

## XXIV. The Neoplatonic One and Plato's *Parmenides*

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### I

As long ago as 1928 Professor E. R. Dodds<sup>1</sup> demonstrated the dependence of the One of Plotinus on an interpretation of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. His demonstration has been universally accepted. But Dodds not only showed the dependence of Plotinus on the *Parmenides* but also offered an account of the history of the doctrine of the One between the late fourth century B.C. and the third century A.D. His view is that the first three hypotheses of the *Parmenides* were already treated in what we should call a Neoplatonic fashion by Moderatus, a Neopythagorean of the second half of the first century A.D.; further, that Moderatus was not the originator of this interpretation, whose origins can in fact be traced back through Eudorus (ca. 25 B.C.) and the Neopythagoreans of his day to the Old Academy. Though Dodds is somewhat unclear at this point,<sup>2</sup> he seems to suggest that already before the time of Eudorus the *Parmenides* was being interpreted in Neopythagorean fashion.

In order to check this derivation, we should look at the three stages of it in detail. These stages are the Neopythagoreanism of Moderatus, the theories of Eudorus, and those of Speusippus and the Old Academy in general. In opposition to Professor A. H. Armstrong, who used to hold that the One of Speusippus was less than Being, rather than "beyond Being," Dr. Ph. Merlan<sup>3</sup> has recently shown that the Aristotelian texts on which Armstrong's account was based are better interpreted in the light of chapter four of Iamblichus' *De communi mathematica scientia*. Merlan shows that the system of Speusippus is not an "evolutionary"

<sup>1</sup> E. R. Dodds, "The *Parmenides* of Plato and the Origins of the Neoplatonic One", *CQ* 22 (1928) 129-42.

<sup>2</sup> Dodds (above, note 1) 139.

<sup>3</sup> Ph. Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague 1953) 86-118. A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge 1940) 22.

one, and that Speusippus' One is beyond Being. Yet the system of Speusippus is a dualism; his One is not the cause of all, and is thus, as we shall see, unlike the Neopythagorean One which Dodds regards as proto-Neoplatonic. We may therefore leave Speusippus aside. His One can have affected Neoplatonism only very indirectly, if at all.

Let us now turn to the other end of the chain and consider Moderatus. The relevant passage is from Simplicius' commentary<sup>4</sup> on Aristotle's *Physics* and has, in general, been correctly interpreted by Dodds.<sup>5</sup> Dodds summarizes the argument of Simplicius as follows: "This conception of Matter goes back to Plato, and ultimately to the Pythagoreans, as Moderatus relates: *for* (γὰρ) Moderatus shows that the *Parmenides* is to be interpreted on Pythagorean lines (κατὰ τοὺς Πυθαγορείους), and that when so interpreted it is found to contain this conception of matter."

Moderatus is trying to prove that the Pythagorean doctrine of matter was taken over by Plato in his *Parmenides* and that if this dialogue is rightly interpreted, it can easily be found there. This "right interpretation" by Moderatus includes the discovery of what was to become the Neoplatonic doctrine of the three Ones. Now Simplicius is not trying to demonstrate that Plato's alleged doctrine of three Ones is Pythagorean, but to show that when Moderatus offered his "right interpretation" of the *Parmenides* as a dialogue containing the Pythagorean doctrine of matter, this interpretation involved the doctrine of the three Ones. There is no reason to assume from this passage that either Simplicius or Moderatus knew of a pre-Moderatan tradition of Neopythagoreanism which had already discovered in embryo the Plotinian doctrine of the three Ones in the *Parmenides*. In other words, as far as this passage goes, there is no evidence that anyone earlier than Moderatus supposed that Plato's *Parmenides* was to be interpreted in what was to become the Neoplatonic manner. It is my view that such an interpretation of the first three hypotheses was in fact first offered by Moderatus as support for the Neopythagorean theory of matter, and that earlier thinkers who, according to Dodds, were precursors of this view, knew only of a Neopythagorean concept of the One which had nothing

<sup>4</sup> *In Phys.* A.7, 230.34–231.49 Diels.

<sup>5</sup> Dodds (above, note 1) 136–38.

to do with the *Parmenides*. There are three Ones in the passage of Moderatus; what, if anything, have *three* Ones to do with Neopythagoreanism *before* Moderatus? If three Ones cannot be discovered, but say, only one, there are many more likely sources for a single One than Plato's *Parmenides*, both in Plato himself and elsewhere.

Our knowledge of Neopythagoreanism is pitifully small, but since Dodds has claimed that the evidence about it given by Eudorus is relevant to our search, we must first examine what he has to say and discover—if possible—a coherent account of the Neopythagorean doctrines, and then compare this account with that given by Alexander Polyhistor, who is our oldest authority for the school.

The passage of Eudorus, quoted verbatim by Simplicius,<sup>6</sup> is too long to be reproduced here, but certain key sentences will be sufficient for our purposes:

κατὰ τὸν ἀνωτάτω λόγον φατέον τοὺς Πυθαγορικοὺς τὸ ἐν ἀρχὴν τῶν πάντων λέγειν, κατὰ δὲ τὸν δεύτερον λόγον δύο ἀρχὰς τῶν ἀποτελουμένων εἶναι, τὸ τε ἐν καὶ τὴν ἐναντίαν τούτῳ φύσιν . . . διὸ καὶ κατ' ἄλλον τρόπον ἀρχὴν ἔφασαν εἶναι τῶν πάντων τὸ ἐν, ὡς ἂν καὶ τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῶν ὄντων πάντων ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγενημένων. τοῦτο δὲ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ὑπεράνω θεόν. . . . φημί τοίνυν τοὺς περὶ τὸν Πυθαγόραν τὸ μὲν ἐν πάντων ἀρχὴν ἀπολιπεῖν, κατ' ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον δύο τὰ ἀνωτάτω στοιχεῖα παρεισάγειν . . . ὥστε ὡς μὲν ἀρχὴ τὸ ἐν, ὡς δὲ στοιχεῖα τὸ ἐν καὶ ἡ ἀόριστος δυάς, ἀρχαὶ ἄμφω ἐν ὄντα πάλιν. καὶ δῆλον ὅτι ἄλλο μὲν ἐστὶν ἐν ἡ ἀρχὴ τῶν πάντων, ἄλλο δὲ ἐν τὸ τῇ δυάδι ἀντικείμενον, ὃ καὶ μονάδα καλοῦσιν.

We may draw a number of conclusions about this passage:

a. That Eudorus attributes two aspects to the Pythagorean account of the first principles of things: that "the One" is the *ἀρχή* of all things, and again that there are two *ἀρχαί*, the One and its opposite.

b. That Mr. Raven is right<sup>7</sup> to suggest that *φημί* in *φημί τοίνυν τοὺς περὶ τὸν Πυθαγόραν κτλ.* means that Eudorus is here *interpreting* rather than quoting his sources, and also that *δῆλον ὅτι* in the last sentence introduces a mere conjecture.

c. That Eudorus' *interpretation* of the Pythagoreans is that the One was their *ἀρχή* whereas their *στοιχεῖα* were τὸ ἐν and ἡ ἀόριστος δυάς. Hence there were two different Ones.

<sup>6</sup> *In Phys.* A.5, 181.10–30 Diels.

<sup>7</sup> J. E. Raven, *Pythagoreans and Eleatics* (Cambridge 1948) 15.

d. That the One opposed to the Dyad was called the Monad.

e. That Neopythagoreanism (as known to Eudorus) was a monistic system in which the One was in some sense prior to all duality. (I accept without reservation the view of Mr. Raven that Eudorus' account is on this matter quite valueless as evidence for pre-Platonic Pythagoreanism. It is however invaluable for the study of Neopythagoreanism.)

Our next step must be to attempt to disinter what is Pythagorean in this account from Eudorus' interpretation. Eudorus thinks that the Pythagoreans posited two Ones, and called the inferior a monad. This does not tally with the other evidence at our disposal. Alexander Polyhistor's view is in fact quite different on the subject of the Monad. His words are:<sup>8</sup> ἀρχὴν μὲν ἀπάντων μονάδα· ἐκ δὲ τῆς μονάδος ἀόριστον δυάδα ὡς ἂν ὕλην τῇ μονάδι αἰτίῳ ὄντι ὑποστήναι. In other words, the Monad is not an inferior One, but is prior to all things and the source of the Indefinite Dyad. In view of this, we should revert to the passage of Eudorus and immediately observe that it is part of Eudorus' conjecture that the Pythagoreans call the second One a Monad. In the section where there is no question of interpretations by Eudorus having crept into the text, there is no mention of a Monad. It seems likely that Eudorus knew that the Pythagoreans used the term Monad but did not fully understand how, and therefore conjectured about its use as the name of a secondary principle. Some light may be shed later on the reasons for this conjecture.

We may now proceed further. In the doctrines of the Pythagoreans as seen in this passage—apart from Eudorus' interpretations of those doctrines—perhaps there are not two Ones at all. Do the Pythagoreans here speak of the One that is the cause of all things—which they call ὁ ὑπεράνω θεός—as well as the One that is opposed to the Dyad? Is there any reason why in a monistic system these two Ones should not be the same? That they are the same would be the natural conclusion to be drawn from the parallel passage of Alexander Polyhistor that has been discussed above. Alexander says that the Monad is the ἀρχή, and that from it arises the Indefinite Dyad which acts as its substrate. In this passage the Monad then appears to function twice, first as prime cause,

<sup>8</sup> *Ap. Diog. Laer.* 8.25.

then as joint cause with the Dyad. Alexander is our oldest authority for ideas current among the Neopythagoreans and his remarks should be given due weight. He only knows of a single One. The views of the Neopythagoreans of Eudorus—when separated from the conjectures of Eudorus himself—could tally with those of Alexander. If in fact the Neopythagoreans only posited a single One but Eudorus supposed that they posited two, it is easy to see how he could limit the title Monad to one of them. Eudorus suggests that it is the One that is opposed to the Indefinite Dyad which the Neopythagoreans called the Monad, whereas Alexander Polyhistor recognizes only a single One which has two cosmogonic functions but which he refers to in both cases as the Monad. Thus we may suppose that the Pythagoreans of Eudorus, like those of Alexander Polyhistor, posited a single One with two functions. In its function as Supreme Cause it was called *ὁ ὑπεράνω θεός*; in both its functions it was probably described as the Monad. This conclusion is borne out by Hippolytus,<sup>9</sup> who remarks of Pythagoras that *μονάδα μὲν εἶναι ἀπεφύνατο τὸν θεόν*, and by Aëtius<sup>10</sup> who, though speaking anachronistically about Pythagoreanism as a single theory and thus describing the Monad as one of a pair of opposites, nevertheless still regards it as God.

Dodds has suggested that in Eudorus there is an ultimate and a derivative Unity.<sup>11</sup> This has appeared to be true of Eudorus' interpretation of the Pythagoreans, but not of the Pythagoreans themselves. The passage of Alexander Polyhistor tells against its being Pythagorean. The other passages cited by Dodds<sup>12</sup> to prove the existence of two unities for the Pythagoreans are later and therefore less reliable. The remark of Proclus, upon which Dodds seems to place the most reliance (*προηγείται γὰρ τὸ ἐν ἀπάσης ἐναντιώσεως, ὡς οἱ Πυθαγόρεοί φασιν*),<sup>13</sup> need not in fact be more than a Neoplatonic misinterpretation of Pythagoreanism, an effort to find in that system the Neoplatonic doctrine of two (or more) Ones. The Monad of Alexander Polyhistor might in one of its aspects be described as *προηγούμενη ἀπάσης ἐναντιώσεως*, but as well as being the cause of all things, it is also

<sup>9</sup> *Refut.* 1.2.2.

<sup>10</sup> 1.7.18.

<sup>11</sup> Dodds (above, note 1) 135–36.

<sup>12</sup> Dodds (above, note 1) 136, note 2.

<sup>13</sup> *In Tim.* 54D (1.176.9 ff. Diehl).

the One to which its own product, the Dyad, acts as substrate. But even if the evidence of Proclus is to be interpreted as Dodds supposes—which I grant cannot be disproved—there is no reason why Proclus should have been dealing with Pythagoreanism earlier than that of Moderatus. In Moderatus, as Dodds has shown, there are three Ones—they derive from the *Parmenides*; in Eudorus' Pythagoreans there is probably only one. Thus even if Proclus is absolutely accurate in his remarks, he gives us no reliable evidence about the pre-Moderatan period. This being so, the evidence of Eudorus and Alexander Polyhistor must be accepted.

We have suggested that Eudorus misread the doctrines of the Pythagoreans and in doing so found two Ones. He thought, wrongly, that the term Monad should be referred solely to the lower of the two. It is incumbent upon us now to suggest why he should have been led to this interpretation. In other words we must attempt, on admittedly very meager evidence, to see some aspects of the thought of Eudorus himself in a little more detail.

The only certain thing we know of Eudorus' metaphysic is that it was monistic. Such must be the reason for his well-known emendation of Aristotle which is reported in Alexander of Aphrodisias, quoting Aspasius. Alexander says that in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 988A, 10–11, where the text—an account of Plato—reads τὰ γὰρ εἶδη τοῦ τί ἐστὶν αἴτια τοῖς ἄλλοις, τοῖς δ' εἶδεσιν τὸ εἶν, Eudorus and an elsewhere unknown Euarmostus (Pythagorean name!) read τοῖς δ' εἶδεσιν τὸ εἶν καὶ τῇ ὕλῃ—thus translating Plato into a monist who derived everything, including matter, from the One.

But we also learn from this text that Eudorus took an interest in the interpretation of Plato in general—a deduction which is supported by Plutarch who knows of a commentary on the *Timaeus* from Eudorus' hand.<sup>14</sup> He appears to have regarded himself as an Academic, though his ethics were in all probability largely of Stoic origin. Yet it may have been to some traditional Platonist account of a passage in the *Philebus* to which his readiness to attribute an inferior role to the Monad is due.

In Damascius' lectures on the *Philebus*, we find an extraordinary interpretation of 15A-B. Plato describes Forms such

<sup>14</sup> *De an. procr.* 1013B, 1019E, 1020C.

as Man, Ox and Beauty first as *ἐνάδες*, then, only a little below, as *μονάδες*. There is no question but that *ἐνός* and *μονός* are synonyms. But such an obvious explanation is far too simple for Damascius or for his source. Damascius<sup>15</sup> writes as follows: "What he calls monads and henads are the apices (*κορυφάς*) of the Forms: henads, as seen in relation to the multitudes depending on them; monads, as related to supra-existential principles" (trans. Westerink). Although both "monad" and "henad" are interpreted as names for Forms, Damascius prefers to call Forms "monads" rather than "henads" when they are being contrasted with what is "beyond Being". A similar passage is to be found in Proclus' commentary on the *Parmenides*<sup>16</sup> where we read that "Socrates in the *Philebus* at one time calls the Forms henads, at another monads." Proclus goes on to explain that the Forms are *μονάδες* when compared with the One itself (*αὐτὸ τὸ ἓν*) but may be called *ἐνάδες* in comparison with particulars. Thus when discussing the Forms in relation to the One both Damascius and Proclus interpreted the *Philebus* as teaching that we should say that the One is prior to the Monads. Compared with the One, a Form is not worthy of the name "henad"; better to call it "monad." As Dodds has said,<sup>17</sup> "Proclus interprets the passage (of the *Philebus*) as referring to the Forms, which are called *μονάδες* as belonging to the world of Being, but *ἐνάδες* in respect of their transcendent unity." It is clear that although for Proclus and Damascius the names "henad" and "monad" both designate Forms, "henad" is the more honorific title.

Dodds<sup>18</sup> has also pointed out that in a passage of Theon of Smyrna<sup>19</sup> we read the following: *καὶ γὰρ εἰ παρὰ Πλάτωνα ἐνάδες εἴρηνται ἐν Φιλήβῳ, οὐ παρὰ τὸ ἓν ἐλέχθησαν, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν ἐνάδα, ἥτις ἐστὶ μονὰς μετοχῇ τοῦ ἐνός*. This means, says Dodds, "that *ἐνάδες* is the plural not of *the* One but of *a* one". In other words, whatever else Theon is doing in this passage, we can be certain that he is protesting against an interpretation of *αἱ ἐνάδες* as the plural of *τὸ ἓν*. Presumably such an interpretation was possible for a denial of it to be necessary. Those who put forward

<sup>15</sup> *Lectures on the Philebus* 44 (page 23 Westerink).

<sup>16</sup> *In Parm.* 880.30.

<sup>17</sup> E. R. Dodds, *Elements of Theology* (Oxford 1933) 258.

<sup>18</sup> Dodds (above, note 17) 258, note 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Expos. rer. math.* 21.14 Hiller.

such an interpretation might have deduced from the etymological connection between τὸ ἓν and ἡ ἐνάς that the henad is nearer the One than the monad and thus superior to it. It is certainly to such superiority that the passages from Proclus and Damascius refer.

Finally we may look briefly at a section of the *Enneads*. In 6.6.9, Plotinus alludes, I believe, to the *Philebus* passage, though Dodds (258) seems to suppose that he is thinking only of Neopythagoreanism. Plotinus tells us that the Forms have been described as Henads and Numbers. His own interpretation of this is as follows: that the Forms as a whole are Authentic Number (ὁ οὐσιώδης ἀριθμός); that individual Forms are ἀριθμοί or ἐνάδες; and that "monadic" number is an image of the Forms. This is not the same doctrine as that taught in the passages of Proclus and Damascius, but there is the same implication of the inferiority of the monad to the henad. If Dodds is right in believing that the people who described the Forms as Henads and Numbers were Neopythagoreans, it is even more interesting that the term μονάς does not itself occur. Be that as it may, there seems to be a tradition visible in Damascius, Proclus, Plotinus and possibly Theon of the superiority of the henad to the monad. The nature of the discussion in *Ennead* 6.6.9 should at least show that it is likely that this distinction is not merely an invention of Plotinus, but a doctrine with which the Platonic tradition had made him familiar.

Plotinus suggests and Theon may possibly verify the antiquity of the notion of the superiority of the henad to the monad. Theon's date is *ca.* 130 A.D. It is not impossible that a similar doctrine was known to Eudorus. And if it *was* known to Eudorus, we have the explanation of how he came to find two Ones in Neopythagoreanism, and why, contrary to the account of Alexander Polyhistor, he supposed that the Neopythagoreans must have called their inferior One the Monad. We should remember that this Monad is the One that accompanies the Indefinite Dyad, the One that is inferior to τὸ ἓν in its primary sense. The Theon passage suggests that some thinkers regarded τὸ ἓν and ἡ ἐνάς as interchangeable—at least in as much as αἱ ἐνάδες was the plural version of both of them. If Eudorus knew of any such view, he might have supposed that the Pythagorean primal One was ἡ ἐνάς and the second ἡ μονάς. This



would then be a natural Platonist interpretation of Pythagoreanism, and the misunderstanding of the term "monad" would thus be a Platonist misinterpretation. That it is a misinterpretation is suggested by the different use of *μονάς* in Alexander Polyhistor.

Thus if we may sum up our conclusions so far, we may say that Eudorus, a Platonist, when reading Pythagorean doctrines about the One, interpreted them in such a way as to suppose that there were two Ones, and that this misinterpretation may have been caused by a traditional "understanding" of the *Philebus*.

But in all this there has appeared no trace of any interpretation of the *Parmenides*. Moderatus' interpretation of the dialogue discussed three Ones. In the Neopythagoreanism misinterpreted by Eudorus there is probably only a single One, and at most not more than two. The only evidence, or apparent evidence, in Eudorus' account that suggests Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Parmenides* is the phrase *τὸν ὑπεράνω θεόν*, a title given, according to Eudorus, to the *ἐν ἀρχῇ*. Dodds believes that this transcendent unity is comparable with the transcendent One found by Moderatus in the *Parmenides*, and that it derives from the same source. But our discussion thus far has shed doubts on the presence of more than a single One in Pythagoreanism, and suggested that Eudorus himself only imagined two; yet a proto-Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Parmenides* would demand at least three. And for the phrase *τὸν ὑπεράνω θεόν*, a better source than the *Parmenides* can be suggested.

Dodds<sup>20</sup> points out that the sixth book of the *Republic* is one of the sources we are looking for. He compares a doctrine attributed by Syrianus<sup>21</sup> to pseudo-Brotinus. Syrianus is discussing what he regards as a unity prior to the opposites of Pythagoreanism. Archaenetus, he says, called this an *αἰτία πρὸ αἰτίας*, Philolaos spoke of it as *τῶν πάντων ἀρχά* while Brotinus supposed that *νοῦ παντός καὶ οὐσίας δυνάμει καὶ πρεσβείᾳ ὑπερέχει*. Similarly Syrianus<sup>22</sup> later says that Plato and Brotinus the Pythagorean held that the One and the Good are *ὑπερούσιον*. The doctrine Brotinus is thus supposed to have held is that the One and the Good are equivalent and that both of them are prior to all *νοῦς* and *οὐσία*. *Republic* 6 (509B) would give the information that

<sup>20</sup> Dodds (above, note 1) 136.

<sup>21</sup> *In Metaph.* N., 925b ff. 166 Kroll.

<sup>22</sup> *In Metaph.* N., 935b. 183 Kroll.

the Good is prior to all οὐσία and therefore presumably to all νοῦς, since νοῦς must be a part of οὐσία (*Sophist* 249A). Aristotle's *Metaphysics* supplies a passage<sup>23</sup> where the One and the Good are said to be equivalent in the eyes of the Platonists. It is true that in this passage the One may still be an οὐσία, but this is hardly enough to deter a determined eclectic—even if Plato was not certain about placing the One beyond Being. Thus without reference to the *Parmenides* the “Brotinus” passage can easily be explained—or almost explained. Ὑπερούσιον is accounted for, but what about θεόν? There are a number of possibilities here. It is known that, from a very early period, the Form of the Good was identified with the *Dēmiourgos* in the *Timaeus*. This combination would give the Good that is “beyond Being” the title of θεός. There is another, though rather less likely, source to be found in Xenocrates. Xenocrates appears to have referred to his first principle as the Monad and as Zeus and νοῦς. Even if here the use of the word νοῦς would not have satisfied pseudo-Brotinus, he could have found another precedent for the equating of his Monad with God.

We may now sum up the history of the origins of the Neoplatonic One as follows:

1. It was early believed (probably rightly) that Plato equated the One and the Good that is “beyond Being”.
2. “Plato’s” Good “beyond Being” was taken over into Pythagoreanism as the One. This One functioned twice; once as supreme cause, and again as joint στοιχεῖον with the Dyad (the name Dyad also being taken over from Plato).
3. Eudorus supposed that there were two Ones in Neopythagoreanism, misled perhaps by a traditional interpretation of the *Philebus*.
4. Moderatus, a Neopythagorean, offered a Neopythagorean interpretation of the *Parmenides*. This interpretation was the basis of the later Neoplatonic view.

It is important to notice that the supreme transcendence of the One has nothing to do with the *Parmenides*. What appears to have happened is that, knowing the doctrine of transcendence

<sup>23</sup> *Metaph.* N., 1091B, 13.

already, Moderatus found confirmation of his view in the *Parmenides*. In doing so, he incidentally discovered the famous *three* Ones of the Neoplatonic interpretation. No one before Moderatus spoke about there being three.

As Dodds<sup>24</sup> says: "Moderatus *shows* (my italics) that the *Parmenides* is to be interpreted on Pythagorean lines." The word used of Moderatus is ἀποφαίνεται. Even apart from the evidence we have brought to demonstrate that the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Parmenides* is no older than Moderatus, this word itself should suggest that Moderatus is not quoting a mere commonplace of the Neopythagorean tradition, but appealing to Plato as an additional support for that tradition.

There is one final point before we conclude our account of the problem up to the time of Moderatus. This arises out of a passage of pseudo-Alexander quoted by Dodds<sup>25</sup> as evidence in favor of the view that the Moderatus passage refers to the *Parmenides*. We read as follows:<sup>26</sup> οἱ μὲν, ὥσπερ Πλάτων καὶ Βροτῖνος ὁ Πυθαγόρειος, φασὶν ὅτι τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτὸ τὸ ἔν ἐστι καὶ οὐσίωται ἐν τῷ ἔν ἐῖναι. We have glanced at "Brotinus" already, and seen him as the repository for Platonizing Pythagorean views of a One that is ὑπερούσιον. I have suggested too that the Neopythagoreans known to Eudorus and those of Alexander Polyhistor had, in fact, only a single One which functioned twice in the scheme of things. It seems to me that pseudo-Alexander's passage teaches a similar doctrine. The One that is beyond οὐσία becomes a One that is being. It does not generate, in any Neoplatonic sense, such a derivative One-Being. It *becomes* being in so far as it *is* One. In this doctrine then, there are not two separate Ones (let alone three!) but a single One functioning twice. That "Brotinus" held this view is therefore not surprising. "Brotinus" was a Pythagorean and this view is the view of the Pythagoreans of Eudorus and of Alexander Polyhistor.

But pseudo-Alexander also attributes it to Plato, and Dodds believes that he must be thinking of the *Parmenides*. But is pseudo-Alexander thinking of Plato's writings themselves or of interpretations of them? Even if he is thinking directly of Plato's text, and of the *Parmenides* in particular, he is himself writing

<sup>24</sup> Dodds (above, note 1) 137.

<sup>25</sup> Dodds (above, note 1) 138.

<sup>26</sup> *In Metaph.* 800.32 Bonitz.

after Moderatus and thus cannot be assumed to supply good evidence about pre-Moderatan interpretations of the *Parmenides*. In brief then, pseudo-Alexander probably made his comment about Plato and "Brotinus" on the basis of correct knowledge about the Neopythagoreanism of "Brotinus" and of faith in the Moderatan interpretation of Plato. It is even possible that the pseudo-Alexander passage has nothing to do with the *Parmenides* at all—a possibility dismissed by Dodds without too much justification. In any case, pseudo-Alexander provides no additional evidence for Neopythagorean interpretation of the *Parmenides* earlier than that of Moderatus.

## II

After Moderatus the Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Parmenides* fails to appear in the writings of philosophers, as far as they have come down to us, until the time of Plotinus. As Dodds remarks,<sup>27</sup> there is no good reason to believe that Numenius called his First Mind τὸ εἶν, and even if he did, the phrase need have nothing to do with the *Parmenides*. Armstrong has suggested<sup>28</sup> that the "negative theology" found in Albinus' *Didaskalikos*<sup>29</sup> derives from the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. In view of the fact that elsewhere<sup>30</sup> Albinus treats the *Parmenides* as purely a logical work, he has to suppose however that, although the "negative theology" comes from the *Parmenides*, Albinus himself did not recognize the fact. But this appears rather difficult and, while of course admitting the existence of "negative theology" in Albinus, we may ask what it has to do with the *Parmenides*. In the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* as normally interpreted by the Neoplatonists we find that the One is knowable not by νοῦς but only when νοῦς is transcended. Yet Albinus opens chapter 10 with the words Ἀρρητος δ' ἐστὶ καὶ νῶ μόνῳ λεηπτός. He follows this up with the doctrine that the First mind is not genus, species, differentia, accident, evil, good, with or without quality, part, whole containing parts, the same as anything or other than anything. He adds that it neither moves nor is moved. The first items on this list are Aristotelian; perhaps the latter look more like something from the *Parmenides*. Yet even here we

<sup>27</sup> Dodds (above, note 1) 132, note 3.

<sup>28</sup> Armstrong (above, note 3) 10, 23.

<sup>29</sup> *Didask.* 10.4.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 6.

should be wary. Albinus thinks of the *Parmenides* as a work of logic. He probably saw in it an examination of the possible predicates of εἶν, but of any εἶν, not the One of Neoplatonism. Thus if Albinus' First Mind is described in terms drawn from the *Parmenides*, this does not mean that Moderatus' interpretation was known to him, and *even if it was*, he would not have accepted it, so long as he held that an Aristotelian νοῦς is the First Principle. Plotinus argues continually against such a νοῦς; his first principle is the One. He therefore could accept a metaphysical interpretation of the *Parmenides* where Albinus could not. Albinus may very well have felt able to accept the *Parmenides* as a valuable source for the construction of a "negative theology," while regarding the metaphysical interpretation of τὸ εἶν as a Pythagorean aberration. Albinus mixed his Platonism with Aristotelianism, but Plotinus, while retaining a good deal of Aristotle, was regarded by Porphyry as the greatest exponent of both the Platonic and the Pythagorean ἀρχαί.<sup>31</sup>

As Dodds has remarked, Moderatus must still have had considerable importance in the third century.<sup>32</sup> He was read in the schools of both Plotinus and Origen.<sup>33</sup> If we have interpreted the matter aright, his great importance in the history of ancient philosophy rests on his interpretation of the *Parmenides* on Pythagorean lines. This interpretation was read and accepted by Plotinus, who, in doing so, took a decisive step for the future of Platonism by dethroning the Aristotelian νοῦς from the rank of First Cause. Though other writers, such as Albinus, may have derived theories of "negative theology" from the *Parmenides* either directly or indirectly, only Moderatus before Plotinus explained the second part in a way which was to become, through the metaphysical genius of Plotinus, fundamental for Neoplatonic thought.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Vita Plot.* 20.

<sup>32</sup> Dodds (above, note 1) 139, note 3.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Porphyry, *Vita Plot.* 20 and Euseb., *HE* 6.19.8.

<sup>34</sup> I should like to thank Professor A. H. Armstrong and Mr. F. H. Sandbach for criticizing the first draft of this paper. They are not, of course, responsible for the views expressed, but have saved me from many errors.