuality to distinctly religious representations: just as he misreads the oracle at Delphi, he at first looks at the divine statue in the temple with an aesthetic gaze. Parmeniscus' first way of looking is shaped less by religious than by worldly assumptions. What

44. The *communis opinio* now seems to be that Greek culture knew no absolute distinction between the two. Connor (1988) has shown the sacred and the secular to be two separate yet interrelated realms. Disagreement, however, then erupts concerning the way in which this relationship features in specific contexts (see Scullion 2005).

45. See, e.g., Rutherford 2000; Elsner and Rutherford 2005, 21–22; Scullion 2005. As Rutherford (2000, 138 n. 26) has rightly observed, the visual is strangely absent from Dillon's (1997) account of Greek pilgrimage.

46. Rutherford 2000, 135. See also the interesting sociological contribution of Cohen (1992), who argues that pilgrims travel to the center of their world and tourists to the periphery.

47. Rutherford 2000, 139.

finally enables him to make the transition from one type of visuality to the other is his capacity to divest his interpretation from his own personal circumstances. In Athenaeus' account, at least, the distinction between the sacred and the secular (here expressed in the form of different, yet related, types of visuality) is neither spatially configured nor object related, but cognitive. The frame of mind with which one enters a given space and looks at a specific object determines whether religious visuality (and hence information processing) applies or not. In short, it matters less what one looks at, or where one looks, but how.

University of Sydney

LITERATURE CITED

Bill, C. P. 1901. Notes on the Greek *Theoros* and *Theoria*. *TAPA* 32: 196–204.

Bruneau, P. 1970. *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l'époque hellénistique et à l'époque impériale*. Paris.

Buck, C. D. 1953. *Theoros*. In *Studies Presented to David Moore Robinson*, vol. 2, ed. G. Mylonas and D. Raymond, 443–44. St. Louis, Mo.

Burkert, W. 1985. *Greek Religion*. Trans. J. Raffan. Cambridge, Mass.

Cohen, E. 1992. Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence. In *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. A. Morinis, 47–61. New York.

Connor, W. R. 1988. "Sacred" and "Secular": *Hiera kai hosia* and the Classical Athenian Concept of the State. *AncSoc* 19: 161–88.

Darnton, R. 1984. *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History.* New York.

Dillon, M. 1997. *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece*. London.

Donohue, A. A. 1988. Xoana *and the Origins of Greek Sculpture*. Atlanta.

Elsner, J. 1995. *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity.* Cambridge.

————. 2007. *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text*. Princeton, N.J.

Elsner, J., and I. Rutherford, eds. 2005. *Pilgrimage in Classical Antiquity and the Early Christian World: Seeing the Gods*. Oxford.

Gordon, R. 1996. The Real and the Imaginary: Production and Religion in the Graeco-Roman World. In *Image and Value in the Graeco-Roman World: Studies in Mithraism and Religious Art*, 5–34. Aldershot. Originally published in *Art History* 2 (1979): 5–34.

Greenblatt, S. 1988. *Shakespearean Negotiations*. London.

Halliwell, S. 2008. *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity.* Cambridge.

Hutton, W. 2005. The Construction of Religious Space in Pausanias. In Elsner and Rutherford 2005, 291–317.

Jacoby, F. 1923. Semos von Delos. *RE* 2.2: 1357–59.

Johnston, S. I. 2008. Animating Statues: A Case Study in Ritual Theory. *Arethusa* 41: 445–77.

Kippenberg, H. G. 1985–86. Introduction: Approaches to Iconology. In *Approaches to Iconology*, ed. H. G. Kippenberg et al., vii–x. Leiden.

Koller, H. 1957. *Theoros* und *Theoria*. *Glotta* 36: 273–86.

Nightingale, A. W. 2004. *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy:* Theoria *in Its Cultural Context*. Cambridge.

Platt, V. 2002. Viewing, Desiring, Believing: Confronting the Divine in a Pompeian House. *Art History* 25: 87–112.

Richter, G. M. 1949. *Archaic Greek Art against Its Historical Background.* Oxford.

Romano, I. B. 1980. Early Greek Cult Images. Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania.
Rutherford, I. 1995. Theoric Crisis: The Dangers of Pilgrimage in Greek Religion and Society. *SMSR* 61: 276–92.
————. 2000. *Theoria* and *Darśan*: Pilgrimage and Vision in Greece and India. *CQ* 50: 133–46.
————. 2001. Tourism and the Sacred: Pausanias and the Traditions of Greek Pilgrimage. In *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece*, ed. S. Alcock, J. F. Cherry, and J. Elsner, 40–52. Oxford.
Schefold, K. 1937. Statuen auf Vasenbildern. *JDAI* 52: 30–75.
Scullion, S. 2005. "Pilgrimage" and Greek Religion: Sacred and Secular in the Pagan Polis. In Elsner and Rutherford 2005, 111–30.
Spivey, N. 1996. *Understanding Greek Sculpture: Ancient Meanings, Modern Readings*. New York.
Steiner, D. T. 2001. *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought*. Princeton, N.J.
Vernant, J.-P. 1991a. From the "Presentification" of the Invisible to the Imitation of Appearance. In Vernant 1991c, 151–63.
————. 1991b. Mortals and Immortals: The Body of the Divine. In Vernant 1991c, 27–49.
————. 1991c. *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*. Ed. F. Zeitlin. Princeton, N.J.
————. 1991d. Speech and Mute Signs. In Vernant 1991c, 303–17.