

PARMENIDES, B 8. 4

μόνος δ' ἔτι μῦθος ὁδοῖο
 λέιπεται ὡς ἔστιν· ταύτῃ δ' ἐπὶ σήματ' ἔασι
 πολλὰ μάλ', ὡς ἀγένητον ἐὼν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἐστιν
 4 οὔλον μουννο†γενές† τε καὶ ἀτρεμές ἦδὲ τελεστόν.

1-52 Simpl. in *Ph.* 145. 1-146. 25 1-14 Simpl. in *Ph.* 78. 8-23 3-5 Simpl. in *Ph.* 30. 1-3 3-4 Clem. *Strom.* v. 14, 112. 2, Euseb. *PE* xiii. 13, 39 4 Simpl. in *Ph.* 120. 23, in *Cael.* 557. 18, Plut. *adv. Colot.* 1114 c, Procl. *Comm. in Platonis Parm.* 1152. 25 Cousin, Ps.-Plut. *Strom.* 5 = Diels *Dox.* 580. 24, Theod. *gr. aff. cur.* ii. 108, iv. 7, Philop. in *Ph.* 65. 7

4 οὔλον μουννογενές Simpl., Clem., Theod. iv. 7, Philop.: μουννον μουννογενές Euseb., Theod. ii. 108, Ps.-Plut.: [ἔστι γὰρ] οὔλομελές Plut.: οὔλομελές Procl. ἦδὲ τελεστόν Covotti: ἦδ' ἀτέλεστον Simpl. in *Ph.* 30, 78, 145: ἦδ' ἀγένητον Simpl. in *Ph.* 120, in *Cael.*, Clem., Euseb., Theod., Plut., Procl., Ps.-Plut., Philop.

THE text of Parmenides 8. 4 is unusually corrupt. Most recent critics, however, agree that Plutarch's ἔστι γὰρ οὔλομελές, printed in the later editions of Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, should be excluded in favour of οὔλον μουννογενές. As G. E. L. Owen remarks ('Eleatic Questions', *CQ* [1960], 102), '[Plutarch's] γὰρ is inappropriate since ἀδιαίρετον is to be proved from ἀγένητον ἀνώλεθρον and not vice versa'. Without the argumentative γὰρ, lines 3-4 function as a list of the σήματα to be discussed later in the fragment. Thus ἀγένητον ἀνώλεθρον is treated at 8. 5-21, οὔλον μουννογενές at 8. 22-5, ἀτρεμές at 8. 26-33, and, adopting Covotti's τελεστόν, the culminating characteristic of finality or completion is treated at 8. 42-9.¹

But even if we reject Plutarch's text, the original difficulty which led Kranz and others to prefer Plutarch's ἔστι γὰρ οὔλομελές to Simplicius' οὔλον μουννογενές remains. For μουννογενές, 'only begotten', appears to contradict ἀγένητον, 'not begotten', in the previous line. In an effort to skirt the difficulty, interpreters (including LSJ) have suggested a meaning 'of one γένος', i.e. 'sui generis', 'unique'. They rely mostly on two passages from Plato's *Timaeus*, though Tarán (op. cit. 92) quotes as a pre-Platonic example Aesch. *Ag.* 898. But there μουννογενές τέκνον means 'only begotten child' and it seems an unjustified quibble on Tarán's part to suggest that 'the father might have begotten other children who died young and so the preservation of his name rests on the only surviving son'. Even in Plato there is no real justification for ever interpreting μουννογενής as 'sui generis'. In the passages listed in Ast's *Lexicon*, μουννογενής is used conventionally at *Criti.* 113 d and *Laws* 691 d. Only at *Tim.* 31 b and 92 c is there any possible ambiguity. Interestingly enough, *Tim.* 31 b forms part of a passage heavily influenced by Parmenides in its uncompromising distinction between the world of Becoming and the world of Being. The question posed about τὸ πᾶν at 27 c is ἥ γέγονεν ἢ καὶ ἀγενές ἐστιν. This distinction

¹ Owen, loc. cit., sees the need for some such emendation. Covotti's solution is defended by Leonardo Tarán in his commentary ad loc. (*Parmenides, a text with translation, commentary and critical essays*,

Princeton, 1965). Simplicius reads ἀγένητον in line 4 only when he quotes the line in isolation. In context it is altogether ruled out by the ἀγένητον of the previous line.

between birth and non-birth is later amplified as an opposition between τὸ ὄν αἰεί, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον and τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν αἰεί, ὄν δὲ οὐδέποτε (27 d). Though the latter is not accessible to reason, and is only an object of belief, it is worth giving an account of it that 'yields to none in likelihood' (exactly the attitude of Parmenides in his Way of Seeming). In the whole section *Tim.* 28–30 the idea of birth is repeated time and again, as if to emphasize the unreliability of the world of appearance. At 31 a Timaeus brings up the new question of how many worlds there are, and immediately concludes that the visible Cosmos must be single like its ideal model. ἵνα οὖν τόδε κατὰ τὴν μόνωσιν ὁμοιον ᾗ τῷ παντελεῖ ζῳῳ, διὰ ταῦτα οὔτε δύο οὔτ' ἀπείρους ἐποίησεν ὁ ποιῶν κόσμους, ἀλλ' εἰς ὃδε μονογενῆς οὐρανὸς γεγενῶς ἔστιν καὶ ἔτ' ἔσται. In this latter passage the two ideas of uniqueness and generation which have been developed just before are expressed independently by εἰς and γεγενῶς and in combination by μονογενῆς. Precisely the same duplication occurs in the concluding sentence of the work (92 c), where the visible God of Becoming is described as an εἰκὼν τοῦ νοητοῦ θεοῦ αἰσθητός, μέγιστος καὶ ἄριστος κάλλιστός τε καὶ τελεώτατος γέγονεν εἰς οὐρανὸς ὃδε μονογενῆς ὢν. Of course in both passages μονογενῆς is pleonastic, and it is to avoid such a pleonasm that interpreters posit a meaning 'sui generis'. But μονογενῆς here is no more pleonastic than at *Criti.* 113 d (Κλειτὴ δὲ μονογενὴ θυγάτηρ ἐγεννησάσθη) and, unlike its use there, in *Timaeus* it effectively underlines the leading ideas of the argument. And even if, without any supporting evidence, we insist on translating μονογενῆς in Plato as 'unique', we must admit that this does not iron out the difficulty in Parmenides. In *Timaeus*, Plato is talking of the world of γένεσις, so that, however we interpret μονογενῆς, the suffix -γενῆς does not contradict the underlying thought. But at 8. 4 Parmenides is talking about a reality which is specifically ἀγένητον (8. 3), so that, however we interpret μονογενῆς, the suffix -γενῆς must clash with his basic argument.

Proponents of the meaning 'sui generis' point to the derivation of the -γενῆς suffix from γένος.¹ But a glance at Buck's *Reverse Index* (pp. 723–4) shows that in the vast majority of cases the suffix -γενῆς = 'begotten'. Before Plato, only in συγγενῆς, ὁμογενῆς, and ἀγενῆς (in the sense of 'ignoble') can the -γενῆς suffix have the meaning 'kin' = γένος.²

In view of the awkwardness of μουννογενές, it is worth looking again at Plutarch's οὐλομελές, particularly as the preceding words ἐστὶ γάρ, which militate against Plutarch's text, are probably not even part of Plutarch's quotation (nor indeed are they printed as such in R. Westman's revision of Pohlenz's Teubner text [Leipzig, 1959]). As Tugwell remarks (*CQ* lviii [1964], 38, n. 1), 'γάρ makes good sense in Plutarch, but nonsense in Parmenides'. External support for beginning Plutarch's quotation with οὐλομελές is provided by Proclus, who is the only other writer besides Plutarch to attest οὐλομελές and who, like Plutarch, begins his quotation with it: λέγει γοῦν ἐκεῖνος ποτὲ μὲν "οὐλομελές τε καὶ ἀτρεμές ἦδ' ἀγένητον" (*Comment. in Platonis Parm.* 1152. 24–5 Cousin).

But even though οὐλομελές without ἐστὶ γάρ is an improvement on μουννογενές,

¹ See Pierre Chantraine, *La Formation des noms en Grec ancien* (Paris, 1933), 424.

² But cf. the meanings 'inborn' for συγγενῆς and 'unborn' for ἀγενῆς, which shows that even in these words the sense 'begotten'

is operative in the suffix. To this isolated trio of -γενῆς = 'kin' words, Plato adds ἡμιγενῆς and the pair ἰδιογενῆς/κοινογενῆς, while Aristotle contributes ἑτερογενῆς.

it is not completely satisfactory. For one thing, it is not attested elsewhere.¹ More important, it would normally imply divisibility into parts (see Tarán's commentary), as when Hippocrates (*De Nutrimento* 9. 106 L.) contrasts *κατὰ μὲν οὐλομελίην* with *κατὰ μέρος δέ*. Furthermore, if we discard *ἐστι γάρ* and replace it with *οὔλον* from Simplicius' text, we have the unmetrical and repetitious sequence *οὔλον οὔλο-*.

A solution is to eliminate the awkward prefix in Plutarch and the illogical suffix in Simplicius, and so arrive at the compound *μονομελές*, 'single-limbed' which is an effective and logical amplification of *οὔλον*. Unlike *οὐλομελές*, *μονομελές* assertively denies any possibility of subdivision, an idea which is duly worked out at 8. 22 ff. (*οὐδὲ διαιρετόν ἐστιν*). And far from being unattested, the word is used by Empedocles, presumably in imitation of Parmenides, to convey exactly that sense of indivisibility which we require here. At Empedocles B 58 the *γυῖα* that under the force of *Νεῖκος* have reached the point where they can no longer undergo division are described as *μονομελῆ*. We should accordingly read Parmenides 8. 4 as *οὔλον μονομελές τε καὶ ἀτρεμὲς ἤδὲ τελεστόν*.

The corruptions in the first half of the line are fairly easily explained. Plutarch's *οὐλομελές* could be the result of a conflation of the preceding *οὔλον* with *μοννο-*. This parallels the corruption of *οὔλον* itself into *μοῦνον* in Eusebius, Theodoretus, and Ps.-Plut. *Strom*. The corruption *μοννογενές* in Simplicius and other *testimonia*, the earliest of which is Clement, can best be explained as the substitution of the familiar Christian epithet 'only begotten' for that strange and perhaps puzzling 'single-limbed'.²

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¹ Littré introduces it by emendation at Hippocr. *Anat.* 8. 540 L.

² Cf. Karl Meister, *Die homerische Kunst-*

sprache (Leipzig, 1921; repr. Darmstadt, 1966), 207.