

CHAPTER THREE

ONE GOD THREE GREEK EXPERIMENTS IN ONENESS*

Ik hou niet van 'één.' 'Één' is zo'n eenzaam woord (I do not like 'one'. 'One' is such a lonesome word).

Liselot (5 year)

ὄθεν καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον οἱ μὲν ἕνα φασὶν εἶναι θεόν, οἱ δὲ πολλοὺς καὶ διαφόρους ταῖς μορφαῖς (Hence ordinary people differ also, some saying that there is one god, others that there are many gods and of various shapes).

Sext. Emp. *Pyrr.* 3.219

1. INTRODUCTION

Ancient Greek religion was, as we have seen in our first chapter, unashamedly polytheistic. Hence the subject of the present chapter, that of 'oneness' in Greek religion Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic, may come as a surprise. I will discuss three Greek modes of bypassing, negotiating, reconciling, in short of coping with the alarming complexity of divine manifestations. The three relevant sections are entitled: "One and many," "Many is one," and "One is the god." The first concerns the Archaic, the last the Hellenistic period, the second discusses a phenomenon that can be found throughout Greek history. All three are 'experiments in oneness', which, on the face of it, attempt to redefine a diversity of phenomena as being basically a unity. I hope to show, however, that none of these theologies aims at fusing the polytheistic plurality itself into one unifying system or structure. Rather, in each of them, though in singularly different ways, the plurality and

* This title is both an indication of what this chapter is about and an allusion to my book *TER UNUS* (1990), on which the third section of the present chapter leans heavily and to which in this chapter I shall refer by its title in order to avoid an irritating repetition of 'Versnel 1990'. I wish to express my deep gratitude to Barbara Porter for her scrutiny in trying to clear the text of an earlier version (published in Porter 2000, 79–163) from flaws and barbarisms in the English and even more for her acute comments on lack of clarity in argument or composition as well as for her numerous suggestions for improvement.

multiformity of polytheism remains unaffected: ‘the many gods’ do not merge into ‘the one’ nor are they explained as emanations or aspects of the one. Both, many and one, maintain a more or less independent position in the conceptual world of the believers.¹

As a matter of fact, my exposition sprouts from a critical reflection on the dogmatic modern idea(l?) of ‘unity in diversity’, often advanced with more conviction than supportive argument. The axiom, endorsed by many a specialist, that the Greeks perceived an underlying unity in the diversity of religious phenomena,² in fact leaves us with more questions than answers. What, precisely, do scholars *mean* by such an assertion as for instance in the words of Walter Burkert “the whole

¹ This may also serve as a clarification of the position I defend in *TER UNUS*, which Price 1999, 11 n. 3 seriously misrepresents when he ranges me among those scholars who “have sought to ‘rescue’ polytheism by arguing for an element of mono-latry or henotheism, in which the power of one god in the pantheon is proclaimed as supreme.” If, as becomes apparent in recent scholarly discussion (e.g. Athanassiadi & Frede 1999; Mitchell & Van Nuffelen 2010), I indeed have contributed to reanimating the study of henotheistic tendencies in Greek religion, the very last objective of that was thus to “rescue polytheism” (nor to attack it, for that matter).

² Or, at the least, did not experience a divide between the two. Just a few instances out of many: E. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums* III (1937) 706: “In Griechenland vollends hat die Frage, ob ein Gott oder viele Götter, kaum eine Rolle gespielt; ob die göttliche Macht als Einheit oder als Vielheit gedacht wird, ist irrelevant....”; Th. Zielinski, *La religion de la Grèce antique* (transl. Paris 1926) 125 f.: “dans le domaine divin, l’unité et la multiplicité se confondent”; Rudhardt 1966, 355: “ce qui est essentiel au polythéisme, c’est que l’unité du divin et la pluralité des noms ou des figures divines, la pluralité des dieux, ne sont pas senties par eux comme contradictoire.” And so on and so forth. Gladigow 1990b, 249 f., already argued against such an “alle Lebenszüge umfassenden Sinntotalität” as generally attributed to pre-modern societies by sociologists of religion. In anthropology the quest for wholeness is under critical discussion. See e.g. K.P. Ewing, *The Illusion of Wholeness: Culture, Self, and the Experience of Inconsistency*, *Ethos* 18 (1990) 251–278. The author suggests that the observer will always maintain *the illusion* of wholeness, despite the presence of multiple inconsistent self-representations that are context-dependent and may shift rapidly. Confronted with inconsistencies, they are “adept at using multiple rhetorical strategies, relying on ambiguity and tropes to establish a position.” Even more essentially I.C. Jarvie, *Rationality and Relativism: In Search of a Philosophy and History of Anthropology* (London 1984) 15, censures the anthropologists’s drive to find integrity of society and culture: the apparently ‘irrational’ behaviour and conceptions of the alien culture are made harmless by taking them as elements of a holistic system which in itself is after all “ordinary in its own right.” Or cf. M. Strathern, *Out of Context: The Persuasive Fictions of Anthropology*, *Current Anthropology* 28 (1987) 251–281, espec. 260, who scorns the anthropologist’s main task as “how to manipulate familiar ideas and concepts to convey alien ones.” All this implies that cultures are not the coherent systems they have been assumed to be. Nor are their theologies. See also below n. 230.

is more than the sum of the parts”?³ And how do you prove such a general statement? Before we can answer these questions, our first task should be to examine *how* the very concepts of unity and plurality relate to each other in Greek perception.⁴

The three experiments in oneness that I shall discuss differ in their points of departure (in terms of historical setting, intellectual climate and social support), in their cosmological presuppositions and implications, and in the nature of the discourse in which they are embedded. Only one of them, the first, explicitly proclaimed a (more or less) overtly monotheistic theology. None of them solved and, as I hope to show, no one endeavoured to solve the problems haunting polytheism.

Because the terms cannot be avoided in our discussion, it may be expedient at this point to give my very provisional and personal working definitions of monotheism and henotheism⁵ in their ‘ideal’ forms. By *monotheism* I shall understand:

the conviction that only one god exists (involving the cultic corollary of exclusive worship), while other gods do not, or, if and as far as they do, must be *made* inexistent, for instance by relegating them beyond the political or cultic horizon of the community and attributing to them the status of powerless, wicked or demonic forces without any (real) significance.

The paradoxical qualifier in this working definition, beginning with “if and as far as they do . . . ,” dramatically exposes the author’s doubt whether one can ever speak of *pure* monotheism⁶ except for a few

³ Burkert 1985, 216.

⁴ Judging by the wealth of studies listed in the following footnotes, I have the impression that the ‘unity and diversity’ polarity—which is not necessarily identical to ‘one and many’—is more fundamentally problematized in studies of Egyptian and Near Eastern religions, in particular that of ancient Israel. See the recent collection of fundamental studies in Porter 2000.

⁵ Of course one can find hosts of variant definitions and discussions in the relevant entries of the well-known encyclopedias of religion. See e.g.: F. Baumgärtel, Monotheismus und Polytheismus, *RGG*³ IV (1960) 1109–1115; R. Hülsewiesche, Monotheismus, *HWP* VI (1984) 142–146; Chr. Schwöbel, Monotheismus, *ThR* 23 (1994) 233–262; C. Gunton, Monotheismus und Polytheismus, *RGG*⁴ V (2002) 1457–1467; Th.M. Ludwig, Monotheism, *Encyclopedia of Religion*² IX (2005) 6155–6163; J. Assmann, Monotheism and Polytheism, in: Johnston 2004, 17–31.

⁶ On this issue see below n. 227.

sectors of Islamic, Jewish,⁷ Christian⁸ and, more generally, philosophical systems. It is also the result of an attempt to accommodate the

⁷ Primarily in what Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (repr. New York 1971) called “The Yahweh Alone Party” as practically exclusively represented in (sections of) the book of Deuteronomy. Elsewhere monotheism is not the correct term for Jewish theology. First, there is the uncomfortable co-existence of God and the Hosts of Angels, as among others demonstrated by H. Corbin, *Le paradoxe du monothéisme* (Paris 1991 = 1981); P. Hayman, Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies? *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42 (1991) 1–15; K. Koch, Monotheismus und Angelologie, in: Dietrich & Klopfenstein 1994, 565–581. Most probably, it was ancient Canaanitic gods who continued their existence in the biblical angels, often in a rather caustic polemic with Yahweh. Cf. P. Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen* (Berlin 1975). A. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (Leiden 1977) and D. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot* (Tübingen 1988) argue for a ‘cooperative dualism’ between Yahweh and El at first, while later the place of vice-regent was taken by other powers, such as Michael. Secondly, there is the awkward female partner of Jahweh by name of Ashera, whose appearance in recently found inscriptions seems to have inspired OT scholars with a new spurt of courage to acknowledge what is (and was already long) obvious. See: J.M. Hadley, in: Dietrich & Klopfenstein 1994, 235–268; *eadem*, DDD s.v. Asherah; *eadem*, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess* (Cambridge 2000). For the general discussion concerning the definition of Israelite monotheism in various periods of its history, one may consult (and observe the gradual, but fundamental, shifts in appreciation in): Rose 1975; O. Keel (ed.), *Monotheismus im alten Israel und seiner Umwelt* (Fribourg 1980); B. Lang (ed.), *Der einzige Gott. Die Geburt des biblischen Monotheismus* (Munich 1981); E. Haag (ed.), *Gott, der einzige. Zur Entstehung des Monotheismus in Israel* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1985); J.H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods. Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (Atlanta 1986); E.B. Borowitz, *The Many Meanings of ‘God is One’* (New York 1988); J.C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism* (Leuven 1990); M.S. Smith, *The Early History of God. Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco 1990); Dietrich & Klopfenstein 1994; F. Stolz, *Einführung in den biblischen Monotheismus* (Darmstadt 1996); R.K. Gnuse, *No Other Gods. Emergent Monotheism in Israel* (Sheffield 1997); M. Weipert, *Jahwe und die anderen Götter: Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des antiken Israel in ihrem syrisch-palästinischen Kontext* (Tübingen 1997); Oeming & Schmid 2003.

⁸ See for instance a curious statement by the (not so very) monotheistic Paul. In 1 Cor. 8:4–6, he says that “we know that (...) there is no God but one,” which obviously implies a monotheistic conception. However, this phrase is immediately followed by: “For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God ...” (See also below n. 144). On this text see illuminatingly: J. Woyke, Das Bekenntnis zum einzig allwirksamen Gott und Herrn und die Dämonisierung von Fremdkulten: Monolatrischer und polylatrischer Monotheismus in 1 Korinther 8 und 10, in: J. Rüpke (ed.), *Gruppenreligionen im römischen Reich. Sozialformen, Grenzbeziehungen und Leistungen* (Tübingen 2007) 87–112. Early Christian monotheism was as precarious as that of the religion of early Israel. For New Testament ‘monotheism’ see: B.J. Pietaert Peerbolte, Jewish Monotheism and Christian Origins, in: A. Houtman, A. de Jong & M. Misses-Van de Weg (edd.), *Empsychoi Logoi. Religious Innovations in Antiquity. Studies in Honour of P.W. van der Horst* (Leiden 2008) 227–246. For early Christianity see e.g. MacMullen 1984, index s.v. monotheism.

concept of monolatry⁹ (exclusive worship of one god without explicit denial of the existence of other gods)¹⁰—which, too, is relevant to a very restricted number of religions, most specifically the one of Israel—with the larger and more universally applicable notion of monotheism. Of course, many differentiations such as ‘exclusive’, ‘inclusive’, ‘pluriform’ or ‘temporary’ monotheism have been proposed.¹¹

In using the term monotheism (as well as its opposite polytheism)¹² in terms of an ‘etic’ definitional and distinctive concept one should continuously be aware that the notion actually originated as an ‘emic’ construct in Christian theology. After its birth in antiquity (Philo), the term is, in modern times, first attested in the work of Henry More (1660).¹³ From the 18th century onwards it acquired its dogmatic and exclusivist status as marker of the identity of Old and New Testament religious thought, especially under the influence of Schleiermacher.¹⁴

In accordance with the evidence that I shall present in the third part of this chapter, *henotheism*¹⁵ may be defined as:

⁹ For an excellent and critical account of the history of monolatry (and henotheism) as technical terms see: R. Mackintosh, *Monolatry and henotheism*, *ERE* VIII (1915) 810 ff. Cf. more recently: Rose 1975, 9–13, Exkurs: Henotheismus, Monolatrie, Monotheismus.

¹⁰ Although in scholarly discussion henotheism and monolatry are often connected (e.g. Chr. Auffarth, *Henotheismus/Monolatrie*, in: *HrwG* III [1993] 104 f.), in my definition monolatry is *not* “Praktizierung des henotheismus.” W. Holsten, *Monolatrie*, in: *RGG*³ IV (1960) 1106. Here I rather follow F. Heiler, *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion* (Stuttgart 1961), 323; Rose 1975, 10, and others.

¹¹ See e.g. on various forms of ‘inclusive monotheism’ and ‘pluriform monotheism’ as he coined it: Th.P. van Baaren, *Pluriform Monotheism*, *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 20 (1965–66) 321–327. Recent works (as above n. 1) tend to use the notion ‘monotheism’ for both pagan and Christian trends in late antiquity. See the sensible discussion in Fürst 2006.

¹² For which see above Chapter I p. 24.

¹³ Hülsewiesche *o.c.* (above n. 5) 142 f.; Stolz *o.c.* (above n. 7) 22 ff.

¹⁴ “Erst Friedrich Schleiermacher mit seiner Einleitung zur zweite Auflage der Glaubenslehre von 1830/1831 hat den Begriff und die Sache des “monotheismus” zu einem identitätsbildenden Merkmal von Judentum, Christentum und Islam gemacht,” thus Marksches 2002, 215. Fundamentally on this development: Gladigow 2002, with further literature, and G. Ahn, *Monotheismus und Polytheismus als religionsgeschichtliche Kategorien?* in: Oeming & Schmid 2003, 1–10, who opens his paper with a section: “Die Verschränkung emischer und etischer Perspektiven in der europäischen Religions- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte.”

¹⁵ The term ‘henotheismus’, first introduced by F.J.W. Schelling in the sense of “relatively rudimentary monotheism,” was canonized (and used interchangeably with ‘kathotheismus’) by Max Müller in order to indicate, in a polytheistic context, the momentaneous and selective adoration of one god, who, for that specific moment of devotion, is exclusively honoured with all available predicates. See: M. Yusa, *Henotheismus*, *ER* VI (1987) 266–7. For the application of the term in the study of Egyptian

the privileged devotion to one god, who is regarded as uniquely superior, while other gods are neither depreciated nor rejected and continue receiving due cultic observance whenever this is ritually required.¹⁶

While monotheism by its definition is supposed to be a permanent and non-intermittent awareness, only coming to an end when the believer loses his monotheistic conviction, henotheism may be either permanent, for instance in a cult group round one god, or restricted to a specific moment in personal adoration.¹⁷ For instance, a hymn to one god may be regarded as a henotheistic moment in a polytheistic context.¹⁸ These definitions imply that boundaries are fluid. It is even to be feared that they will not suffice to cover the whole spectrum of 'oneness'. The introduction of the paradoxical notion 'non-exclusive monotheism' may help us out of the deadlock.

2. ONE AND MANY: THE GOD(S) OF XENOPHANES

Εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος,
οὔ τι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίος οὐδὲ νόημα
(One god [*Heis theos*] among gods and men (the) greatest,
neither in form nor in thought resembling mortal beings).

This is the astounding proclamation issued round the middle of the sixth century BC by the Ionian philosopher Xenophanes of Kolophon (B 23),¹⁹ who has been lauded as “a paradigm of the pre-socratic

religion: Hornung 1971, 233. For its occurrence in Graeco-Roman religion: *TER UNUS* and below section 4. Recently, Eich 2010, espec. in the section “Polytheismus, Monotheismus, Henotheismus” (pp. 101–110) gives a clear summary of the problems of definition, largely accepting my own earlier suggestions.

¹⁶ “The expression of a relationship with a privileged divinity. Instead of being structured solely according to a contractual votive ritualism, this expression enhanced the theological quality and ontology of the power invoked, frequently as a result of a direct personal experience,” as Belayche 2010, 146 has it.

¹⁷ The latter is basically Max Müller’s interpretation of the concept, which is also referred to as ‘affective monotheism’. A. van Selms, in: M.A. Beek *et alii* (edd.), *Symbolae Biblicae et Mesopotamicae M.Th de Liagre Böhl dedicatae* (Leiden 1973) 341–348, introduced the term ‘temporary henotheism’ in an article under the same title. He refers to situations in Mesopotamia and Israel (e.g. *Epic of Atrahasis*, I, 376–383, Dan. 6:8) in which it is stipulated that *for a certain period of time* only one god will receive adoration.

¹⁸ After all, Müller’s conceptualization of the notion henotheism was grounded in the unique attention of the hymn to one god. Cf. Stolz *o.c.* (above n. 7) 44 f.

¹⁹ The basic edition and standard for the numeration of his fragments as well as of those of all other Presocratic philosophers is: H. Diels & W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente*

genius” and “ein Revolutionär des Geistes”²⁰ on the one hand, and relativized as a person that “would have smiled if he had known that one day he was to be regarded as a theologian,” on the other.²¹

The statement is as surprising for its revolutionary religious innovation²² as for the inconsistency it conceals. In his violent revolt against the excrescences of anthropomorphic polytheism²³ Xenophanes postulated one supreme Deity, who was completely immovable, unimaginal,

der Vorsokratiker (Berlin 1951⁶, cited as D.-K.). The numbers preceded by a B refer to the fragments in this edition. Fundamental also: G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven & M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge 1983², cited as KRS), with English translations. The Greek texts also in: J. Edmonds, *Greek Elegy and Iambus* (Cambridge Mass.-London 1931) I, 182–215, and in J. Mansfeld, *Die Vorsokratiker. Griechisch-Deutsch: Auswahl der Fragmente* (Stuttgart 1987). Further editions of Xenophanean fragments and commentaries: M. Untersteiner, *Senofane. Testimonianze e frammenti* (Florence 1956); E. Heitsch, *Xenophanes: Die Fragmente* (Munich-Zürich 1983) with German translation; J.H. Leshner, *Xenophanes of Colophon. Fragments: A Text and Translation with a Commentary* (Toronto-London 1992). Two annotated bibliographical surveys: L. Paquet, M. Roussel, Y. Lafrance, *Les présocratiques. Bibliographie analytique 1879–1980*, I (Paris 1988) 421–443; L.E. Navia, *The Presocratic Philosophers. An Annotated Bibliography* (New York-London 1993) 619–648.

²⁰ Barnes 1979, 82 and K. Ziegler, Xenophanes von Kolophon, ein Revolutionär des Geistes, *Gymnasium* 72 (1965) 289–302, respectively.

²¹ Burnet 1930, 129. Cf. D. Babut, *La religion des philosophes grecs* (Paris 1974) 26: “Mais qu’il ne soit pas un philosophe comme les autres n’autorise pas à le transformer en théologien: c’est en philosophe qu’il essaie d’élaborer un concept satisfaisant du divin...”. Contra: E.g. Mansfeld 1987, 209: “zu Recht verdankt er seinen Ruhm der Einführung eines neuen, sublimierten Gottesbegriff;” Schäfer 1996, 144, on X.’s theology: “Der Kolophonier selbst dürfte sie wohl als das Herzstück seines gesamten Denkens aufgefaßt haben.”

²² With this I do not wish to deny that similar initiatives may have been attempted before in different cultures, for instance in the Near East. See Simo Parpola’s work, summarized by himself in his paper ‘Monotheism in Ancient Assyria’, in: Porter 2000, 165–209 (cf. espec. his ‘The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy’, *JNE* 52 (1993) 161–208) but see the criticism by Porter, *ibid.* 211–271. Cf. more recently the survey by M.S. Smith, *God in Translation* (Tübingen 2008) Ch. 3.2. “One-God”: Worldviews in Mesopotamia and Israel and Their Lack of Translatability (pp. 149–179). On the other hand, *sub specie aeternitatis* and accordingly neglecting the historical perspective, Feyerabend 1986 denies both the revolutionary innovation and the value of Xenophanes’ initiatives. See below: p. 265.

²³ Cf. B 11: “It was Homer and Hesiod who attributed to the gods all sorts of things which are matters of reproach and censure among men: theft, adultery, and mutual deceit;” B 14: “But mortals suppose that gods are born, and have clothes and speech and bodies like their own;” B 15: “If horses or oxen or lions had hands and could make drawings with their hands and accomplish such works as men, horses would draw the figures of gods as similar to horses, and oxen as similar to oxen, and they would lend them a physical appearance like their own;” B 16: “Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black; Thracians that theirs are blue-eyed and red-haired.”

and predominantly characterized as (being or having) a Great Mind (*Nous*), swaying the universe through thought alone.²⁴

To serve the reader and as a basis for further reference I here give the much quoted list of “seven dogmas whose ascription to Xenophanes is secured by actual fragments from his poems” as formulated by Barnes 1982, 85:

- 1) God is motionless.
- 2) God is ungenerated.
- 3) ‘There is one god, greatest among gods and men.’
- 4) God is not anthropomorphic.
- 5) God thinks and perceives ‘as a whole.’
- 6) God moves things by the power of his mind.
- 7) God is morally perfect.

In some aspects of his theory the influence of his Ionian predecessors is unmistakable, but the two major components of his theological system—the rejection of anthropomorphism and the embracing of one abstract divinity—are drawn with unique rigour and explicitness. Consequently, surveying this momentous theological initiative the reader cannot but be shocked when confronted with the wording of the most influential Xenophanean postulate, already quoted in the beginning of this section but very much worth repeating and analyzing in more detail (B 23):²⁵

²⁴ Cf. B 23, quoted in the beginning of this section; B 26 and 25: “Always he remains in the same place, moving not at all; nor is it fitting for him to go to different places at different times; but without toil he moves all things by the thought of his mind;” B 24 “As whole he sees, as whole he comprehends, as whole he hears.”

²⁵ Recent decades witnessed the rise of a debate on the authenticity of these lines. For general discussion of the reliability of what later authors have handed down as the *ipsissima verba* of Xenophanes: C. Osborne, *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy: Hipolytus of Rome and the Presocratics* (Ithaca 1987), on which see the critical reviews by J. Barnes, *Phronesis* 33 (1988) 327–344, and A. Mourelatos, *Ancient Philosophy* 9 (1989) 111–117. More specifically, M.J. Edwards, *Xenophanes Christianus?*, *GRBS* 32 (1991) 219–228, argues that the majority of the verses quoted in the present paper are fabrications made by the Christian Clemens. The notion of *heis theos* in B 23 in particular seems suspicious to him, since it does not occur in any other Greek philosopher prior to Plato, while it is the cornerstone of many Christian and Jewish fabrications of late antiquity (on which see below). I cannot go into this discussion here. Practically no other scholar shares this viewpoint and, anyway, it remains that “to judge by his other doxographers, Xenophanes was not so partial to *heis* as to *hen*,” which suffices for my argument.

One god among gods and men (the) greatest,²⁶
neither in form nor in thought resembling mortal beings.

These lines conceal, as I announced above, an inconsistency. How are we to explain that the first intransigent monist²⁷ of Greek philosophy admits through the back door what he has just previously ousted triumphantly through the front door? How to explain the contradiction, already looming in the presentation by Anaximenes, between the postulate of one all-embracing divine *arche* and the acceptance of a polytheistic world view, as apparent from the reference to '(the) gods'? Nor is this the only place where Xenophanes refers to the plural 'gods'.²⁸ But perhaps we should take a step back and first ask some preliminary questions. For instance, *is* our fragment proof of a monotheistic experiment, as is assumed by those scholars who praise Xenophanes as "the only genuine monotheist that ever existed."²⁹ In the words of Burnet 1930, 143:

We cannot admit that Xenophanes conceded to the existence of subordinate or special gods; because it is exactly the existence of these gods that he had particularly in mind to deny.³⁰

²⁶ Of course, classicists quarrel about the correct interpretation of this 'one' as cheerfully as do Old Testament scholars about "Israel, your God is one." Do the two lines contain *three* predicates (one, greatest, not resembling) or only two, with 'one' functioning as attribute? And so on and so forth. See the discussions in Stokes 1971, 76–79; Leshner 1992, 96–100; Schäfer 1996, 165 ff. There have been many attempts to 'dismonotheize' the expression *heis theos* by pointing out that a common Greek idiom uses *heis* to reinforce the superlative (which is true: see the third section of this chapter) and next arguing that, consequently, what is intended is: "the one greatest god" thus ruling out: "God is one, the greatest..." (which is less than compelling). To demonstrate the faultiness of this argument would require more space than I have available. I confine myself to the observations, first, that the complete doxography, including Aristotle and Theophrastus, understands these lines and the rest of Xenophanes' theology as unequivocally implying "God is one" and, second, that the all-embracing predicates in the several fragments quoted cannot but refer to a divine being that is not only infinitely *greater* than, but also and more important, *fundamentally different* from (supposed) other divine beings. I myself have tried to avoid a premature, all too explicit interpretation by not inserting the verbal form "is", which does not occur in the Greek text.

²⁷ Aristotle *Met.* A 5.986b21 calls Xenophanes the first "monist" (πρῶτος ἐνίσας), because "he said that the One was the god" (τὸ ἐν [neuter!] εἶναι τὸν θεόν) after having looked up at the whole universe."

²⁸ They are found in Fragments B 1.24; 11.1; 12.1; 14.1; 15.3; 16.1; 18.1; 34.2.

²⁹ U. von Wilamowitz, *Die griechische Literatur und Sprache* (Berlin 1905) 38.

³⁰ We will encounter various different arguments put forward to defend X.'s monotheistic conviction, even if the existence of other gods cannot be denied. Most of them require a generous dash of generosity on the side of the reader when confronted with a

Or should we, on the contrary, follow many scholars in calling into question:

whether a convinced monotheist in an unreceptive polytheistic society would cloud the issue by a mention of plural gods which is at least ambiguous, in the very context where he is firmly stating his revolutionary view.³¹

Since this question—more especially the notion ‘*pure monotheism*’—is essential to my central argument, we will have to cast a quick glance into the scholarly discussion.³² It will reveal how desperately—and diversely—scholars have struggled to elicit a coherent meaning from these two lines, squirming in their attempts to defend the text against the most fatal charge imaginable in Academia: lack of consistency.

1. *One or many?*

By way of introduction I select three different assessments taken from three of the best-known textbooks.³³ Burkert, in a characteristically clear and well considered summary, writes:

What sounds like monotheism is nevertheless drawing on entirely customary formulae: one is the greatest and for that very reason is not alone.

very modern logical argumentation applied to reconcile the ambivalence. Barnes 1982, 91 f., for instance, excels in an Oxford type of algebraic logic in order to arrive at his conclusion: “Xenophanes, I conclude was a monotheist, as the long tradition has it; (...) like later Christian theologians, he argued on purely logical grounds that there could not be a plurality of gods.” A different, very popular and less vulnerable, method is to downplay the importance of the ‘normal’ gods. One for all: Mansfeld 1987, 210, “die anderen Götter sind aber, verglichen mit dem grössten, kaum bedeutend.” In a different vein Heitsch 1994, 15, “Der Fehler, den Xenophanes zu sehen meint, liegt daher nicht darin, dass die einen oder anderen Völker falsche Vorstellungen von den Göttern haben, sondern darin dass sie sich überhaupt Bilder machen.”

³¹ Stokes 1971, 76, inferring that the fragment cannot be reconciled with a pure monotheism. Some go much farther in their doubt. Babut 1974 even contests the common opinion that Xenophanes’ theological views constitute a radical departure from the religious mythologies of Homer and Hesiod. Cf. *idem*, *La religion des philosophes grecs* (Paris 1974) 22–27. In the same year and in a similar vein: Eisenstadt 1974. So, here, the conclusion may be—quite contrary to, but no less firm than the one of Barnes cited in the preceding note—: “Gegen den Tenor traditioneller Untersuchungen muß daher eindeutig festgestellt werden, daß Xenophanes *kein* Monotheist ist” (Schäfer 1996, 167).

³² For a summarizing discussion, apart from the ones mentioned above nn. 30 and 31, see: A. Lefka, *The Xenophanean Religious Thought: A Field of Various Interpretations*, *Kernos* 2 (1989) 89–96. Cf. also Zajcev 1996, 204 f.

³³ Burkert 1985, 308, KRS 170, and Jaeger 1947, 43 f., respectively.

On the other hand, Kirk, Raven & Schofield comment:

‘Greatest among gods and men’ should not be taken literally; men are mentioned by a ‘polar’ usage. This is simply an emphatic device,³⁴ and for the same reason the plural of ‘gods’ need not be intended literally.

Even so, they continue: “In fact Xenophanes wrote of ‘gods’ in other places also; partly, no doubt, this was a concession, perhaps not a fully conscious one, to popular religious terminology.”

Jaeger, finally, states:

But while he extols this God as more than human, he also describes him explicitly as ‘the greatest among gods and men.’ This manner of speaking, with its polar juxtaposition of gods and men, follows the old epic formulas; nevertheless it still makes it perfectly clear that besides the One God there must be others, just as there are men.

However, according to Jaeger, these other gods could *not* be the anthropomorphic Homeric ones and it was *not* Xenophanes’ intention to compromise with popular religion.³⁵ Rather we should think of Thales’ dictum “that all things are full of gods.” Conclusion: “In any case the one all-embracing God is so far superior to all the other lesser divine forces that he alone could really seem important to Xenophanes.” In our terminology, Jaeger seems to opt for a henotheistic solution.

How very revealing are these desperate attempts to come to terms with an undeniable and irritating clash of One and Many in two coherent lines of a professed ‘monist’!³⁶ After the well-nigh arithmetical

³⁴ Indeed, Greek poetry abounds in polar expressions meant to denote a totality, not seldom producing curiously absurd results. KRS mention for instance Heraclitus Fr. 30 who says that the world-order was made by “none of gods or men.” Add for instance Creon in Sophocles’ *Antigone*, who says: “Go, go now, servants, those present and those absent.” G. Müller, *Sophokles Antigone* [Heidelberg 1967] *ad loc.* explains the “Unlogik” by Creon’s desperate haste. However, there are numerous parallels for these illogical polarities. See Eur. *HF* 1106 with von Wilamowitz’ note; Eur. *Hipp.* with Barrett’s note; Soph. *El.* 305; Plaut. *Trin.* 360.

³⁵ Jaeger 1947, 44. Here he is followed by Nilsson *GGR* I³ 742: “nicht die Götter der Volksreligion.” This is a ‘dagger to the hand’ of those scholars who wish to coat the pill of a persistent polytheism in an otherwise monotheistic theology. If the other gods do continue their existence Xenophanes must have viewed them as: “in neuer, von Unordentlichem und Menschlich-Gestalthaftem gereinigter Form als Figuren eines zu reformierenden Kultus” (Mansfeld 1987, 211), or as “von Anthropomorphismen und ethischen Defekten gereinigten personalen göttlichen Mächten” (Schäfer 1996, 165).

³⁶ The uneasiness concerning the contradiction is ubiquitous. Two examples: Guthrie 1962, 375, regretfully qualifies it as “at the least a surprising carelessness.” Schäfer

inference that the superlative qualification ‘the greatest’ necessarily presupposes the existence of other (lesser) gods, we see two diametrically opposed strategies to negotiate the blatant contradiction that thus emerges: a centrifugal versus a centripetal one. The first³⁷ tries to resolve the inconsistency by explaining it away: the mention of gods is nothing more than a rhetorical concession, not referring to anything ‘really real’. At most it is a tactical concession to popular religious tradition, which, by implication, in his heart Xenophanes must have vehemently opposed.³⁸ The other approach offers an explanation in terms of what the Germans call *Hineininterpretation*, whence referred to as centripetal by me. It helpfully trots out a homemade theological system in order to make it all logically acceptable: there are indeed more gods but they cannot have been the traditional Olympians. The one great deity and the other lesser gods form a kind of hierarchy,³⁹ in which the normal traditional—or the not so normal revised type of gods—are described as emanations, representatives or parts of the central ‘one’.⁴⁰

1996, 164: “*Leider* spricht Xenophanes (23) tatsächlich in einer sehr ambivalenten Weise von “Gott” und “Götter” in einem Atemzug” (my italics).

³⁷ Last refuge to many a scholar including such celebrities as Zeller, Burnet, Diels-Kranz, followed by François 1957, 167, where one can find the earlier literature.

³⁸ Mansfeld 1987, 211: “Zu vergleichen ist, dass auch spätere griechische Philosophen die Existenz der Götter des Kultes im allgemeinen nicht gelehnet haben, ungeachtet ihrer philosophischen Überzeugung, in der für solche Götter kaum oder überhaupt kein Platz war. Überdies vermied eine solche Gesinnung, auch bei Xenophanes, den Konflikt mit den von Staat wegen und privat geübten Kultgebräuchen.”

³⁹ Cf. Mansfeld 1987, 210: The one god is their absolute sovereign. “Nur: dessen absolute Souveränität hebt die minderen Gottheiten weder in ihrer Existenz auf, noch beschneidet sie deren Verehrenswürdigkeit.”

⁴⁰ For a survey of earlier adherents to this and similar ideas including: Gomperz, Decharme, Diès, Jaeger, Untersteiner, see François 1957, 166. More recently: Pötscher 1962, *l.c.* (below n. 56): “Der eine Gott ist in ihnen allen präsent”; B. Wisniewski, *La conception de dieu chez Xenophane*, *RCCM* 35 (1993) 211–218: “dieux (*theoi*) ne signifient pas une pluralité des dieux, mais les parties d’un seul et même dieu”; Chr. Eucken, *Die Gotteserfassung im Symposion des Xenophanes*, *Gymnasium* 19 (1993) 5–17, espec. 16: “Die vielen Götter (...) scheinen als Vermittler der für sich allein nicht absolut bestimmbareren höheren Vorstellung des einen Gottes zu dienen”; A. Drozdek, *Xenophanes’ Theology*, *SIFC* Quarta serie, 2 (2004) 141–157, espec. 151: “the gods are only manifestations of the true, only God.” Another solution, namely that “the gods” of Xenophanes must be “the elements and sun, moon and stars” (C. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* [New York 1960] 165 n. 3 and others) is incompatible with other elements in Xenophanes’ theory, as Finkelberg 1990 146, correctly argues. This does not, however, necessarily entail the non-existence of the gods in Xenophanes’ thought, as Finkelberg thinks.

This is not to say that such ‘unity in diversity’⁴¹ has never been proposed in antiquity. It was, most notably in Stoic⁴² and later Neoplatonic systems.⁴³ Stoic theology indeed tended towards monotheism, with Zeus as the central God, but did not exclude the existence of other gods in addition to Zeus.⁴⁴ Zeus, however, is the only eternal god; the others originate and end with the cycle of the kosmos, when everything is consumed by fire and then regenerated. Accordingly, the Roman polymath Varro⁴⁵ claimed that all the gods were parts (*partes*)

⁴¹ The idea that ‘one principle (or one god) is all’ did not immediately find much adherence and in the earlier period—as far as we can see—remained confined to Orphic and Eleatic circles. I cannot go into Xenophanes’ possible relationship with the Eleatics. For this see: G. Cerri, *Senofane ed Elea (una questione di metodo) QUCC* 64 f. (2000) 31–50; J. Wiesner, *Wissen und Skepsis bei Xenophanes, Hermes* 125 (1997) 17–33; M. Bugno (ed.), *Senofane ed Elea tra Ionia e Magna Grecia* (Napoli 2005), Parte seconda: Senofane, Elea, gli Eleati (149–284). Nor can I discuss the monist par excellence Parmenides and the relationship between his and Xenophanes’ theories. See for later ‘monism’ in Greek philosophy with emphasis on Plato: Rowe 1980, 54–67; P. Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides. Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought* (Princeton 1998); J.A. Palmer, *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* (Oxford 2009).

⁴² See already Aristotle *Met.* 1074b3, arguing that the divine encompasses the whole of nature, and cf. *Mund.* 397b10–401b24, *Pol.* 1326a32, where god is the ‘divine power’ (*theia dunamis*) that ‘holds everything together’ as the informing principle of the kosmos, or Fr. 49, where he identifies god with mind, while “the rest is addition in the form of myth, in order to persuade the multitude and to be useful for laws and (private) interest.”

⁴³ In later antiquity it was summarized by Servius *ad Verg. Georg.* I.5: “The Stoics say that there is only one god, one and the same power, which is called by different names in accordance with different functions.”

⁴⁴ A.A. Long, *Epictetus. A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford 2002) 144: “Because the Stoic divinity is everywhere, Stoic philosophers could accommodate gods in the plural. (...) Strictly, though, these gods are only symbolical ways of referring to the world’s most powerful constituents all of which owe their existence to the single ‘active’ named God in the singular or Zeus.” Cf. J. Mansfeld, *Theology*, in: Algra *et alii* (edd.), *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge 1999 = 2005) 461 ff.; M. Frede, *Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Later Antiquity*, in: Athanassiadi & Frede 1999, 51 ff.; K. Algra, *Stoic Theology*, in: B. Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge 2003) 153–178, espec. 165–170; P.A. Meijer, *Stoic Theology: Proofs for the Existence of the Cosmic God and the Traditional Gods, Including a Commentary on Cleanthes’ Hymn to Zeus* (Delft 2007). On Zeus as the ‘one god’ of Stoicism: *Idem*, *Hellenistic Philosophy* (London 1974) 149 f. So already in the famous Hymn to Zeus by the Stoic Cleanthes. Recent translations and discussions in: W. Cassidy, in: M. Kiley *et alii* (edd.), *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine: A Critical Anthology* (London 1997) 132–138, and J.C. Thom, *Cleanthes’ Hymn to Zeus. Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Tübingen 2005); P.A. Meijer, *o.c.*

⁴⁵ In his *theologia tripertita* he distinguished three types of theology: the one transmitted by poets (*mythicon*, translated by Augustinus as *fabulosa*), the one taught by philosophy (*physicon*, latin: *naturale*), and the *theologia civilis* (transposed to the Greek situation: the religion of the polis). Fr. 10: *prima ... theologia maxime accommodata est ad theatrum, secunda ad mundum, tertia ad urbem*. The latter one, being

or qualities (*virtutes*) of one central superior divine being, which he, too, identifies with Jupiter.⁴⁶ However, observing analogies between Xenophanean and Stoic theology is one thing, imposing the full system of the latter onto the former is another. The two are separated by centuries of increasingly sophisticated philosophical reflection. What is more, while we do have explicit knowledge of Stoic theory, there is no scrap of information on a supposed deeper coherence of the different types of gods in the few fragments of Xenophanes. On the contrary, the expression “greatest *among gods and men*” does little to encourage the reader to single out one of these two categories (the ‘gods’) for a special relationship to the One.

If so far we briefly discussed arguments advanced to vindicate monotheism for Xenophanean theology, it is both alarming and significant that exactly the same arguments have been put forward for rescuing Xenophanes for the sake of polytheism. Already in the late 19th century, Freudenthal⁴⁷ claimed that he could find nothing whatsoever that is indicative of monotheistic tendencies in Xenophanes. According to him Xenophanes professed a genuine polytheism, albeit one in which one central god—whom Freudenthal tended to identify as Zeus—reigns as a despot over his subject gods. As parts of the great God they reign over their own smaller sections of the world.⁴⁸

the religion of cult and ritual, should have aspects of both others in order to suit the taste and intellectual level of the *vulgus*. B. Cardauns, *M. Terentius Varro. Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum I. Die Fragmente* (Abh. Ak Mainz 1976), Fr. 6–12, espec. 7 = Aug. CD 6.5, and the commentary at pp. 140 ff. See: G. Lieberg, *Die Theologia Tripartita in Forschung und Bezeugung, ANRW I.4.* (1973) 63–115; *idem*, *The Theologia Tripartita as an Intellectual Model in Antiquity, JIES Monographs 4* (1984) 91–115; H. Dörrie, *Zu Varros Konzeption der theologia tripartita in den Antiquitates rerum divinarum*, in *Festschrift G. Radke* (Münster 1986) 76–82.

⁴⁶ Fr. 27 = August. CD 4.11, *omnes dii deaeque sit unus Iuppiter, sive sint, ut quidam volunt, omnia ista partes eius sive virtutes eius*. For a documentation of the ‘one and all’ theology of late antiquity see: Versnel 1990, 213–216.

⁴⁷ Freudenthal 1886, espec. 8–12; 16; 28–31. Of course, he met with fierce resistance by renowned contemporaries such as Zeller and Diels, who in their textbooks had proclaimed a ‘pure monotheism’, and felt little inclination to surrender. All the same, he found many followers as well. See: François 1957, 165 n. 1.

⁴⁸ For that matter, the idea of an omnipotent Being, transcending all the other powers in the world, even the gods themselves, was one which the epic writers had already associated with *their* highest god. Hom. *Il* 8.18–27 presents a striking instance of the absolute superiority of Zeus, which Aristotle *De motu an.* 4.700a even cites as the first intimation of the power of his ‘unmoved mover’. See: Jaeger 1947, 46. For Homeric Epic as the cradle of monotheistic thought see already: H. Haas, *Der Zug zum Monotheismus in den homerischen Epen und in den Dichtungen des Hesiod, Pindar, und Aeschylus, ARW 3* (1900) 153–183. M.L. West, in: Athanassiadi & Frede

What we see, then, is that both ‘monotheist’ and ‘polytheist’ partisans may acknowledge the co-existence of ‘lesser gods’ and ‘the One God,’ and, what is more, that they may describe the relationship of the two divine categories in similar terms. Monotheism and polytheism are just words, *our* words, for concepts each of which apparently can be applied to one and the same paradoxical ambiguity. Moreover, in both theories we encountered the same assumption that the One God and the many lesser gods together must have formed part and parcel of one coherent theology, viewed either as a hierarchy or as a unity in diversity. Now, to associate the two categories of gods in such a way is to devise a theological system, in this case *our* system, not seldom grounded in—or at least very comparable to—constructions known from ancient doxographic tradition which embraced the very same line of projection. There are strong reasons, however, for questioning the legitimacy of such a, generally unreflected, hermeneutic approach if there is no trace of reflection on the relationship of the two types of gods in the remaining fragments. To explain this silence one has a choice of two options. One is that the author has enunciated his ideas on the real nature of the ‘other gods’ (including their relation with the One) but the relevant parts of his work are lost. The other is that the author has not expressed an opinion, for instance because he never felt the inclination to pay explicit attention to the issue. It is amazing—and characteristic of our modern drive towards consistency—that the latter option, if considered at all, has never managed to secure an equal standing in the scholarly debate. The, often implicit, modish conviction is exemplarily expressed by Finkelberg 1990, 136:

1999, 21–40, espec. 22 ff., regards the motif of the assembly of the gods as the first step towards monotheism because it implies that “only one god counts.” Various scholars of either school, the monotheist and the polytheist, regard Xenophanes as indebted to the Homeric notion of “the greatest god.” Among many others: Heitsch 1994, 17; S. Broadie, in: Long 1999, 210 ff. Indeed, throughout Greek history, Zeus is not only superior to the other gods in degree, but he is also distinct in kind. Zeus, more than *primus inter pares*, stands above the rest of the pantheon. His supremacy at times approaches divine singularity, as, after many others, recently K. Dowden, *Zeus* (London-New York 2006) once more points out. For the Aeschylean Zeus as all-powerful and all-encompassing god see *i.a.* G. Calogero, Xenophanes, Aeschylos und die erste Definition der Allmacht Gottes, in *idem*, *Studien über Eleatismus* (Darmstadt 1970) 283–301; Jajcev 1996.

At any rate, to saddle a thinker with inconsistencies and contradictions is not the best exegetical method, and before resorting to it, it is always advisable to investigate other possibilities.⁴⁹

It will be hard to find a reader who would disagree with such a—both paradigmatic and axiomatic—truism. ‘Of course’ the modern interpreter should go as far as possible in trying to detect consistency in an author’s thought. The alternative is to quit the field of literary criticism and the history of philosophy. But, as said earlier, one should not go farther than possible. What to do if every new alternative interpretation of an ‘apparent’ inconsistency appears to generate new logically implausibilities? In that case one might at least consider the option exemplarily expressed by Wilamowitz, *Platon* (Berlin 1919) II 238 n. 1:

We should not regard the rhapsode as a consistent systematic thinker. Hence we should distrust the system that the [doxographic] treatises hand down to us, and which our historians of philosophy develop even further.⁵⁰

This other extreme on the scale of exegetical principles might make us reconsider the word ‘thinker’ in Finkelberg’s phrase just quoted. Does an author only deserve this predicate if he thinks in exactly the way modern thinkers think? What *all* suggestions discussed so far have in common—and share with the modern strategies discussed in our second chapter—is the imposition of a typical modern drive towards

⁴⁹ This is in the context of the interpretation of B 34, as quoted below p. 256, where Finkelberg refuses to believe that Xenophanes can have “declared that though human beings can never attain certain knowledge about distant things and that his accounts of heavenly and underground things were mere opinions, concerning the divine he possessed precise knowledge and therefore his account on God was the most certain truth.” An implausibility that he introduces with the rhetorical question “Must we, then, allow that Xenophanes did not trouble to be consistent?” The difference between our positions is that what he here poses as an (ironic) rhetorical question is exactly a question that to my mind is both legitimate and in need of serious consideration.

⁵⁰ “Wir werden in dem Rhapsoden nicht einen konsequenten Systematiker sehen dürfen, also dem System, das die [sc. doxographischen] Referate uns überliefern, und unsere Historiker der Philosophie noch weiter ausbauen, mißtrauen.” Even though the great Hellenist may have gone a bit far in his outspoken preference for the poet over the systematic philosopher, his observation that it was the doxographic tradition, especially Theophrastos and Ps. Aristoteles, *De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia* that constructed a system from the works of Xenophanes on the basis of Eleatic and Peripatetic models is indisputable. Whatever we accept as system in Xenophanes rests largely on later reconstruction: J. Wiesner, *Ps. Aristoteles MXG: Der historische Wert des Xenophanes-Referates* (Amsterdam 1974); Finkelberg 1990. Note that Aristotle *Met.* 986b27 calls him “somewhat uncouth” (*agroikoteros*), referring to the lack of well constructed arguments in his work.

consistency upon an archaic mentality that need not (always) have had a similar penchant for (our) logic. This does not mean that all these suggestions are mistaken. It is, to mention only one, true that traditional expressions may persevere in an otherwise revolutionary new context. A popular proverbial expression still in fashion a century ago in modern (allegedly *monotheistic*) Greece bears a curious resemblance to the Xenophanean paradox: “May God fit thee to find favour with gods and men” (νὰ σ’ ἀξιώσει ὁ θεὸς νὰ εὐχαριστήσῃς θεοὺς καὶ ἀνθρώπους).⁵¹

Whichever position one may tend to favour, the polytheistic or the monotheistic, the first thing to do is to determine what we may agree that we know of Xenophanes’ ideas with a reasonable degree of certainty. This means that for the moment we restrict ourselves to what may be taken as authentic remnants of his own writings. Of course, this is another bone of contention between the specialists, but the seven dogmas as formulated by Barnes (above p. 246) may come close to a common denominator. If we accept them, and I have nothing against it, we should realize that the qualities ascribed to ‘God’ under nos. 1, 3, 5 and 6 are directly derived from the fragments, while those under nos. 2, 4, and 7 are inferences drawn from the *disqualifications* of the traditional gods of (Homeric) mythology. They are expressions of a *theologia negativa*. In a discussion in which the one (new) God is opposed to the many (old) gods, this *e contrario* ascription of positive qualifications to the one god seems legitimate. What, however, can on no account be justified is to adopt Barnes’ list, but adapt it in such a way that the singular ‘God’ in nos. 2, 4 and 7 is now ‘pluralized’ with the result that ‘Gods are ungenerated,’ ‘Gods are not anthropomorphic’ and ‘Gods are morally perfect.’⁵² Such an extrapolation is inadmissible. The poet singled out disreputable qualifications for the traditional gods of myth and bestowed the most magnificent qualities onto his One God. But he did *not* say that the traditional gods should be ‘reformed’ in accordance with the image of the new one. In what remains of his work he leaves us up in the air with respect to the section of his theology—if it ever existed, which I seriously doubt—that concerned

⁵¹ J.C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1910) 48, who aptly comments that it “combines impartially the one God and the many.” Laura Gibbs tells me that instead of the expression “God and saints preserve us” she often hears people saying “gods and saints preserve us.”

⁵² So for instance Schäfer 1996, 203. This confusion also haunts A. Drozdek Xenophanes’ *Theology*, *SIFC Quarta serie*, 2 (2004) 141–157. I did not see his *Greek Philosophers as Theologians. The Divine Arche* (Aldershot and Burlington VT 2007).

the many gods except for the explicit advice to worship and honour them in their cults. The author *may* have regarded them as “gereinigte Götter,” as many scholars prefer, but, clearly, that is not the central issue of his interest. His theology is focused on the One; the arguments derived from the frailties of the mythical gods are put in the service of that goal and of that goal only. The question “and what about the other gods?” is ours, being a corollary of our bent toward consistent systematization. And we shrink from considering the possibility that at this point Xenophanes just discontinued his strictly logical train of thought by *not* explicating this part of his theology.

But is it possible to accept that Xenophanes tolerated a form of coexistence of the One and the many, without seriously attempting to accommodate the inherent inconsistency? I will try to answer this question in the next section of our enquiry. For the moment it must suffice that in a veiled manner the poet himself may have hinted at the implied paradoxes of his ‘system,’ namely in fragment (B 34):

No man knows, or ever will know, the truth about the gods and about everything I speak of: for even if one chanced to say the complete truth, yet oneself does not know it; but opinion is allotted to all (men).⁵³

How very intricate the “truth about the gods” is appears from a few lines from his famous Banquet elegy, where (ll.13 ff.) he gives the seemingly monotheistic advice:

The first thing men of sense should do is to sing a hymn to *the God* with reverent words and pure speech, with a libation and a prayer for the means to do what is right.

However, only ten lines later, plurality strikes back in the final line (24), where we read:

Nay, always keep *the gods* duly in mind.

2. One and Many

Despite the miracles of ingenuity displayed by scholars such as Pottsher, Stokes, Leshner and Gerson—to mention only the ones with whom I feel most affinity on this issue—to come to terms with the

⁵³ On the much debated meaning of this fragment, see: E. Heitsch, *Xenophanes. Die Fragmente* (Munich-Zürich 1983) 173–184; *idem*, *Das Wissen des Xenophanes*, *RhM*. 109 (1966) 193–235, espec. 208–216; *idem*, 1994; Finkelberg 1990, 131–146.

aporia that we are discussing, the fact remains that there is always a 'however'. Too many solutions, too many 'however's'. Methodically the correct first step is just to accept the irrefutable observation of Leshner:

the fragments warrant attributing to Xenophanes the novel idea of a single god of unusual power, consciousness, and cosmic influence, but not the stronger view that beyond this one god there could be nothing else worthy of the name.⁵⁴

Next, however, we should ask the question: How must we imagine that Xenophanes coped with the paradox? *Did* he? Did he *experience* it as a paradox? We have seen that some scholars claim that Xenophanes must have been a monotheist (he said so himself, didn't he?), others that he cannot but have been a polytheist (he said so himself, right?). In order to solve the paradox one scholar makes an appeal to phenomena of linguistic-rhetorical perseverance, another devises a theology in which gods are part of *the* god.⁵⁵ Nobody, as far as I know, has ever contended in an explicit and straight enunciation that Xenophanes just adhered to *both* views (he said so himself, okay?), because he literally had no choice.⁵⁶ Before we explore this suggestion a bit further, I should first say what I do *not* wish to imply by this idea. I am not thinking of a conscious yielding to political or social pressure, whether or not compensated by an occasional 'eppure si muove' between the teeth.⁵⁷ Nor do I appeal to an unconscious slip (quite a few slips as a

⁵⁴ Leshner 1992, 99, thus summarizing a wide-spread opinion, as we have seen. It is not this fact but its interpretation on which opinions widely differ.

⁵⁵ "Diese verwirrende Fülle sich widersprechender Xenophanesbilder": P. Steinmetz, *Xenophanes-studien*, *RhM* 109 (1966) 13–73, espec. 24.

⁵⁶ Although Pötscher 1962 comes quite close. His discussion and refutation of all other interpretations mentioned in my text is the most cogent one known to me. Also parts of his interpretation of the relationship 'One god'–'the gods', that I shall cite shortly, are convincing, but I do not follow him in his central thesis that 'the gods' are representatives of 'the One god': "Durch die Wesensgleichheit des einen Gottes und der Götter—wenn man von der Einheit des überragenden absieht—vermögen ihn diese zu repräsentieren;" "Der eine Gott ist in ihnen allen präsent, weil sie—die Erscheinungsformen von ihm in der bewussten Welt—ihm in allem gleich sind, aber er ist doch mehr als die Summe der Götter: denn er ist der Eine". Cf. also Gerson *l.c.* below n. 58. O. Gigon, *Die Theologie der Vorsokratiker*, in: Rose 1954, 127–155; *ibid.* 33–36, asks just the right questions on these types of contradictions ("Widerspruch") and argues that some of them are unresolvable and should be taken seriously ("unaufhebbar und anzuerkennen" [35]).

⁵⁷ This is the solution of S.E. Lawrence, *The God that is Truly God and the Universe of Euripides' Heracles*, *Mnemosyne* 51 (1998) 129–146, where he discusses a strikingly similar problem of consistency in *HF* 1340–1346. The hero's rejection of all kinds of negative features of 'the gods' (and with them of the existence of these gods themselves)

matter of fact) of pen or tongue, nor even—though there is nothing wrong with it—to a gradual development in the philosopher’s thought of which we have only incoherent and undatable scraps of evidence. What I do wish to suggest can be explained in three related, but distinct arguments.

First, Xenophanes, besides being a genius, was and remained a child of his time and, like most other social beings, was unable to escape from his cultural universe, even if he had wished to. While experimenting with one he was living with a second, different set of images and representations of the divine. The two indeed diverged dramatically and, if subjected to a severe formal logical analysis, would inevitably have come to a clash. The significant point—ininitely more interesting and important than the irresolvable and indeed mistaken question, which of the two aspects represented his *real* conviction⁵⁸—is that they were *not* scrutinized in such a relentless fashion.⁵⁹ Apparently, both concep-

and his preference for “The god, who if truly God, needs nothing” (sometimes viewed as an allusion to Xenophanes, D.-K. C 1. So, e.g. W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Sophists* [Cambridge 1971] 230; Barnes 1982, 90 ff.; cf. G.W. Bond, *Euripides, Heracles* [Oxford 1981] *ad loc.*, but cf. more balanced: F. Egli, *Euripides im Kontext zeitgenössischer intellektueller Strömungen. Analyse der Funktion philosophischer Themen in den Tragödien und Fragmenten* [Munich—Leipzig 2003] 122–125) call into question the fundamental presuppositions of the plot. Renouncing the full range of soothing, denying and negotiating solutions by earlier scholars, Lawrence concludes: “Heracles new god is Euripides’ way of giving his hero a purely secular orientation without turning him into an atheist.” Chr. Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 373, on the ‘notion of divine self-sufficiency’ here put forward by Heracles concludes: “The central notion of unknowability in Greek religion allowed speculation of this type to be unproblematically articulated.”

⁵⁸ In this respect there are excellent observations in Gerson 1990, 18 f., who aptly notes that there may easily be some confusion in using the terms ‘monotheistic’ and ‘polytheistic’ as contradictory and as suitable for classifying the thought of Xenophanes: “If by ‘polytheism’ we mean the recognition of a multiplicity of active powers in the universe stronger and more durable than men, then Xenophanes is a polytheist. (...) If ‘polytheism’ indicates belief in a multiplicity of *personal* beings more powerful and durable than men, I think the textual evidence is against the claim that Xenophanes is a polytheist. (...) When I say that Xenophanes is a philosophical monotheist, I do not mean to deny that he is a polytheist in the first sense or that, conceivably, he is a polytheist in the second sense, but that he reasons to a unique *arche* in the universe ...” The (essential) difference between Gerson’s views and mine is that I would *not* deny that the two conceptions—monotheism-polytheism—are mutually exclusive if considered from one and the same perspective. Nor would I deny the possibility of the second option concerning polytheism, though avoiding the term ‘belief’. As I shall argue, in Xenophanes’ perception they exist simultaneous and side by side as *complementary* but independent forms of expression.

⁵⁹ As we discussed in the previous chapter, it requires lots of courage in our often rigidly constructivistic late modern climate to reconsider whether there may still be a

tions could and did exist side by side not only within the cultural universe of one civilization or in one period of time, which is a historical banality, *but even in the mind of one poet and thinker*,⁶⁰ which may be of great explanatory relevance. In other words, in the field of natural philosophy Xenophanes devised a radically new conception of god, yet did not even contemplate taking an equally radical leave from the cultic—and, one might even assume partly also from the mythical⁶¹—conception of the (traditional) gods, who had always been and continued to be indispensable and essential materials for the construction of the (religious) symbolic universe of the *polis*. Whenever—if ever—it was necessary to keep them apart, the author had recourse to several different layers of discourse—philosophical, mythical, cultic—, which constantly alternate and intertwine in his texts.

In general, the two different imageries may be prevented from clashing by a virtuoso winking process, well-known from (socio-) psychological reactions to cognitive dissonance.⁶² In a fascinating monograph on Erasmus, another genius on the borderline between two paradigms,

spark of truth in the discovery of the last part of this century, for instance in the works of Hermann Fränkel, Bruno Snell, and in a different way in Walter Pötscher, that archaic Greeks did not (always) draw similar nor equally harsh distinctions as 20th century readers. If we want to make sense of Greek religion, following the lines set out by Gould 1985, we should *not* overlook the motto that he adopted from William Empson: “The notion is that life involves maintaining oneself between contradictions that cannot be solved.” And cf. the words of J.F. Holleman as quoted in Ch. II n. 53.

⁶⁰ Indeed, it would do no harm to recall that Xenophanes is “the only one whose genuine writings find a place both among the Presocratic philosophers of Diels and the lyric anthology of Diehl”: Guthrie 1962, 361. On the grounds for his preference for the metrical form see: G. Most, in: Long 1999, 351 ff.

⁶¹ In this respect I agree with Eisenstadt 1974 and Babut 1974, the latter of whom, however, goes too far in downplaying the uniqueness and singularity of the new God.

⁶² I have amply discussed these psychological techniques introduced by L. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (New York 1957) in the Introduction to *TER UNUS*, 4–8, where more relevant titles can be found, and applied them throughout that book. I also addressed the question whether the notion of cognitive dissonance may be applied as long as the conflicting elements are not brought to the attention of the observer. It may, in terms of “a winking process” applied to keep two conflicting realities apart exactly in order to *prevent* them from clashing on the level of conscious awareness. Then the dissonances are “situated just below the normal level of critical consciousness in men [.....] so that they could in principle have been aware of it but as a rule took it for granted,” thus J.G.A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (New York 1971) 32. Another question is whether the theory may be applied at all to pre-modern—even ancient—mentality. This question was answered affirmatively and convincingly by N.H. Taylor, *Cognitive Dissonance and Early Christianity: A Theory and its Application Reconsidered, Religion and Theology. A Journal of Contemporary Religious Discourse* 5 (1998) 138–153.

the stark inconsistencies and ambiguities in his thought and expression are explained by the fact that he belonged to two cultures: the late medieval world which he could not forsake, and the early modern one which he helped to create.⁶³ And so did Xenophanes.⁶⁴

In his thought-provoking excursus on the 'logische Frage' implied in the contradictions of the One and the Many in Egyptian religion, Hornung,⁶⁵ after denouncing a long list of traditional explanations marked by such predicates as 'alogic', 'prelogic', or 'undifferentiated', embraces the concept of complementarity. Two logically contradictory predicates or qualities can both be experienced as true and valid. He adduces Bohr's theory of the complementary validity of both the wave- and the quantum theory as a revealing analogy. Incidentally, the present paragraph, more than any other in this book, may offer some relief to those who fear that living by inconsistencies, contradictions and ambiguities, is a symptom of (primitive) stupidity and hence may disqualify 'their' Greeks. It is not and it does not.

My second argument is that Xenophanes did not need to *keep* apart his two types of gods. They *were* apart. The new god represents a radi-

⁶³ J.D. Tracy, *Erasmus of the Low Countries* (Berkeley 1997). Circa 1600 AD revolutionary astronomical discoveries were gradually incorporated into a traditional cosmology, effecting incredible contradictions: T. van Nouhuys, *The Age of Two-Faced Janus. The Comets of 1577 and 1618 and the Decline of the Aristotelian World View in the Netherlands* (Diss. Leiden 1997). For antiquity I have argued the same concerning the paradox of liberation and subjection in the early Hellenistic period as a signal of cultural and political transition: "There are indispensable relics of the old which still exists and inevitable signs of the new which already exists, irreconciled and pregnant with tension." *TER UNUS*, 39–95, espec. 82 f. For the clash between monotheism and polytheism in Israel compare for instance: N. Lohfink, *Polytheistisches und monotheistisches Sprechen über Gott im Alten Testament*, in: *idem, Unsere grossen Wörter. Das Alte Testament zu Themen dieser Jahren* (Freiburg etc. 1977) 124–144, espec. 139: "Es herrscht also eine Dialektik von Vielheit und Einheit"; 141: "Es kam darauf an, Polytheismus wie Monotheismus (. . . .) als zwei in gewisser Hinsicht gleichwertige, jedoch epochal festgelegte Weisen des Sprechens über Gott deutlich werden zu lassen."

⁶⁴ No less a person than Karl Popper has often lauded Xenophanes as a forerunner of his own, very (late) modern, philosophy, and thus becomes easy prey for Feyerebend's scorn (see below. p. 265).

⁶⁵ Hornung 1971, 233–240. For what follows he refers to C.F. von Weizsäcker, *Komplementarität und Logik, Die Naturwissenschaften* 42 (1955) 521–529; A. Petersen, *Quantumphysics and the Philosophical Tradition* (Cambridge Mass. 1968). I do hope this is not going too far into amateurish exploitation of half (or less)-understood physics as mercilessly denounced by A. Sokal & J. Bricmont, *Eleganter Unsinn. Wie die Denker der Postmoderne die Wissenschaften mißbrauchen* (Munich 1999), after the first of these two authors had managed to make a monkey out of the editorial board of the journal *Social Text*, by publishing, in its 1996 volume, a nonsense article under the title "Transgressing the Boundaries. A Transformativ Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity."

cally new and different category. Though conceived of as the *immanent* principle of all that is, he or it at the same time *transcends* all that is: gods and men.⁶⁶ In later times a human being who exceeded all other mortals in power or quality—such as Hellenistic kings or Roman emperors—could be promoted into a category different from the human species. Transcending the *condition humaine* he became god. As long as he was god—for instance during restricted periods in which his divinity was ritually staged or politically deployed—the display of human frailties was frowned upon: no spitting or sneezing for the deified emperor during his *adventus*. However, though parading as a god and being honoured with the same “hymns, reverent words and libation,” to quote Xenophanes, and even with sacrifices, he was not a god like the other ‘real’ gods.⁶⁷ The few megalomaniacs who did fail to observe the boundaries were considered insane. All this (and much more) indicates that there was no such thing as one fixed category ‘god’.⁶⁸ Rather we are confronted with a type of classification without sharp borders, more especially with a so-called ‘polythetic class’, a concept first coined by Wittgenstein. Such classes are like families to which all members belong, linked by “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing” without, however, sharing all the family resemblances.⁶⁹

A process of deification distantly comparable with that of the Hellenistic ruler happened to Xenophanes’ First Principle of Being,

⁶⁶ Gerson 1990, 242 n. 18, is right when he calls it misleading in a Pre-Socratic context to use the contrast between immanence and transcendence to describe the early understanding of an *arche*. I cannot go into this aspect of the Xenophanean god here for which, besides the literature on Xenophanes mentioned in earlier notes, see especially: J.A. Palmer, Xenophanes’ Ouranian God in the fourth Century, in: *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 16 (1998) 1–34.

⁶⁷ Significantly, as a rule people did not pray to the divine ruler, although, as always, there are a few exceptions. All this will be the subject of our last chapter.

⁶⁸ See below Chapter VI.

⁶⁹ L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York 1958, translated from the German ed. of 1953) I, 66 f. The principle of polythetic classification is exemplarily exploited by J.Z. Smith, *Fences and Neighbors: Some Contours of Early Judaism*, in: *idem, Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago 1982) 1–18. It is also usefully applied to the definition of ‘religion’: W.P. Alston, Religion, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* VII (1967) 142, distinguishes ‘nine religion-making characteristics’ and states that “when enough of these characteristics are present to a sufficient degree, we have religion”. The same might work out for gods, but, of course, Alston’s statements together contain at least three subjective elements liable to arbitrariness. See on all this: R. Needham, Polythetic Classification: Convergence and Consequences, *Man* 10 (1975) 349–369.

departing however from the other extreme on the scale of divinity. Exceeding all imagination, the First Principle inevitably was endowed with the highest and uniquely unsurpassable predicate available in the Greek language. 'It' became god *faute de mieux*.⁷⁰ However, though bearing the same name and sharing a number of qualities with the traditional gods, 'he' differs from them in other respects. Nothing gives better expression to the profound difference than the concept 'transcendence'. Though belonging to the same polythetic class as (traditional) gods, the One God at the same time transcends all others, hence belongs to a different category. His ontological (and grammatical) 'singularity' entails a qualitative singularity.⁷¹ This implies that the One and the Many did not need to *compete*. As concepts they were complementary. Both possessed a conceptual domain of their own besides sharing the territory common to gods. There was no real urge, either in the domain of society or in that of logic, to expel either one of them from the religious perception.⁷²

It may be helpful here to call to mind that language can be desperately slippery. As we shall discover in subsequent chapters, a god need not *always* be god, some gods are *not complete* gods, other gods are *supercomplete* gods, hence some gods are *more* god than others,⁷³ etcetera. In other words the term *theos*, that we translate as "god" (but especially here translating is a precarious if not impossible venture) accommodates a scale of gradually shifting meanings, the extremes being hardly recognizable as belonging to one class. Generally, the

⁷⁰ As Gerson 1990, 246 n. 40, scornfully remarks about one modern interpretation of the *apeiron* of Anaximander. Cf. Burkert 1996a, 27 "Language itself, as a signifying system, seems to be in need of an 'ultimate signifier', the absolute, god".

⁷¹ This would be my answer to a question raised by F. Chapouthier in: Rose 1954, 162: "Comment les philosophes ont-ils laisser subsister côte à côte d'une part le nom de dieu pour désigner les principes de la nature et quelquefois un principe unique et de l'autre ce même nom pour désigner les dieux de la religion traditionnelle?" (And see the subsequent discussion there). Pötscher 1962, 5, seems to be the only one who has understood this: "um die Götter hat man sich zu kümmern wie um eine reale Gegebenheit (...) Doch der eine Gott hat eine höhere Realität indem er der grösste ist, sich aber nicht bloss graduell von den Göttern unterscheidet, sondern durch seine Singularität (*heis theos*) in einem prinzipiellen Gegensatz zu der pluralistischen Gattung der *theoi* steht." However, my final interpretation of their interrelationship differs fundamentally from his, as cited above n. 56.

⁷² Comparably on the basic differences between the literary genres of epic and dramatic poetry on the one hand and philosophy and science on the other, and their implications for the representations of the divine: Nicolai 2005.

⁷³ As, in a different context, Chaniotis 2010, 121 entitles one of his sections: 'Some gods are more divine than others'.

(modern) reader's attitude seems to be determined by two equally irrational assumptions, namely 1) that the human mind is capable of and prepared to constantly produce consistent thought-sequences; and 2) that language is the perfect means of communication for expressing these thoughts adequately and unambiguously to others.⁷⁴ As for the latter assumption, even the briefest glance at the linguistic literature⁷⁵ teaches us that human language is an extremely precarious means of communication. Any introduction to polysemy will teach that one term can unite quite incompatible, sometimes even radically opposite implications, references and meanings, depending on the user, the situation and the associations they bear. "Hence comes the great trouble we have in understanding each other (...): it is because we all use the same words without giving them the same meaning," Durkheim sighed already in 1912.⁷⁶ An additional complication is that it is not so much the question of what person or what thing, but in what context or discourse a person or thing may be called god. It is the context or discourse which decides what is or is not tolerated. All this may help us not too readily to dismiss a polysemantic potential in the term "theos," and will thus be of service in the present context as well as in later chapters, most of all in the last one.

I add briefly a third consideration, which is both a specification and a generalization of the argument just put forward and is independent of the specific nature of the one god of Xenophanes. There is no need for a detailed discussion, because we have dealt with the subject in our first chapter. There we saw that the imagery and, indeed, the 'personality' of a god in a cultic ambiance, be it in private worship or in temple ritual, is not necessarily identical to, in fact is often very different from, the same god (or rather the god with the same name) in theological reflection or mythical narrative. Moreover, it is perfectly possible, and

⁷⁴ See: *TER UNUS* 14 ff., for a more detailed discussion and bibliographical references.

⁷⁵ J.G. Kooij, *Ambiguity in Natural Language* (Amsterdam-London 1971), espec. Ch. 5: Ambiguity in the Lexikon: some Observations on Polysemy; J. Lyons, *Semantics* I, II (Cambridge 1977); G. Leech, *Semantics* (Harmondsworth 1977); B.Th. Tervoort *et alii*, *Psycholinguistiek* (Utrecht 1975=1972); R.F. Terwilliger, *Meaning and Mind* (Oxford 1968).

⁷⁶ E. Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris 1912). I quote from the English translation: *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London 1976²) 436. Here is how a linguist phrases the problem: "Words (...) do not have 'meanings' in the sort of way that children have parents. They have *uses*, identifiable in particular places and periods" (Carney 1972, 86).

even belongs to normal practice, to perform a cultic ritual without ever relating it to the specific theological identity of the god involved. Dutch ministers daintily succeed in ritually reciting the apostolic creed which portrays a god whom, to judge by their sermons, the same preachers have long lost sight of. For this same reason the many gods of civil religion did not need to collide with the One created by Xenophanes, probably not even in the philosopher's own perception.⁷⁷

And different they were! The profound innovation in the concept of the Xenophanean god becomes apparent precisely in the phrases quoted from the Banquet elegy:

The first thing men of sense should do is to sing a hymn to the God with reverent words and pure speech, with a libation and a prayer for the means to do what is right.

Insofar as the new god should be honoured with hymns, reverent words, pure speech, and with libations, there is not much of a problem. Rough outlines of what these hymns may have looked like can be gathered from hymns referring to a 'one and all' ideology ubiquitous in later times. Libations, as distinct from sacrifice (which is conspicuously lacking in the picture), are appropriate too. They often function not so much as a gift to the god(s) but rather as the ritual overture to the communication with the divine.⁷⁸ However, as soon as prayer comes into view difficulties emerge. What should one pray for to a god of such an immense and abstract nature? The answer is as appropriate in the philosophical context as it is unserviceable in the religion of daily life. One should ask for "the means to do what is right." With this prescription a long history of 'philosophical prayer' begins.⁷⁹ If it is

⁷⁷ Cf. S. Broadie, in: Long 1999, 210: "A precise monotheism is not among Xenophanes' innovations (...). As his language shows, the issue for him is not the numerical unicity of the divine, but its self-harmony." All this implies that I cannot accept the proposition (which came to my attention after the completion of the present chapter) of J. Halfwassen, *Der Gott des Xenophanes: Überlegungen über Ursprung und Struktur eines philosophischen Monotheismus*, ARG 10 (2008) 275–294. To my mind his view that Xenophanes denied the *existence* of the 'normal' gods is just as untenable as his absolutist thesis that Xenophanes "Gott und Welt ontologisch von einander geschieden hat."

⁷⁸ P. Veyne, *Images de divinités tenant une phiale ou patère: La libation comme "rite de passage" et non pas offrande*, *Metis* 5 (1990) 17–28. As such it may be ranged among what M.F.C. Bourdillon & M. Fortes (edd.), *Sacrifice* (Bristol 1980) call 'token gifts', 'gifts' whose value consists in a gesture of piety and good will. Cf. below (Ch. IV, n. 107).

⁷⁹ Chr. Eucken *o.c.* (above n. 40); Pulleyn 1997, 209–214.

true, in the words of Burkert,⁸⁰ that Xenophanes found listeners but no adherents or disciples, and that his theories had no impact whatever on the mainstream cult religion, this can be explained above all by the fact that his god by its very nature was devoid of anything resembling anthropomorphic personality in terms of either representation (image, myth) or communication (cultic ritual, prayer). These four elements, it should be recalled, were the stuff ancient religion was made of. The god of Xenophanes, conversely, was ‘ab-human’⁸¹ according to the Sceptic Timon, and “ein Denk-, Seh-, Hör-, und Intelligenzmonstrum” in the opinion of Paul Feyerabend,⁸² referring to the famous characterization in B 24: “As whole he/it sees, as whole he/it comprehends, as whole he/it hears.”⁸³

Once more, ambiguity cannot be avoided. According to Jaeger, on the strength of exactly the same data, the One God is quite clearly a conscious, more or less personal being,⁸⁴ while, on the other hand, Cornford⁸⁵—followed by many others—holds that, if ‘personal’ at all, the god is yet not a person in the full sense of that term, since in contrast to the traditional gods, there is no communication with him. Indeed, according to some specialists, Xenophanes’ theology is better characterized by the concept pantheism⁸⁶ than by monotheism. Again I would suggest that it is mistaken, and consequently doomed to failure, to try and explain Xenophanes’ system in terms of an ‘either-or’ dilemma. Rather, and this time even more obviously, we are confronted with an exemplary instance of an ‘and-and’ complementarity. In its

⁸⁰ Burkert 1985, 309.

⁸¹ Thus my tentative translation of (funny) Greek *ap’anthrôpôn* (Fabricius; mss *apanthrôpon*)—by analogy with ‘abnormal’, and in order to avoid the misleading term ‘inhuman’—as Timon (*apud* Sext. Emp. *Hypoth.* 1.224 = Fr. A 35 D-K.) qualifies the Xenophanean god. On this passage: E. Vogt, *Des Timon von Phleius Urteil über Xenophanes*, *RhM* 107 (1964) 295–298.

⁸² Feyerabend 1986, 210. For the unapproachability of such a god see below nn. 113 f.

⁸³ Except in cases of emphasis Greek does not use pronouns to indicate the subject (no doubt to the relief of Xenophanes). Different translations betray (slightly) different interpretations. KRS: “All of him sees, all thinks, and all hears”; Leshner: “Whole he sees, whole he thinks, and whole he hears.”

⁸⁴ Jaeger 1947, 44; cf. François 1957, 162: “un être personnel.”

⁸⁵ F. M. Cornford, *Principium sapientiae. The Origins of Greek Philosophical Thought* (Cambridge 1952) 147 f.

⁸⁶ On pantheistic concepts of the one god see: Rowe 1980. For bibliography see: C. Corbato, *Studi senofanei*, *Annali Triestini* 22 (1952) 179–227, espec. 180 n. 6–9; M. Untersteiner, *Senofane* (Florence 1955) pp. cc ff.

(original) quality of a physical *arche*, the First Principle is a neuter and as such ‘it’ can—albeit not very easily—be designated without the aid of anthropomorphic characteristics. As a *theos* (the second step in the evolution) ‘he’ cannot.⁸⁷ Consequently, in the course of his reflection on the *arche*, the philosopher is both condemned to and saved by a constantly alternating appeal to two different focuses, the physical-philosophical and the theological, each marked by its corresponding type of discourse. However, the two layers of perception do intermingle as they have never stopped doing in theological reflection till the present day. Due to restrictions inherent in human imagination and language it is impossible to speak about a god, however devoid of human characteristics, without applying anthropomorphic terminology.⁸⁸ Any philosopher of religion knows it: why demand from Xenophanes more than the humanly possible?

3. Concluding remarks

One and Many, unity and diversity, it is all there in Xenophanes’ philosophy. However, the interaction between the two does not allow a rash and simple definition. If there is unity in diversity here, it is not the well-known concept of a plurality of gods united into, or being parts or emanations of, one all-encompassing supreme divine being. The *arche* devised by Xenophanes was the product of natural philosophy, not of theology. As *physical* ‘all’ it did encompass, but it encompassed everything that is, because it *was* everything that is: not only gods, but also men, and the whole material world. Just as men were both part of it *and* were independent beings, so were the (traditional) gods. As *theological* ‘One God’ (*Heis Theos*) he transcended everything, hence also the (other) gods, and in this perspective the gods maintained their traditional (pluralist) independent status. Instead of inclusiveness there is coexistence in accordance with the principle of complementarity. In the words of M.L. West:⁸⁹ “People are slow to adjust their religion to their philosophy.”

⁸⁷ Cf. O. Gigon in: Rose 1954, 138, in connection with the *apeiron* of Anaximander: “Die gewaltsame Verknüpfung dinglicher und personaler Kategorien (.....). Es genügt zu sehen, wie seltsam (.....) ‚physikalische‘ und ‚theologische‘ Kategorien sich verbinden;” 135: “Der Widerspruch ist unaufhebbar und anzuerkennen.”

⁸⁸ This is the point of departure of our Chapter V.

⁸⁹ In: Athanassiadi & Frede 1999, 40, where he also states: “Yet it is difficult to find a Presocratic who can be counted as a monotheist without qualification.”

In general terms, then, it would appear that a monotheistic theology is *not* 'by definition' rigorously incompatible with polytheistic forms of (cult-)religion. Though I have argued that Xenophanes' monotheism was not *inclusive*, I would not object to the label *non-exclusivistic*.⁹⁰ In the first part of this chapter we learned that the so-called monotheism of the Old Testament was not an *exclusive* belief in One God during the major part of its development. The collective volume about monotheistic tendencies in late antiquity by Athanassiadi & Frede 1999 in the words of one reviewer, T.D. Barnes,⁹¹ "proves that even if they worshipped a multiplicity of gods, most thinking men in late antiquity who reflected at all on what this worship meant were in a very real sense monotheists."

Recently Nicolai 2005 raised the question whether personal and a-personal representations of the divine are compatible or not. For archaic and classical Greece he concludes:

Obviously, in daily praxis the more educated Greeks liberally ignored the logical incompatibility of the traditional (strongly poetically ingrained) religion and the philosophically enlightened religion. Without scruples they followed a double track course.⁹²

"Doppelgleisig verfahren" (a double track procedure), that is the perfect expression of what I have argued for Xenophanes and in which this poet-philosopher is far from being an exception. As to the nature of the (other) gods I have argued against the suggestion that they formed a novel category different from the traditional (Homeric) gods. However, there is yet another possibility: *hoi theoi* of Xenophanes might be congruent with a traditional picture, though not with that of the traditional Olympian family as represented in myth and cult, but as a comprehensive expression indicating a more or less generic

⁹⁰ I would be tempted to suggest for further use the term 'sophisticated polytheism', if its creator had not meant something radically different by it: W.G. Lambert, *The Historical Development of the Mesopotamian Pantheon: A Study in Sophisticated Polytheism*, in: H. Goedicke & J.J.M. Roberts (edd.), *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (Baltimore-London 1975) 191–199.

⁹¹ Monotheists all?, *Phoenix* 55 (142–162), espec. 143.

⁹² "In der Praxis des täglichen Lebens hat man (in der Welt der gebildeten) zwar offensichtlich über die logische Unvereinbarkeit der traditionellen (stark poetisch geprägten) Religion und der philosophisch aufgeklärten Religion großzügig hinweggesehen und ist guten Gewissens doppelgleisig verfahren."

anonymous divine leading principle in nature.⁹³ Although it will soon become apparent that this possibility is not consonant with the religious evidence, the question is of interest to our issue, for indeed, in archaic and classical literature, the expression *hoi theoi* often refers to a general organizing principle ruling nature and cosmos. In the following section I will explore this second experiment in oneness.

3. ONE IS MANY: THE GODS, THE GOD AND THE DIVINE

In addition to such proclamations that god is one and all, there exists a type of discourse in which the term god (and variants) seems to be used as a general device to explain—or at least to convey (some) sense to—the inexplicable, often connoting such notions as inescapable fate, chance or the predestined. The terms *ho theos*, *hoi theoi*, *to theion*, *ho daimon*, *hoi daimones*, referring to an anonymous and mysteriously interfering divine (or at least supernatural) power, abound in Greek idiom of all periods. A full discussion of the material can be found in a comprehensive study by François 1957, where all the testimonies are duly collected. We encountered the phenomenon in the passages of Herodotus discussed in the preceding chapter and we now return for a moment to this author. For this I have several reasons. First and foremost these episodes reveal in an exemplary fashion the frequency of the term and the important part played by the terms and concepts of ‘gods’, ‘the god’ or ‘the divine’. Secondly, these passages are easily the most appropriate guides in finding the niche or the ‘semantic family’ of these terms in a context of connotative alternatives. Thirdly, Herodotus is particularly interesting in this respect since he adopts and further develops previous archaic thought patterns on the one hand, while foreshadowing an ensuing development on the other. So let us continue our enquiry following his lead.

1. *On singular plurals*

It has often been observed and valued as a conspicuous characteristic of Herodotus that in his work names of individual gods are relatively

⁹³ See for instance: François 1957, 169 ff., whose general argument I endorse, but whom I do not follow in his suggestion concerning Xenophanes’ theology: “Le terme *theoi* n’exprime pas autre chose que la notion traditionnelle de la Puissance divine,” with reference to similar expressions in Pindar and Aeschylus.

rare, at least as far as their personal interventions in human affairs are concerned.⁹⁴ Instead, especially when he voices his own conviction concerning the causes of events—either as a narrator’s comment or through the words of commentators in his text—Herodotus rather refers to gods, the gods, or the divine.⁹⁵ This does not mean that individual gods do not occur in action. They do, but not frequently and with little detail. For instance in stories of how they defend their sanctuaries against enemy attack (Demeter: 9.65; Poseidon: 8.129; in more general terms 8.109).⁹⁶ But even here ambiguities soon emerge, complicating the picture. Apollo in particular is a striking example of brinkmanship. At times he is the icon of anonymous divine foreknowledge or predestination, an oracular voice rather than a personal god. At other occasions, however, he distinctly is an individual deity with a will and affections, and in this identity he is subject to the absolute superior authority of fate and the predestined, that is to say: to ‘the gods’. It is precisely the amalgamation of these two ‘personalities’ in the Croesus-episode that is so illustrative of the multiplicity of representations intertwining or interchanging in a dazzling shift of alternations.⁹⁷

In the appendix of the present book it is shown that concepts of ‘All the gods’ and ‘The Twelve Gods’, though intended and generally understood as the sum total of the whole pantheon or of the twelve

⁹⁴ This is hardly to be explained as an overriding ‘historiographical principle’ as D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto etc. 1989) 64–67 argues, but rather an example of the ‘uncertainty principle’ as Gould 1985, 9–14 (and elsewhere, see below) argues. Cf. Harrison 1997, 104, and on the use of ‘vague designations’ *idem* 2000, 169 f. See also next note.

⁹⁵ Long ago I learned most of what was worth knowing concerning Herodotus’ religious conceptions from a work in my own language: G.C.J. Daniëls, *Religieuś-historische studie over Herodotus* (Antwerpen 1946). On the issue at stake see espec. Linforth 1928. Following this innovative article there has been a deluge of studies on this issue, most of which were already of great use in Ch. II: Nilsson *GGR* I, 759 ff.; Pötscher 1958; L. Huber, *Religiöse und politische Beweggründe des Handelns in der Geschichtsschreibung Herodots* (Tübingen 1965); Gould 1989, espec. Ch. 4, ‘Why things happen’. More recent and most excellent: Gould 1994 and Harrison 1997; *idem* 2000, Ch. 6, ‘The Unity and Multiplicity of the Divine’, espec. 164–169 (*daimon*), 169–171 (the gods); 171–175 (the god); 176–179 (the divine—τὸ θεῖον).

⁹⁶ Linforth 1928, 211 ff. gives a complete list of (eleven) instances of direct intercourse between named gods and men. For events ascribed to named gods, see: *ibid.* 213–217; Harrison 1997, 104 f.; *idem* 2000, index s.v. ‘divine intervention.’

⁹⁷ See on the general status of Apollo’s oracles and the variety of reactions and interpretations: R.C.T. Parker, Greek States and Greek Oracles, in: P.A. Cartledge & F.D. Harvey (edd.), *Crux: Essays presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix* (= *History of Political Thought* 6 [1985]) 298–326.

great gods, in the cultic evidence functioned as a supplement added to, and not as a sum total replacing the individual gods. In cultic contexts (oath, vow, sacrifice, prayer) the collectives ‘twelve gods’ and ‘all the gods’ have acquired an identity in their own right, side by side with that of the individual gods. Besides illuminating questions of ordering, it can also help us clarify questions connected with our present subject.

If the Greeks can refer to ‘all the gods’ *and* Zeus *and* Apollo, this at least implies that the two constituents in this formula are of the same order, belong to the same class or system: both collectives and individuals boast a cultic existence and receive the concomitant forms of worship. This appears to be quite different in the case of *hoi theoi* (the gods). It can be shown that *hoi theoi* as an anonymous notion in the passages of Herodotus and elsewhere in Greek literature radically differs from *hoi theoi* in the sense of πάντες θεοί. More often than not the term ‘the gods’ is *not* intended to denote the sum total of individual gods,⁹⁸ which may receive worship as πάντες θεοί in local cults.⁹⁹ Rather than a cumulative or collective notion ‘the gods’ represent a conceptualizing comprehensive one, in which the notion of formal-grammatical plurality has practically disappeared from the semantic field of vision.¹⁰⁰ This is most obviously apparent from the fact that *hoi theoi* may occur as an equivalent of *ho theos*.¹⁰¹ In contexts

⁹⁸ Already in the beginning of the last century W.H.S. Jones, A Note on the Vague Use of *THEOI*, *CR* 27 (1913) 252ff., referred to this as a “vague use.”

⁹⁹ This goes beyond such formulations as: “Herodotus recognized the existence of numerous gods who may act as individuals on particular occasions, or who may be thought of as something like a unified group with a racial solidarity contrasting them with the race of men,” as Linforth 1928, 218, has it, though I do accept many of his keen observations, e.g. on *theoi*: “There is actually no more mythological connotation in the word than there is in the word ‘God’ as used by a monotheist” (219). Mikalson 1983, 67 f. with numerous testimonies and literature in n. 18, speaks of an “abstractive collective” and states that such a persistent conception is “one of the features which (...) tends to distinguish it from its literary counterpart.” Interestingly, Herodotus 2.52, says that “in ancient times (...) the Pelasgians offered and prayed to the gods, but without any distinction of name or title—for they had not yet heard of such a thing (...). Long afterwards the names of the gods were brought into Greece from Egypt and the Pelasgians learned them.” See: W. Burkert, Herodot über die Namen der Götter: Polytheismus als historisches Problem, *MH* 42 (1985) 121–132.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. J. Assmann, Monotheism and Polytheism, in: Johnston 2004, 16: “Unity in this case does not mean the exclusive worship of one God, but the structure and coherence of the divine world, *which is not just an accumulation of deities*, but a structured whole, a pantheon.”

¹⁰¹ François 1957, 305, collects 83 texts throughout Greek literature in which the author uses *theos/daimon* alternatively in singular and plural, without any difference in meaning.

referring to fate, the predestined, chance or fortune, these two notions are fully interchangeable¹⁰² as we can see for instance from the fact that the singular noun *ho theos* may take a verbal form in the plural.¹⁰³

Likewise, *ho theos* or *to theion*,¹⁰⁴ in the generic sense of the divine authority ruling the universe and interfering in human life often synonymous with fate and predestination, stands in opposition to one individual god out of many.¹⁰⁵ The latter meaning of course occurs as well.¹⁰⁶ In some of the expressions of the Croesus *logos ho theos* unequivocally refers to one individual god, namely Apollo, who is with equal certainty *not* to be identified with fate and chance since according to his own confession by his attempt to help Croesus he has opposed himself to this highest anonymous authority, to which gods of his own category (that is *not* ‘the gods’ in the sense of an anonymous steering principle) are subjected, having only a restricted scope for intervention. And, of course, the term *theos* referring to a special god is ubiquitous in contexts where the identity of this god is

¹⁰² M.L. West, in: Athanassiadi & Frede 1999, 38: “Whenever some theological truth is formulated, some statement about the régime under which mankind lives, the writer typically does not name one of the traditional gods but says οἱ θεοί or ὁ θεός. The indifference as between singular and plural is possible because when someone says ‘the gods’, the assumption is that these gods act as a unanimous body.”

¹⁰³ François 1957, 106, which reinforces the conclusion that “(*ho*) *theos* et (*ho*) *daimon* ont été généralement employés, au singulier, dans un sens collectif” (307). Else 1949 mentions numerous cases of the collocation of monotheistic and polytheistic language in early Greek literature.

¹⁰⁴ Though I agree with the distinction by Pötscher 1958, 28 f., between *theos* as the generic concept of a god interfering in human life, as opposed to the mythical gods, I cannot accept his suggestion that *to theion* is a higher abstraction encompassing these two categories. The testimonia leave no doubt that *ho theos* and *to theion* belong roughly in the same semantic register, even though there are functional differences for which see: Harrison 2000, 176 ff., especially on the deductive and ‘diagnostic’ nature of the use of *to theion*.

¹⁰⁵ Pötscher 1958 is most instructive on the differentiation between ‘the god’ as a general concept and the gods of myth and cult. P. 7: “Beide Weisen, das Übernatürliche zu erfassen, als “den Gott” oder als einen aus dem reichen Götterhimmel der Griechen bestehen nebeneinander.” At p. 8, he speaks of “einer gewissen Schichtenaufbau,” one layer for the experience *theos*, the other for the mythical gods. Cf. Harrison 2000, 171–175, on the double denotation of *ho theos* as ‘the god in question’ on the one hand and the ‘anonymous’ generic use of the term on the other, including the quick alternation of the two in several passages.

¹⁰⁶ Linforth 1928, goes as far as possible—certainly too far—in tracing either an unnamed, but nonetheless well-known individual god or “the god who is directing this affair” wherever the term *ho theos* is used. The weaknesses of this approach are exemplarily exposed by Pötscher 1958.

made explicit.¹⁰⁷ So, paradoxically, both *ho theos* and *hoi theoi* may be indicative of both a polytheistic and a mon(othe)istic thought pattern. On the one hand, *hoi theoi* may be used as a plural of individual gods as e.g. in expressions such as: “one of the gods” or “none of the gods.”¹⁰⁸ In the monistic sense of ‘the divine authority ruling the universe’, on the other hand, the expression *hoi theoi*, though grammatically the plural of *ho theos*, from a semantic point of view is not.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, as quoted earlier, “Words (...) do not have ‘meanings’ in the sort of way that children have parents. They have *uses*, identifiable in particular places and periods.”

Accordingly, the two different notions covered by the same plural *hoi theoi*, though prone to confusion, as a rule can be well distinguished if viewed in their respective contexts. For it is the context which makes it possible for the language user to filter out from the various possible meanings of polyvalent words or expressions all except the desired ones.¹¹⁰ Xenophanes profited from this opportunity offered by language. And as we shall experience to our sorrow in the third section of this chapter, there is some truth in the provocative contention by Quentin Skinner that: “if a statement is considered in a fully open context (...), a man might mean by it anything that a man might mean by it.”¹¹¹

One of the most telling differences between the two types of *hoi theoi* is that ‘the gods’ in the generic sense are by their very nature anonymous, while ‘the gods’ as *pantes theoi* are conceived as a collective of known and named gods. Now, probably the major function of name giving is social integration—the incorporation of the named person into one’s own cultural sphere. Reversely, anonymity may either indicate that the anonymous one does not belong to one’s own group or, on the other hand, is of an unbridgeably higher status, which makes him into a qualitative ‘other’. Burckhardt Gladigow holds that absolute

¹⁰⁷ François 1957, 315–326 gives all the relevant places from the Greek literature treated in his book.

¹⁰⁸ Harrison 2000, 170.

¹⁰⁹ Although I agree with François 1957, 308, speaking on the term *hoi theoi* in Homer: “on laisse complètement dans l’ombre les traits individuels des divers dieux pour envisager avant tout l’unité de l’ensemble,” I would in general go one step further and for later authors like Herodotus argue that *hoi theoi* is not even *experienced* as a ‘collective’ notion. See also below p. 273 f.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Carney 1972, 105 ff.

¹¹¹ See: J. Dunn, The Identity of the History of Ideas, *Philosophy* 43 (1968) 85–104, espec. 98. See for further discussion: *TER UNUS* 16 ff.

anonymity is an expression of *Nichtverfügbarkeit*, unavailability.¹¹² The anonymous *hoi theoi*, like Fate, are unavailable for communication or negotiation. They are unapproachable. Moschos fr. 2 (mid 2nd c. BC) addresses Fate as λιτοῦς ἄτεγκτε “not to be softened by prayers,” and Vettius Valens 5.9.2 (2nd c. AD) says: “It is impossible to gain the victory over the predestined fate, either by prayer or by sacrifice.” These expressions are *topoi*,¹¹³ and as such can be found in much earlier literary expressions.

Here, I would suggest, we have arrived at the fundamental difference between the god(s) as a comprehensive anonymous (and monistic) notion and the gods as the sum total of individual, named divinities. A reference to the first category may provide a cause for disaster but is not helpful as to the desire for solution, help or recovery. Being an unapproachable supernatural principle ‘the god(s)’ cannot be mollified and there is no point in prayer or sacrifice.¹¹⁴ There are altars and sacrifices for *pantes theoi*; there are none for *hoi theoi*.¹¹⁵ If you want to get rid

¹¹² Gladigow 1975, 30 f.; 1981, 1217 f. As he also discusses, this is not the only function of anonymity. See e.g. A. Henrichs, Namenlosigkeit und Euphemismus: zur Ambivalenz der chthonischen Mächte im altattischen Drama, in: H. Hofmann (ed.), *Fragmenta dramatica: Beiträge zur Interpretation der griechischen Tragiker-fragmente und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Göttingen 1991). When Burkert 1996a, 13 concludes: “Götter bleiben unverfügbar” this is a reference to a different phenomenon, namely the typically Greek type of relationship with the gods which does not allow man to lay a claim on the god by addressing him/her as “my god.” See above p. 102.

¹¹³ Especially when predestined fate takes the form of the inevitability of death. Cf. also below nn. 158 and 159. The inflexibility of ‘fate,’ *heimarmene* or ‘the gods,’ does not prevent ancient man from praying to individual gods. See: L. Lenaz, *Regitur fato si Iuppiter ipse . . .*: Una postilla al *Carmen contra paganos*, in: *Perennitas. Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich* (Roma 1980) 293–309, espec. 298–305.

¹¹⁴ This is a characteristic that ‘the gods’ share with the Xenophanean one. As Empedocles says of his god: “It is not possible to reach to god and set him before our eyes, nor to grasp him with our hands.” Or Feyerabend 1986, 210 on the traditional gods as opposed to the Xenophanean one: “Diese konnte man ja noch verstehen, man konnte sie beeinflussen, man konnte sie sogar an der Nase herumführen, man konnte sie durch Opfer, Bitten, Argumente von unerwünschten Handlungen abbringen—zur Welt die sie lenkten, gab es ein persönliches Verhältnis.” There is some likeness here with the god Hades, who is (nearly entirely) devoid of altars and sacrifices. A scholion on Homer (*ad Il.* 9.158) attributes this to his inexorable nature. Eur. *Alc.* 424 calls him ἄσπονδος θεός.

¹¹⁵ Mikalson 1989, 86, on classical Athens: “οἱ θεοί as a group lack all the definitions of locale, cult site, and function which characterize practised religion. οἱ θεοί, like daimon, is a conceptual, not a cult term. Athenians, in the classical period, at least, did not make prayers to οἱ θεοί in these terms. (...) Prayers to ‘the gods’ whether they be successful or not, are a literary device—meaning little more than ‘I pray’ or ‘I strongly hope.’” Cf. *idem* 1983, 68. Votive texts to ‘the gods and the goddesses’ (mostly but not always in Latin) with the text *Dis deabusque secundum inter-*

of your problems, you appeal to one or more personal gods—if need be to “all the gods”—with prayer and sacrifice.¹¹⁶ In cases of sudden incalculable and unexpected calamities, however, the Greek perspective easily shifts from *a* god to a more abstract notion such as *the* god, or the *gods*,¹¹⁷ or even something “more than a god,” not to seek remedy, however, but to find a cause or an explanation. As the nurse in Eur. *Hippolytus* 359 f. comments on the cause of Phaedra’s illegal love:

Sure no goddess Cypris (Aphrodite) is,
But, if it may be, something more than a God,
(ἀλλ’ εἴ τι μείζον ἄλλο γίγνεται θεοῦ)
Who hath ruined her, and me, and all this house.

No sacrifice, no wishing prayer, I said, because what is predestined (either by arbitrary fate or by way of retribution) cannot be escaped, not even by a god. The only exception to this rule is at the same time its most gratifying confirmation. Just as the cause of unfathomable events cannot be “a god but must be something more than a god,” so the inexplicable sacrifice that is something more than sacrifice cannot be associated with *a* god. I am referring to human sacrifice, particularly self-sacrifice as it is demanded and executed in numerous myths.

pretationem oraculi Clari Apollinis do occur in later antiquity, namely in a series of inscriptions known from various parts of the Empire, all versions of the same oracle from Klaros, propagated perhaps on the initiative of Caracalla after his consultation of the oracle in 213 AD. The oracle may have recommended to continue worshipping the traditional Olympian gods, although they ranked below the highest god. See: S. Mitchell, *Inscriptions from Meli (Koccaliler) in Pisidia*, *AS* 53 (2003) 139–159, with a new Greek sample; EBGR 2003, no. 116; C.P. Jones, *Ten Dedications “To the Gods and Goddesses” and the Antonine Plague*, *JRA* 18 (2005) 293–301; Busine 2005, 184–189; Chaniotis 2010, 117 f.

¹¹⁶ A striking corroboration can be found in the fourteenth book of the *Odyssey*, which is brimful of references to ‘Zeus’, ‘god’ or the ‘gods’ as agents of some good but more often bad experiences, but never in the context of prayer or sacrifice. When at last Eumaios prepares a sacrifice (414 ff. See below Chapter IV. p. 367 f.), the first prayer is to “all the gods” (423 ff.) who are beseeched to bring Odysseus safely home. Just so Odysseus is advised to sacrifice to all the gods for a safe trip home, *Od.* 11.132 ff.

¹¹⁷ See Nicolai 2005, 22–29, who argues that the personal and a-personal images of deity are perfectly compatible in the mind of the believer exactly because “jede von beiden einerseits nur eine—jeweils durch einen individuellen Erfahrungshorizont bestimmte—anthropogene Schöpfung darstellt (...), andererseits aber zugleich eine ganz bestimmte situationsbedingte Funktion zu erfüllen hat.” He argues that in a hopeless situation man needs to resort to a personal god to whom he can pray for help and salvation. In a more philosophical reflective context it is rather the god(s) as highest principle of causation that man relies on for explanation and comfort. Cf. Nilsson *GGR* I, 219: “in diesen kollektiven oder unbestimmten Bezeichnungen wird das individuelle verwischt.”

Demanded by whom? With one or two exceptions never by an individual god, for as Plutarch says in his *Life of Pelopidas* 21, “such a barbaric and unlawful sacrifice could not possibly please any of the gods” (οὐδενὶ τῶν κρείττωνων). It was not any of the gods, but ‘the gods’, anonymous gods, who were the authorities that were consistently credited with the ultimate claim to this “sacrifice more than sacrifice.”¹¹⁸

As in our earlier discussion of Xenophanes, here again we describe two at first sight not easily compatible conceptions of the divine world, which nonetheless are both experienced as simultaneously true and valid. Nilsson GGR I 761 was right when he wrote: “Herodotus war eben so guter Polytheist wie irgendeiner seiner Zeitgenossen.” But those who have detected monotheistic tendencies in his cosmology are equally right.¹¹⁹ Again we observe two different but co-existing layers of divine conceptualization, each embedded in its own type of discourse, and we observe that, like Xenophanes, Herodotus saw no problem in professing mildly—albeit far from Xenophanean—monotheistic ideas side by side to a traditional polytheism.¹²⁰ Both conceptions are juxtaposed and intertwined, throughout his work, sometimes influencing each other. For, albeit above-individual, the concept of the anonymous divine authority is not as purely abstract as the *heis theos* of Xenophanes. The mechanical working of divine retribution and compensation by ‘the gods’ can be expressed in more ‘affective’ terms: the universal law of alternation that the excessively prosperous have to fear may alternate with divine envy, thus at least terminologically ‘humanizing’ the mechanical law into a more anthropomorphic affect.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Versnel 1981b, espec. 171–179. Comparably in funerary texts it is never one specific god but always anonymous gods, ‘the gods’ (sometimes with predicates like *iniqui* or *iniusti*), who are blamed for premature death. See below n. 158.

¹¹⁹ Which does not make him a “closet monotheist” as Harrison 2000, 179 rightly notes. When he adds “The use of singular nouns (...) no more reflects a resolute monotheism than plurals suggest a radical polytheism” the emphasis should be placed on ‘resolute’ and ‘radical’.

¹²⁰ This by no means involves that Herodotus should be a “follower of Xenophanes,” as has been argued by E. Hussey in an unpublished essay on “The Religious Opinions of Herodotus” as quoted by Gould 1994, 94 n. 7. Nor was he a disciple of Anaximander. Thus: P.S. Derow, *Historical Explanation: Polybius and his Predecessors*, in: S. Hornblower (ed.), *Greek Historiography* (Oxford 1994) 78, as contested by Harrison 1997, 112, and *idem* 2000, 116. Their respective religious cosmologies widely differ.

¹²¹ For divine envy in archaic Greek literature see above Ch. II n. 72. More generally: S. Ranulf, *The Jealousy of the God and Criminal Law at Athens* (London-Kopenhagen

If, then, the notion of ‘the gods’ becomes near identical to the all-embracing power of Fate, there is no systematization of the precise relationship between the two. In the words of Nilsson *GGR* I 761:

In Fate he perceives the divine in action, without questioning the relationship between inescapable Fate and divine power.¹²²

Nor is there any explicit reflection on the precise relationship between freedom and responsibility in human action and the arbitrary omnipotence of ‘the gods’. Numerous are the reports of events—especially catastrophic ones—that are prepared by the gods or the god, but enacted by man (*Hdt.* 7.8a 1; 7.139.5; 8.109.3).¹²³

As noted earlier Herodotus was a *trait d’union* between the archaic period that preceded and the ideas of the fourth century and the Hellenistic period that followed. The terms *ho theos*, *hoi theoi*, *to theion*, *ho daimon*, *hoi daimones* referring to an anonymous and mysteriously interfering supernatural power abound in Greek idiom of all periods.¹²⁴ François 1957 offers a full survey of the evidence¹²⁵ and thus extends the data so characteristic of Herodotus’ theology to different periods and authors, from Homer via archaic poetry, 5th century tragedy and historiography,¹²⁶ to 4th century rhetoric and philosophy. *Ho theos* and *ho daimon* in open contexts, so he sums up, practically never denote ‘un Dieu unique et personnel’. Significantly, the only exception seems to be Xenophanes, whose One God does designate one specific divine

1933); P. Walcot, *Envy and the Greeks: A Study of Human Behaviour* (Warminster 1978); Aalders 1979; M.W. Dickie, *Lo phthonos degli dei nella letteratura greca del quinto secolo a. Christo*, *Atena e Roma* 32 (1987) 113–125.

¹²² “Im Schicksal sieht er das göttliche Wirken, ohne nach dem Verhältnis zwischen dem unentrinnbaren Schicksal und der göttlichen Macht zu fragen.”

¹²³ See Ch. II n. 30. Most recently: Harrison 1997, 107 f. also on the technique of ‘let-out clauses’ involved. Cf. more generally: Harrison 2000, Ch. 9 ‘Fate and Human Responsibility.’

¹²⁴ Often Zeus is preferred as a general term indicating the supreme divine power or Fate. Celebrated passages are the hymn for Zeus in Aesch. *Ag.* 160 ff., “das eindrucksvollste Zeugnis aischyleischer Religion”: A. Lesky, *Die Griechische Tragödie* (Stuttgart 1958) 103. Cf. p. 65: “Zeus und Schicksal bedeuten das Gleiche.” Cf. further: “Zeus is the universe—and what is still higher than this” (Aesch. *Fr.* 70 *TrGf*); Hes. *Op.* 42 and 47, where the same act is ascribed first to ‘the gods’, then to Zeus. See also below n. 161.

¹²⁵ The attestations in Herodotus at pp. 201–209. Cf. also G. Soleri, *Politeismo e monoteismo nel vocabolario teologico della letteratura greca da Omero a Platone*, *Rivista di Studi Classici* 8 (1960) 24–56.

¹²⁶ For Xenophon see also: M. Sordi, *Religione e guerra nel pensiero di Senofonte*, in: M. Sordi (ed.), *Il pensiero sulla guerra nel mondo antico* (Milano 2001) 37–43, espec. 38 f.; Pownall 1998, 255 n. 22 and *passim*.

entity.¹²⁷ Everywhere else, as we saw, the singular (*ho theos*) and plural (*hoi theoi*), denoting the same idea, freely alternate in the very same contexts.

After Herodotus, with in his wake Xenophon, especially in his *Hellenika*, as an important transition point,¹²⁸ the idiom remains popular, but a significant shift becomes apparent in the rise of *Tuche* (Fortune, Luck, “die Signatur des beginnenden Hellenismus”)¹²⁹ as a rival designation. Fourth Century Athenian orators continued to appeal to religious arguments for purposes of persuasion.¹³⁰ The politicians Demosthenes, who opposed the Macedonian king Philippos, and Aeschines, who had long favoured the Macedonian, both had to admit in the end that the historical outcome of their policies was not in accordance with what they had intended or expected. Both readily took recourse to ‘the God’, *to daimonion*, or to *Tuche*, which are freely interchangeable.¹³¹ Aeschin. 2.130–1: “It was *Tuche* first of all

¹²⁷ François 1975, 311: “Les conceptions de Xénophane constituent (...) une catégorie spéciale.” Cf. Soleri *o.c.* (above n. 125) 55: “*theos e daimon* (...) mantengono costantemente un significato collettivo e generico; e nulla più (...). Unica eccezione, ben singolare, è Senofane.”

¹²⁸ Pownall 1998.

¹²⁹ Nilsson *GGR* II, 301.

¹³⁰ For what follows I refer the reader to: H. Meuss, *Die Vorstellungen von Gottheit und Schicksal bei den attischen Rednern—Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der griechischen Volksreligion*, *Jahrb. f. Class. Phil.* 35 (1889) 445–476; D.B. King, *The Appeal to Religion in Greek Rhetoric*, *CJ* 50 (1954–5) 363–376; M. Vielberg, *Die religiösen Vorstellungen der Redner Lykurg*, *RhM* 134 (1991) 49–68; H. Montgomery, *Piety and Persuasion: Mythology and Religion in Fourth-Century Athenian Oratory*, in: P. Hellström & B. Alroth (edd.), *Religion and Power in the Ancient Greek World* (Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1993, Uppsala 1996) 125–132. A particularly helpful survey: Mikalson 1983, Ch. 8 (pp. 53–62) ‘The Nature of Divine Intervention,’ and Ch. 9 (pp. 63–73) ‘The Nature of the gods.’ His vision is slightly biased though, as has often been noticed, by his near exclusive leaning on works of orators and epigraphical texts in contrast to tragedy or other literary genres.

¹³¹ As noted by von Wilamowitz *ad* Dem. *De cor.* 193: “nichts Bestimmtes, geschweige Persönliches wird dabei empfunden.” Cf. H. Wankel, *Rede für Ktesiphon über den Kranz* II (Heidelberg 1976) 908 ff. On the rise and bloom of these two concepts in the Hellenistic period see: G. Sfameni Gasparro, *Daimôn and Tuchê in the Hellenistic Religious Experience*, in: P. Bilde *et alii* (edd.), *Conventional Values of the Hellenistic Greeks* (Aarhus 1997) 67–109. On *Tyche* in New Comedy: G. Vogt-Spira, *Dramaturgie des Zufalls: Tyche und Handeln in der Komödie Menanders* (Munich 1992), with interesting conclusions concerning the multiple forms of relationship between the action of the human being and the interference of *tyche*/*Tyche*. On the Greek novel: M. Alperowitz, *Das Wirken und Walten der Götter im griechischen Roman* (Biblioth. klass. Altert. NF 88, 1992) Ch. 5 “Schicksalsmächte” pp. 59–88 with *Tyche* at 75–87, an analysis of the arbitrary, negative imagery of *Tyche*, in some works envisioned as a personal, in others as an impersonal abstract power. However, in accordance with its focus on a ‘happy ending’ the novel may also accept an overall divine justice:

that ruined the Phocians, and she is mistress of all things” (Τύχη ἡ πάντων ἐστὶ κυρία). Dem. *De cor.* 193: “You must not accuse me (...) for the event was in god’s hand not mine”, which, later (252), is varied into: “it is a stupid thing for any human being to reproach his brother man on the score of fortune.” From the fourth century onwards we can follow Tuche’s rise to the central position held by ‘the gods’ in earlier expressions. Most significantly, in the same period the ‘envy of the gods’ is gradually replaced by the ‘enviousness of Fate.’¹³²

2. Concluding remarks

The term *hoi theoi* as the semantic plural of—and hence clearly distinct from—*ho theos*, designates the total multitude of traditional individual gods as individual gods, and in that sense practically equals ‘all the gods’, as exemplified in Plato’s advice: “one must praise all the gods” as discussed in Appendix I. ‘All the gods’ can be addressed in prayer. They even boast cultic worship, as we shall see. Herodotean (*hoi theoi*) as a generic expression, though grammatically a plural, from a semantic point of view refers to a unity, a oneness, signifying one all-governing divine principle. Here *hoi theoi* is not distinct from but, on the contrary, semantically equals *ho theos* and *to theion*. The two different notions covered by the same plural *hoi theoi*, though prone to confusion, as a rule can be well distinguished if viewed in their respective contexts. But if we do not have a context the choice will be less obvious. Consequently, I would not be so sure which of the two possible denotations (or if one prefers: connotations) is the dominant one in the topical opening words of official decrees in Athenian inscriptions: *theoi*.¹³³

K. Waldner, Die poetische Gerechtigkeit der Götter: Recht und Religion im griechischen Roman, in: D. Elm von der Osten *e.a.* (edd.), *Texte als Medium und Reflexion von Religion im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart 2006) 101–123.

¹³² Aalders 1979. Tuche and Fate become near equivalents in this period.

¹³³ Accordingly, there has been much guessing around about the ‘real’ meaning of this heading. R.L. Ponder, The Origin of *theoi* as Inscription-Heading, in: *Studies Presented to Sterling Dow* (Durham 1984) 243–250, gives a survey and a new interpretation (245): “*theoi* is not a dedicatory formula, nor a formal appeal for good fortune, nor an indication that suitable religious rites had been performed. Rather (...) its presence on the stone may be best explained as harking back to an early religious element, imprecatory and apotropaic in nature.” How complicated things may be becomes apparent in the opening of the *iamata* inscriptions at Epidauros, which has in the upper left Θεός, in the upper right Τύχη ἀγαθῆ, and in the next line the title:

Concerning the relationship of monotheism and polytheism in Herodotus I here summarize our findings in a felicitous formulation by Linforth:¹³⁴

Though the multiplicity of gods is never called in question, there is a disposition to speak of the divine element in the world *as if* it were characterized by the indivisibility of the god of the pure monotheist.

As if, as we will note in several chapters of this book, is perhaps the most productive and promising strategy in religion.

Throughout their history the different notions of anonymous divine intervention share a central function: they are conceptual devices deployed to convey sense to the inexplicable by anchoring it in an ultimate authority, even if this implies the acknowledgement of the limitations of human knowledge in these matters.¹³⁵ While Xenophanes' God helps us explain *how* the (material) world *is* (hence is 'good to think [with]'), 'the god' or 'the gods' of Herodotus (and of his predecessors and successors) help us understand *why* (catastrophic) events *happen* in human life, and so to accept them (they are 'good to suffer with').¹³⁶ The first is the revolutionary creation by one individual, the latter ones are moulded by the collective imagery of a civilization. Together they are basic instruments "to create a world of meaning in the context of which human life can be significantly lived."¹³⁷ Inherent in their common function, both types of gods also share a nearly complete lack of worship in terms of statues, altars, temples, cult, and, most relevant: prayer.

While Herodotus' 'gods' may reflect either the arbitrary, or the moral or the mechanical principles of alternation or retaliation, Tuche is essentially an arbitrary and capricious power in accordance with her

Ἰάματα τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος καὶ τοῦ Ἀσκληπίου. It would be a mistake to take *theos* as referring to (one of) the two Epidaurian gods.

¹³⁴ Linforth 1928, 218. Although, as noted above n. 99, I cannot accept the overall view on which it is based.

¹³⁵ Gould 1994, 94 and more extensively on the 'uncertainty principle': Gould 1985, espec. 9–14.

¹³⁶ 'Good to think (with)' is perhaps the most characteristic expression of the 'école de Paris' (including Vernant, after Lévi-Strauss). For a discussion see Cl. Geertz' celebrated 'Religion as a Cultural System', in: Geertz 1973, 87–125. See also: Burkert 1996a, 26 f.: "Affliction is made bearable by an ultimate if non-empirical answer to the grieving one's question, 'why.'" Cf. Harrison 1997, 108: "The gods act then as a kind of outside regulatory body of human attempts at justice," adding, however: "This is, of course, to reduce a complex web of religious beliefs to a simple formula."

¹³⁷ T.F. O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion* (Englewoods Cliffs 1966) 5.

nature: Fortune, Luck, Chance. *Not* by chance it was exactly this power that from the late classical period onwards did receive divine honours, was worshipped with sacrifices and statues in temples dedicated to her, and—especially as Agathe Tyche (Good Fortune)—grew into a great goddess: an astounding strategy for domesticating the fearfully arbitrary power of Chance. Many *poleis* had their protecting Tyche, as did kings.¹³⁸ However great, the goddess remained whimsical and (for that reason?) never ousted the other gods. We shall meet this “Mistress of all things” again in the next section.

4. “ONE IS THE GOD”¹³⁹

1. *Praising the god*

Heis (ho) theos (‘one is the god!’): this is the acclamation that resounded far and wide in the Greek speaking eastern part of the Roman world

¹³⁸ For Tyche as a goddess see: A.A. Buriks, *PERI TUCHES* (Diss. Leiden 1945); G. Herzog-Hauser, *RE* VII (1948) 1643–1689; Nilsson *GGR* 361 ff.; U. von Wilamowitz, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* II (Darmstadt 1959³ = 1955²) 295–305; Mikalson 1983, 53–62. *LIMC* VIII 1 (1997) 115–117.

¹³⁹ As indicated above this section is a very condensed version of various parts of my *TER UNUS*, to which I refer the reader for more ample substantiation of what I am here summarizing. After this chapter was finished, I had the chance to read first drafts of the papers now published as Belayche 2010 and Chaniotis 2010, briefly announced in Chaniotis-Chiai 2007. Both offer fresh, detailed, and important treatments of themes connected with the notion of henotheism, focussing more than I did on their social and political contexts. Thus they present a welcome substantiation as well as an illuminating amplification of what I had argued in *TER UNUS*. Since their main arguments and conclusions in all respects concur with mine I have largely maintained my present text as it was, updating ancient evidence and modern bibliography wherever it seemed useful. After the completion of this chapter G.F. Chiai sent me drafts of a number of his articles most of them in print at that time: *Il villaggio ed il suo dio: considerazioni sulla concorrenza religiosa nelle comunità rurali dell’Asia Minore in epoca romana*, *Mythos. Rivista di Storia delle Religioni* n.s. 1 (2006–2007) 137–164; *Allmächtige Götter und fromme Menschen im ländlichen Kleinasien der Kaiserzeit*, *Millennium Jahrbuch* 6 (2009) 61–106; *Perchè un dio è potente? Considerazioni sull’ enoteismo e sulla costruzione del divino in Asia Minore* (forthcoming *SMSR* 2010). They all concern the religious and cultural mentality typical of the henotheistic cults of Asia Minor as discussed in the works of scholars mentioned above as well as in the present section, and are particularly useful for their collections of the epigraphical evidence. On occurrence and meaning of the cheer *heis (ho) theos* see most recently: C. Markchies, *Heis Theos? Religionsgeschichte und Christentum* bei Erik Peterson, in: B. Nichteiss (ed.), *Vom Ende der Zeit. Geschichtstheologie und Eschatologie bei Erik Peterson* (*Sympos. Mainz*) (Münster 2001) 38–74; *idem* 2002. Cf. also next note.

of the Hellenistic and Imperial era down to the sixth century AD.¹⁴⁰ Nor is it lacking in Christian literature.¹⁴¹ We recover the expression—often applied as a protective spell¹⁴²—engraved in amulets, rings, gems and other objects, inscribed in stone and written in papyri as well as in (especially religious) literature. With this acclamation we broach our third ‘experiment in oneness’, the theology which is generally referred to as ‘henotheism’.

The term ‘henotheism’ is a modern formation canonized by Max Müller,¹⁴³ only later, in the study of Hellenistic religions, associated with and redefined in the light of the acclamation *heis (ho) theos*. In anticipation of a demonstration given below and in accordance with the provisional definition given above p. 244, we can state for the moment that the acclamation does not necessarily imply monotheistic notions (‘there is no other god *except* this god’), although this connotation may understandably creep in from time to time.¹⁴⁴ As a

¹⁴⁰ “Man stolpert (...) förmlich über εἷς θεός-inschriften,” thus Marksches 2002, 213, speaking about Syria in 5th c. AD. The basic collection has long been Petersson 1926. Further attestations and discussions also in the works of Weinreich and Nock. There has been a host of more recent publications of single acclamations especially in papyri and on gems. At the moment of writing Marksches’ revised and augmented edition of Peterson is in the press. See Marksches 2002, where he demonstrates the differences in the connotations of the expression among Christians, Jews, Samaritans in late antiquity, *inter alia* referring to a find of more than 70 new texts in Samaria on which see: L. Di Segni, Εἷς θεός in Palestinian Inscriptions, *SCI* 13 (1994) 94–115. Cf. also Fürst 2006.

¹⁴¹ As it is still alive in modern Greek. At Good Friday the children chant: “ένας εἷναι ο θεός” (God is one) (Friedl 1962, 102). Curiously enough, in the period in which Christians exploited the cheer to distinguish their creed from that of the pagans, milestones in Palestine seem to counter this propaganda by acclaiming the ‘neo-pagan’ emperor Julian thus: εἷς θεός, εἷς Ἰουλιανός ὁ Αὐγουστος (*vel* βασιλεύς) (Peterson 1926, 271) and εἷς θ[εός], νίκ[α], Ἰουλι[ανέ] (*SEG* 41.1544).

¹⁴² The acclamation of a god as ‘one’ is often closely connected with expressions of his outstanding soteriological qualities. “One is the god who heals every sickness,” claims a magical papyrus published by D. Wortmann, *Neue magische Texte*, *BJ* 168 (1968) no. 7, p. 105 (= Betz *PGM* XCIX; *Suppl. Mag.* 33), who failed to notice that this is just a slightly elaborated version of a very common acclamation: εἷς θεός ὁ βοηθῶν/βοηθός (‘One is God the helper/healer’): Petersson 1926, *passim*.

¹⁴³ above p. 244.

¹⁴⁴ Significantly, when it does, there may still remain inconsistencies. We saw above (n. 8) that Paul 1 Cor. 8:4–6, says that “we know that (...) there is no God but one,” (οὐδεὶς θεός εἰ μὴ εἷς), which doubtless refers to a monotheistic conception. However, this phrase is immediately followed by an undiluted polytheistic statement. Cf. Wengst 1967, 132: “Dass diese Übernahme in den christlichen Bereich nicht eine völlige Uminterpretation im Sinne des Monotheismus bedeutete, sondern dass der elative Sinn noch erhalten blieb, zeigt der Kontext von 1 Kor 8:6, wenn Paulus die Einzigkeit des Kyrios Jesus im Gegenüber zu den vielen Kyrioi betont, deren Existenz

rule, it implies a personal devotion to one god ('there is no other god like this god') without involving rejection or neglect of other gods. As such this acclamation discloses a shift in religious attitudes of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods which, although not strictly monotheistic and not necessarily a *praeparatio* to the adoption of monotheism, belongs among the most striking of all antiquity. To be sure, the Mediterranean population did not *en masse* convert or adhere to henotheistic types of devotion, no more than it massively converted to the so-called 'Oriental religions'. On the contrary, henotheism seems to have remained a somewhat sectarian phenomenon of an essentially competitive nature. However, this did not prevent many of its features from permeating established types of religion as well. As such it is certainly one of the most characteristic hallmarks of what Veyne 1986 calls "le second paganisme" of the second and third centuries AD. Various features, however, can be perceived long before this period and it is here that we shall start our exposition.

As it is impossible to embark upon a detailed treatment of all the different aspects of henotheism, I select three topics for brief discussion: 1) the typical characteristics of the religious mentality implied in this conception, 2) the concept of 'oneness' in terms such as Greek *heis*, feminine: *mia*; *monos*, feminine: *monê*; and Lat. *unus/una, solus/sola*, 3) the question of origins. This disposition may cause some surprise if not suspicion. Why not focus first and foremost on the denotation of the central element of henotheism: the term *heis*? The answer is that it is practically unfeasible to determine precisely what acclamative *heis* ('one') denotes—not surprisingly when dealing with acclamations—so that the maximum we can hope to recover is what the term connotes—not surprisingly when dealing with a religious expression. It might even be argued that acclamative *heis* does not 'denote' at all, but instead summarizes, hence evokes, a set of connotations, without which the expression cannot be understood at all.¹⁴⁵

er in v. 5 einräumt." On the use of the formula *heis theos* in connection with the process of christianisation see: F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization I–II* (Leiden–New York 1993–1994), I, 120 ff.; II, 313 ff.; Fürst 2006. For a recent—brief but informative—discussion of henotheism in (late) antiquity, in accordance with my own ideas, see Eich 2010, 101–110.

¹⁴⁵ On religious acclamations and the diversity of their meanings and implications see: Chaniotis 2010, 123, with ample literature in nn. 46 ff.; *idem*, 'Acclamation as a Form of Religious Communication', in: H. Cancik & J. Rüpke (edd.), *Die Religion des Imperium Romanum: Koine und Konfrontationen* (Tübingen 2009) 199–218. Interest-

However, a quest for connotations requires insight into the religious ambience in which the predicate *heis* belongs, in other words a delineation of the religious *Sitz im Leben* of henotheism. In order to achieve this we shall proceed in two steps.

First, we shall focus our attention on the goddess Isis. Not only was she an eminently henotheistic deity in that she was consistently—and one of the first to be—acclaimed as being “One,” but her specific qualities were also lauded in extensive hymns, called ‘aretalogies’ or ‘praises’. A brief summary of such an aretalogy will also offer the most convenient avenue to a first, provisional discussion of the ethno-cultural roots of this belief system. Next, more generally, we shall draw up an inventory of the most conspicuous elements of the theology involved as exemplified in a variety of different religious expressions, all of them indicative of the religiosity concerning gods who are praised as ‘one’ or at the least as uniquely great.

2. Aretalogy

An aretalogy is a laudatory description of the miraculous power (*arete*) of a god. The longest and best-known is the Isis aretalogy of Kume¹⁴⁶ (further referred to as K). Like other samples of these liturgical panegyrics, often publicized as a token of gratitude and/or for propagandistic purposes, it was inscribed on stone.¹⁴⁷ The remarkable resemblance

ing discussions on the socio-psychological mechanism of the acclamation in Roman times: G.S. Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome* (Baltimore 1999).

¹⁴⁶ Apart from many specialized studies and editions of various versions of the same aretalogy in other inscriptions or literary texts, the text of K can be found e.g. in W. Peek, *Der Isishymnus von Andros und verwandte Texte* (Berlin 1930); R. Harder, *Karpokrates von Chalkis und die memphitische Isispropaganda, Abh. Berlin* 1943 (1944), Grandjean 1975, *IG XII Suppl.* pp. 98/9, Totti 1985 no. 1. A translation in: F.C. Grant, *Hellenistic Religions* (Indianapolis 1980 = 1953) 131 ff. For full bibliography and discussion of K and other aretalogies, the genre aretalogy in general, its nature and origin, I refer to *TER UNUS* 37–52. On the aretalogy of Harpokrates from Chalkis see recently: R. Matthey, *Retour sur l’hymne “arétalogique” de Karpokrate a Chalcis*, *ARG* 9 (2007) 191–222.

¹⁴⁷ Besides these aretalogies there were other means to extol the majesty of the god(dess), for instance by relating a specific miracle or even by collecting these stories in miracle books. The two types could be combined, as for example in the hymn of Maronea (Grandjean 1975), “the only surviving sophistic encomium to a deity of the Hellenistic ages” (D. Papanikolaou, *The Aretalogy of Isis from Maroneia and the Question of Hellenistic “Asianism,” ZPE* 168 [2009] 59–70, espec. 67). Many of these *aretai* are reproduced by Longo 1969. They are discussed by Nock 1933, 84 ff., MacMullen 1981, 10 ff., Versnel 1981a, 54–62, with special attention to the aspect of *marturia*.

of the various versions of this aretalogy that have come down to us strongly suggests a common origin. Half a century of fierce scholarly debate has not yielded a consensus on the original nature of the supposed prototype, whose cradle, according to legend, stood in Memphis. On the one hand they display numerous non-Greek, particularly Egyptian, elements that are obvious to any reader and denied by none. Not only are they unequivocally present in such proclamations as: “I invented the letters together with Hermes (= Egyptian Thot)” (K 3c), or “I am the wife and sister of Osiris” (K 6), but also in “I divided earth from heaven” (K 12), an act of creation that no Greek god could boast.¹⁴⁸ Stylistically, a series of *Ego*-proclamations in which a god proclaims his wondrous powers (*dunameis*) is un-Greek.¹⁴⁹ Though certainly not lacking in Greek literature (see Ch. V), expressions of omnipotence composed of two polar qualities such as “I soothe the sea and make it turbulent” (K 43) and “I make the navigable unnavigable whenever it pleases me” (K 50) have their roots in the ancient Near East.¹⁵⁰ Nor is a *parallelismus membrorum* like the one at the end of the Isis aretalogy cited below typical of Greek literature, although both tropes are not completely lacking.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, in 1949 the two major

¹⁴⁸ I do not recognize anything really comparable in Hesiod *Th.* 126 ff.; 173 ff., to which F. Solmsen, *Isis among the Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge Mass. 1980) 133 n. 48, refers. The fragments of an Orphic theogony in the Derveni Papyrus (M.L. West, *The Orphic Poems* [Oxford 1983] 68–115; A. Laks & G.W. Most [edd.], *Studies in the Derveni Papyrus* [Oxford 1997]); G. Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus. Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation* [Cambridge 2004]; Th. Kouremenos, G.M. Parássoglou & K. Tsantsanoglou, *The Derveni Papyrus. Edited with Introduction and Commentary* [Florence 2006]), do explain the castration of Ouranos by Kronos as the separation of heaven and earth. But there cannot be any doubt as to the strong Near-Eastern influences here, since the same text adds that Zeus swallowed the genitals of Ouranos and became pregnant, which clearly goes back to the Kumarbi myth. See: W. Burkert, *Oriental and Greek Mythology: The Meeting of Parallels*, in: Bremmer 1987, 10–40, espec. 22.

¹⁴⁹ See for a discussion: *TER UNUS* 43 n. 10.

¹⁵⁰ An exhaustive list of such polar expressions of omnipotence in *PGM* I, 96–132. There are even stronger statements of this type in *P.Oxy* 1380 (Totti 1985 no. 20), ll. 195/6: “you, mistress of growth and destruction,” and above all ll. 175 ff.: “and you give destruction to whom you like, and to those that are destroyed you give growth.” Fowden 1986, 49, deems it likely that part of the invocation is a translation from an Egyptian text. No need to recall that this type of expression is particularly characteristic of the OT, for instance in Deut. 32:39, “I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal.”

¹⁵¹ The evidence in Greek literature: *TER UNUS* 43 n. 11, and below in Chapter V, pp. ##.

experts on Hellenistic religion, A.D. Nock and A.J. Festugière,¹⁵² independently (and forcefully) attacked the theory of a wholesale Egyptian origin contending that the original text must have been written in Greek since it contained numerous basically Greek concepts. For reasons of space I cannot go into this discussion here and shall only repeat my personal conviction that the aretalogies of Isis are a genuinely *Hellenistic* creation—very comparable to the creation of the god Sarapis himself—in which Greek elements have been amalgamated with Egyptian-oriental ones.¹⁵³

Let us return now to the aretalogy of Kyme. In the first line Isis proclaims her absolute sovereignty: “I am Isis, the mistress of every land.” Then a breathless series of some fifty *Ego* proclamations articulates the goddess as the one who has created (divided) heaven and earth, who has defined the laws of nature and who (sometimes arbitrarily) manipulates the physical elements. After having invented agriculture she was the one who initiated social order and civilization by introducing language, justice, religion, moral codes and love. After a preliminary formula of omnipotence in ll. 46/7: “What pleases me, that shall be finished; for me everything makes way,” the hymn ends with the unsurpassed and unsurpassable climax (ll. 55/6):

I overcome Fate,
Fate harkens to me.

The two lines can be understood as comprehensive formulas in which Isis’ supremacy over life and death, including sickness, perils and disaster, is proclaimed. The first Hymn of Isidorus¹⁵⁴ (2nd or 1st c. BC) 26–34, articulates this in exemplary soteriological formulas:

¹⁵² A.D. Nock, *Gnomon* 21 (1949) 221–228 = Nock 1972 II, 703–711; A.J. Festugière, A propos des arétalogies d’Isis, *HThR* 42 (1949) 209–234 = Festugière 1972, 138–163. For a full discussion see: *TER UNUS* 41–44.

¹⁵³ This is also the opinion of major specialists such as L.Vidman, J. Leclant, J. Gwyn Griffiths, G. Fowden. This view is supported by an undeniable similarity with Egyptian hymns for Isis, found at Philae and published by L.V. Zabkar, Six Hymns to Isis in the Sanctuary of her Temple at Philae and their Theological Significance, *JEA* 69 (1983) 115–137; *idem*, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae* (Hannover-London 1988), belonging to the period of Ptolemy II Philadelphos. Very important parallels in demotic hymns from 2nd c. BC into 2nd c. AD have now been collected in: H. Kockelmann, *Praising the Goddess: A Comparative and Annotated Re-edition of Six Demotic Hymns and Praises Addressed to Isis* (Berlin-New York 2008).

¹⁵⁴ Found in 1935 at Medinet Madi in the Fayum. The major publication is: Vanderlip 1972, whose translation I here adopt. Cf. also: É. Bernand, *Les inscriptions métriques de l’Égypte gréco-romaine* (Paris 1969) 631–652; Totti 1985 no. 21 ff.

Deathless Saviour, many-named, mightiest Isis,
 Saving from war cities and all their citizens:
 Men, their wives, possessions and children.
 As many as are bound fast in prison, in the power of death,
 As many as are in pain through anguished, sleepless nights,
 All who are wanderers in a foreign land,
 And as many as sail on the Great Sea in winter
 When men may be destroyed and their ships wrecked and sunk,
 All are saved if they pray that You be present to help.

Line 4 has literally: “in the fatal destiny of death.” This is a crucial formula, for, like the final lines of the aretology of Kume, it represents an early anticipation of what was to develop into one of Isis’ most specific qualities during the imperial period. From the beginning of the second century AD onwards, we find Isis glorified for having the power to shift the boundaries that determine the measured time of life, i.e. for being victorious over fate.¹⁵⁵ In this she is matched by her consort Sarapis, who proclaims:¹⁵⁶ “for I change Fate” (lit. “change the clothes of Fate”). This is a commentary as it were on K 55/6 quoted above, and though certainly not an assurance of blissful immortality in the netherworld,¹⁵⁷ it definitely exalts Isis above the ranks of other, and in particular the Greek gods, to whom, as we saw above, Herodotus’ words applied: “fate cannot be escaped, not even by a god.”¹⁵⁸ As we have seen, the only Greek god who sometimes managed to ransom a favourite mortal from death, albeit for a limited period, was Apollo,¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Eg. Apul. *Metam.* 11.6, “you shall know that I alone have power to prolong your life also beyond the span determined by your destiny”; cf. 11.25.

¹⁵⁶ In a papyrus of the 3rd c. AD. Ed. pr. Abt, *ARW* 18 (1915) 257. Totti 1985 no. 12, where a full bibliography is presented. Cf. also Weinreich 1969, I 410.

¹⁵⁷ As Cumont once understood it. See: *TER UNUS* 47 ff.

¹⁵⁸ A funerary inscription (*Syll.*³ 889) informs us that “neither by flattery, nor by supplication, nor by tears will man ever be able to overstep the boundaries of the predestined,” thus summarizing a stock *topos* in literature which ranges from early lyric via Hellenistic poetry into epigrams, philosophical and astrological works of the Roman period. Cf. H. Wankel, ‘Alle Menschen müssen sterben.’ Variationen eines Topos der griechischen Literatur, *Hermes* 111 (1983) 129–154. Hence in cases of premature death ‘the gods’ and fate can equally be blamed for ill luck. Testimonia in A.D. Nock, *JRS* 30 (1940) 194 f.; R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epithaphs* (Urbana Ill. 1942) 142–158. Latin evidence: D. Pikhhaus, *Levensbeschouwing en Milieu in de Latijnse Metrische Inscripties* (Bruxelles 1978) 117–126. Cf. above n. 113.

¹⁵⁹ Hdt. 1.91; cf. R. Riecks, Eine tragische Erzählung bei Herodot, *Poetica* 7 (1975) 23–44, espec. 32; Aesch. *Eum.* 723 ff.; Eur. *Alc.* prol.; cf. J.M. Bell, Euripides’ *Alcestis*. A Reading, *Emerita* 48 (1980) 43–76 on the inevitability of *ananke* (here = inescapable fate). Even in the 250s AD Apollo still recalled how he had “shamed” the Fates and kept of an epidemic a century before: Lane Fox 1986, 231. On the other hand the

and the notion of divine victory over Fate or Predestination is not documented before the imperial period in religious texts outside Egypt.¹⁶⁰ A goddess who has the unique¹⁶¹ power to overcome destiny and liberate men from the chafing bonds of inescapable fate may become a new Fate herself. And here, as promised above, Tuche emerges again. For Isis was readily identified with Tuche,¹⁶² though in contradistinction to the blind and arbitrary Fortune she was a seeing and helpful one. The combat between the two is glorified in Apuleius *Metam.* 11.15.

All this has a consequence of crucial importance: a goddess who triumphs over Fate and moreover boasts an extensive series of matchless miraculous feats may lay claim to the most lofty titles. So does Isis in the first line of the aretalogy by calling herself sovereign (lit. *turannos*: tyrant) of all the land, in Egyptian ears probably referring to the land Egypt, in the Greek perception, no doubt understood as the whole civilized world. No god or goddess has such a variety of titles indicating unlimited power and sovereignty. The most frequent are: Queen (*basilissa*), Mistress (*despoina, anassa*) and Lady (*kuria*).¹⁶³ This divine absolutism in many respects imitates the model of the worldly autocracy so typical of Hellenistic kingship.¹⁶⁴

prolongation of life belongs to the normal capabilities of Egyptian gods: Nock 1972 II, 705 n. 7; Gwyn Griffiths 1975, 166.

¹⁶⁰ In fact, the final lines of aretalogy K, whose model can be dated to the third or second century BC, are so exceptional in the context of Hellenistic religion that they have been explained as a later addition by no less a specialist than Festugière, who, however, recanted few years later.

¹⁶¹ Zeus holding the scales of destiny in Homer is a rare exception to the rule. The Zeus who, in lyric poetry and sometimes in tragedy, is pictured as the highest lord of destiny (as e.g. in Archil. fr. 298 W.; cf. U. Bianchi, *Dios Aisa. Destino, uomini e divinità nell' epos, nelle teogonie e nel culto dei Greci* [Rome 1953]) may practically be identified with such notions as *hoi theoi, ho theos* and *to theion*, as we demonstrated earlier. Even the Christian god, once beyond the boundaries of the theologians' protectorate, is powerless (or nearly so) against the Fates. See above Ch. II nn. 158 f. In early Christian theology Christ or the Virgin Mother compete with Isis in the combat against Fate. They share this task with the great god of Gnostic and Hermetic speculation, also present in magical papyri. Outside this 'theosophy' the notion is rare.

¹⁶² J. Bergman, I overcome Fate, Fate harkens to me. Some Observations on Isis as a Goddess of Fate, in: Ringren (ed.), *Fatalistic Beliefs in Religion, Folklore and Literature* (Stockholm 1967) 35–51; F. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée* (Leiden 1973) I, 92 f.; III, 271 ff.; Gwyn Griffiths 1975, 241–244; *idem*, The Concept of the Divine Judgement in the Mystery Religions, in: U. Bianchi & M.J. Vermaseren (edd.), *La soteriologia dei culti orientali nell' impero Romano* (Leiden 1982) 192–219, espec. 199 f.

¹⁶³ Collection and discussion: *TER UNUS* 66.

¹⁶⁴ Most especially the curious amalgamation of liberation and subjection, which is not of direct concern to our present issue, mirrors the two sides of Hellenistic mon-

If we now try to summarize the picture delineated so far we can best quote the famous cheers of the Ephesians—who apparently were addicted to acclamations—that “Isis is a great goddess.”¹⁶⁵ ‘Great’, that is the most natural and common designation to indicate that the goddess towers above all other gods. And this, of course, is exactly the briefest summary of the hyperbolic ego-proclamations in the aretalogy: Isis can achieve what no other god is able to. She is not only great, she is *eminently and uniquely* great. In other words, she is the great champion in a divine competition for omnipotence.¹⁶⁶ Now, there are also

archy as I have argued at length in *TER UNUS* Ch.1 and in: ‘Religious Projection: A Hellenistic Instance’, in: L. Martin (ed.), *Religious Transformations and Socio-Political Change* (Berlin-New York 1993) 25–39.

¹⁶⁵ Xen. Ephes. 5, 13. Just as they acclaimed their own goddess with the words: “Great is the Artemis of the Ephesians” (Acts 19.28). Cf. *PGM* XXIV, 1, and parallels in Peterson 1926, 208; R. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich-Berlin 1962) 111 f.; Gwyn Griffiths 1975, 238. Cf. Isis in an ancient glossary: “Isis, that is the great hope” (*P.Oxy* XLV.3239). This may refer to dream interpretations, as M. Marcovich, *ZPE* 29 (1978) 49, has suggested. For *elpis* in religious context see: F. Cumont, *Lux perpetua* (Paris 1949) 401–405; Versnel 1985, 256 ff.

¹⁶⁶ For this reason Chaniotis 2010, providing rich evidence of superlative language (129 f.) and especially *meγas* in cheers and acclamations (134 f.), prefers to use the term ‘megatheism’ for this new type of religiosity, whose competitive context he emphasizes. As, in *TER UNUS* pp. 234–237, I myself have amply argued for elative ‘great’ as one of the meanings of the cheer *heis* in the agonistic ambiance which is the subject of Chaniotis’ investigation, as had already been suggested before by L. Robert: “équivalence pratique entre *heis* et *meγas*” (see below on the distinction between henotheistic and elative praises pp. 297 ff. with n. 203 and n. 212), I have nothing to object. In this context the two Greek words simply have the same meaning and the cheers may alternate. On the central significance of the notion ‘great’ see especially the fourth item of the nine characteristics of henotheistic religiosity below p. 290 f. and its more elaborated version in *TER UNUS* 194 ff. In later antiquity practically any god might claim the predicate ‘great’ or ‘the greatest.’ See for instance the collected inscriptions in: F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d’Alexandrie impériale (I^{er}–III^e s. apr. J.-C.)* (Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 108) (Cairo 1994). More recently the dispute concerning the status of the Hypsistos Theos has been drawn into the discussion. See various contributions to Athanassiadi & Frede 1999; Y. Ustinova, *The Supreme Gods of the Bosphoran Kingdom: Celestial Aphrodite and the Most High God* (Leiden 1999); M. Stein, Die Verehrung des Theos Hypsistos. Ein allumfassender pagan-jüdischer Synkretismus, *EA* 33 (2001) 119–125; G.W. Bowersock, The Highest God with Particular Reference to North-Pontus, *Hyperboreus* 8 (2002) 353–363; W. Wischmeyer, ΘΕΟΣ ΥΨΙΣΤΟΣ. Neues zu einer alten Debatte, *ZAC* 9 (2005) 149–168; Chaniotis-Chiai 2007, 118 n. 9; Fürst 2006, 505–510; N. Belayche, De la polysémie des épicleses: ΥΨΙΣΤΟΣ dans le monde gréco-romain, in: Belayche e.a. 2005, 427–442; *eadem*, *Hypsistos*. Une voie de l’exaltation des dieux dans le polythéisme gréco-romain, *ARG* 7 (2007) 34–55; *eadem* 2008, n. 11, and the significant complication presented by the Thea Hypsiste in: Chaniotis 2010, 120. St. Mitchell defends his position in: Further Thoughts on the Cult of Theos Hypsistos, in: Mitchell & Van Nuffelen 2010, 167–208.

different ways to express this. In one of her aretalogies¹⁶⁷ Isis claims: “I, Isis, am the *one and only* sovereign of this era” (ἐγὼ τύραννος Εἴσις αἰῶνος μόνη). ‘Alone’, ‘without rival’, ‘unique(ly)’, that is what terms such as Greek *monos/monê*, used here as elsewhere for Isis, denote and as such they are another fitting summary of the aretalogies. The term also brings us very close to that other Greek expression, *heis* (fem. *mia*), Latin *unus/una*, with which the goddess is stereotypically acclaimed. *P.Oxy* 1380 l.6 even calls her τὴν μίαν: “the One.” So it will be helpful to go into the meanings and functions of the term *monos*, as we shall do. But let us first have a glance at the more general characteristics of henotheistic religiosity, as collected from a broad range of evidence concerning Hellenistic gods (very much including Isis again) who—in opposition to the gods of classical Greece—claim a unique and superior status associated with notions of omnipotence.

3. *Nine characteristics of henotheistic religion*

Besides being ‘one’—whatever this may imply—the henotheistic gods of the Hellenistic era such as Isis and Sarapis lay claim to modes of adoration that are often radically different from the ones known for traditional Greek religion. I have drawn a list of nine of these characteristics¹⁶⁸ and will each time present only one or two illustrations.

1. Cosmopolitan pretensions and claims to universal worship are characteristic of great Hellenistic gods, especially of Isis. For instance: “all mortals who live on the boundless earth, Thracians, Greeks, and Barbarians, express Your fair Name, a Name honoured among all.”¹⁶⁹ Compare the expression “Tyrant of all land” in the Kume aretalogy.

2. If it is true that “miracle proves deity” (A.D. Nock),¹⁷⁰ it is no less true that, apart from a few scattered earlier instances, the first traces of a *structural* advertising function of miracles in Greece can

¹⁶⁷ Aretalogy of Cyrene, *SEG* 9.192.

¹⁶⁸ They match the nine features of Euripides’ *Bacchae* which I analysed in *TER UNUS* 164–172, and summarized in Ch. I above pp. 140 f.

¹⁶⁹ The phrase is taken from one of the most extensive ‘topographical’ catalogues, viz. the first Isiac hymn of Isidorus ll.14 ff. (Totti 1985 no. 21), the most extensive being *P.Oxy* 1380. In her commentary Vanderlip 1972, *ad loc.* gives a survey of parallel expressions. Indicative are further fixed epithets such as: *polyonymos* and *murionymos* (“with many/innumerable names”), on which see above Chapter I, p. 55 f.

¹⁷⁰ Or “miracle proves Saint” as a modern Greek proverb says: ἅγιος ποῦ δὲν θαυματουργεῖ, δὲν δοξάζεται (a saint that does not work miracles, is not honoured).

be discovered in the late classical miracle records of Asklepios' at Epidauros (4th c. BC), as we shall discuss in Chapter V. Significantly, the earliest epigraphical attestation of the term *aretê* in the sense of 'miraculous divine intervention' likewise dates from the fourth century BC.¹⁷¹ Both thus mark the dawn of the Hellenistic era. For, indeed, miracles and epiphanies adduced as proof of the greatness of a god are typical of certain trends in Hellenistic and later Roman religiosity.¹⁷² Isis and Sarapis frequently exacted obedience and worship through visions or miracles and the same is true for other gods, including the god of the Christians.

3. *Makarismoi*, being expressions of beatitude due to divine blessings, are a common feature of Hellenistic piety. The curious confessions of personal devotion and the concomitant beatitude as exemplarily expressed in the eleventh book of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* have no exact parallel in classical literature, with the exception of Euripides' *Bacchae*.¹⁷³

4. Although, naturally, 'great' is a common epithet of gods,¹⁷⁴ emphatic acclamations of greatness are exceptional in the classical period but abound in Hellenistic and Roman henotheistic ideology. In these periods "the desire to be magnified" (Eur. *Bacchae* 209), as we noted in the preceding section, is structurally reflected in endless 'magnifications', most emphatically documented in the curious confession inscriptions from North Eastern Lydia and the bordering area of Phrygia,¹⁷⁵ dating from the second and third centuries AD. Their frequent *exordium*: "Great is (the god) NN" is a ritualized acclamation. The ritual cheering was readily put into action as a propagandistic weapon in the struggle between pagans and Christians: "Great is the

Cf. Varro *apud* Aug. *CD* 4.22: "It is useless to know if Aesculapius is a god, if one does not know that he heals the sick, if one does not know why you should beseech him."

¹⁷¹ *Syll.*³ 1131, whose importance has been duly valued by A. Kiefer, *Aretalogische Studien* (Leipzig 1929) 21 f. and cf. Grandjean 1975, 1 ff.

¹⁷² One fine example: *P.Oxy* 1382 (Totti 1985 no. 13) gives the title of a book "The Miracle (*aretê*) of Zeus Helios, great Sarapis, done to Syrion the Pilot." In the preceding passage a miracle is described whose final words are: "This miracle is recorded in the libraries of Mercurium. Do all of you who are present say: 'There is one Zeus Sarapis'."

¹⁷³ As demonstrated in the second chapter of *TER UNUS* and see above Ch. I, p. 140 f. A good second is Euripides' *Ion* 130 ff., and his *Hippolytos*.

¹⁷⁴ B. Müller, *Megas Theos* (Diss. Halle 1913); M. Bissinger, *Das Adjektiv megas in der griechischen Dichtung* (1966).

¹⁷⁵ Collected with a commentary by Petzl 1994. On the sovereignty of the gods: Pleket 1981, 171–183.

Artemis of the Ephesians” shouted the inhabitants of Ephesus during two full hours in a henotheistic attempt to stop an advancing monotheism. And the Christians never stopped yelling back.¹⁷⁶

5. Cultic worship is the natural privilege of a god. Naturally, terms such as ‘to serve’ (*therapeuein*) occur in Greek religious texts of all periods. But the interpretation of such service as a personal submission or devotion to the god, even to the effect of being ‘possessed’ or ‘enslaved’ by the deity is definitely foreign to classical religiosity.¹⁷⁷ In classical literature a few passages in Euripides’ tragedy the *Ion* come close to it, but here the protagonist was a temple slave, a position which may have influenced the terminology.¹⁷⁸ The scarce, though significant, testimonies in actual cult have been discussed in Chapter I.¹⁷⁹ On the other hand, structural symptoms of personal or collective surrender to a god, frequently in the form of sacred slavery, are rife in later periods. A fixed technical terminology indicates both the monk-like submission of, for example, the devotees of henotheistic Sarapis and the sovereignty of the local god holding sway over Maeonian villages,¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ In apocryphal Acts of Apostles the crowd generally exclaims “Great is the god of the Christians” (or “of Peter” or “of Paul”). On these and comparable Christian acclamations see: *TWNT* s.v. *mezas, kurios*; V.H. Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (Leiden 1963) 51–68; Wengst 1967, 123–136. Consequently, the faithful adherent often underlines his inadequacy to describe the greatness of the god: “for it is within the reach of gods alone and not of mortals to describe the mighty deeds of the gods” says *P.Oxy* 1381, ll. 40 f., one of many examples of this expression. Totti 1985 no. 15. Cf. Grandjean 1975, 38–44.

¹⁷⁷ W.L. Westermann, *The Freedmen and the Slaves of God*, *PAPhS* 92 (1948) 56; K.H. Rengsdorff, *doulos*, *TWNT* II (1935) 267. For all relevant evidence and a fundamental discussion I refer to Pleket 1981. His discussion of the term *therapeia* as particularly relevant to the new type of religiosity (and perhaps derived from Oriental prototypes) is more recently corroborated by M.-F. Baslez, *Entre traditions nationales et intégration: les associations sémitiques du monde grec*, in: S. Ribichini, M. Rocchi & P. Xella (edd.), *La questione delle influenze vicino-orientali sulla religione greca* (Rome 2001) 235–247.

¹⁷⁸ Especially *Ion* 151 f.: “Oh, I would that my service to Apollo would never end...”. Cf. Pleket 1981, 164 f. On the specific piety in the *Ion* see also: Yunis 1988, 121–138.

¹⁷⁹ As for instance the *nympholeptos* Archedamos from Thera who decorated a cave in Attica ca. 400 BC, as well as other servants of a god.

¹⁸⁰ On the terminology see especially P. Herrmann, *Men, Herr von Axiotta*. In: *Studien zur Religion und Kultur Kleinasiens. Festschrift F.K. Dörner* (Leiden 1978) 415–424; Pleket 1981, 162 f.; 177; Belayche 2006, 257–269. Cf. also the work of Chiaï mentioned above n. 139. On the corresponding titlature of these gods e.g. ‘master’, ‘lord’ (κύριος, δεσπότης) see now also: T. Ritti, Antonino Pio ‘padrone della terra e del mare’, *Annali di Archeologia e di Storia Antica* 9/10 (2002/2003) 271–282. On the relationship of monotheism/henotheism and monarchy: A. Fürst, *Monotheismus und Monarchie: zum Zusammenhang von Heil und Herrschaft in der Antike*, *Theolo-*

whose inhabitants regarded their gods as monarchs and themselves as the slaves of the deity.

6. With the exception of a few isolated cases of ostentatious atheism,¹⁸¹ the explicit refusal of worship is an unknown phenomenon in the archaic and classical periods.¹⁸² In fact, the term ‘faith’ is of little avail in defining archaic and classical forms of belief, since the pantheon of the *polis* was as self-evident and unquestioned as the *polis* and her socio-cultural codes.¹⁸³ The refusal to believe in and, consequently, to honour a particular god—characteristics of the *theomachos* (‘one who fights against god’, e.g. in *Acts* 5:39)¹⁸⁴—becomes a veritable *topos* in the legends of the expansion of the demanding and imperious Hellenistic gods and cults. “Let the unfaithful see, let them see

gie und Philosophie 81 (2006) 321–338. On the ‘democratization’ of the terminology: E.W. Dickie, Κύριε, δέσποτα, *domine*. Greek Politeness in the Roman Empire, *JHS* 121 (2001) 1–11.

¹⁸¹ M. Winiarczyk, Wer galt im Altertum als Atheist? *Philologus* 128 (1984) 157–183, provides a full list of ancient ‘atheists’.

¹⁸² “Il n’y a pas de place, dans ce système, pour le personnage du renonçant”, says J.-P. Vernant, *L’individu, la mort, l’amour: Soi-même et l’autre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1989) 213, speaking of the inclusive cultic world of fifth century Athens. Challenge directed to the gods as expressed in the myths of Tantalos, Niobe, Arachne and Marsyas are of a decidedly different nature and allude to the sin of *hybris* and its consequences rather than to lack of belief in the existence of the god. Cf. W. Nestle, *Legenden vom Tod der Gottesverächter*, *ARW* 33 (1936) 246–269; Chr. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Crime and Punishment: Tityos, Tantalos and Sisyphos in Odyssey 11*, *BICS* 33 (1986) 37–58.

¹⁸³ This has long been recognized as one of the most characteristic distinctions between the religion of the classical *polis* and the confession creeds in Hellenistic and later periods. Although J. Kinneavy, *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith* (Oxford 1988) has argued that the concept of *pistis* was rooted in classical rhetoric, faith as a conscious choice and involving acts of conversion is, as was powerfully argued by Nock 1933, practically restricted to heno- and monotheistic creeds. (On conversion see most recently: C.B. Kendall, O. Nicholson, W.D. Phillips, Jr., & M. Ragnow [edd.], *Conversion to Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Modern Age: Considering the Process in Europe, Asia, and the America* [Minnesota Studies in Early Modern History, Minneapolis 2009]). There is a significant Epidaurian inscription (no. 3 Herzog) in which a person who mocks the *iamata* (‘healings’) of Asklepios is punished for his *apistia* by an illness which is only cured after his ‘conversion’. Henceforth his name will be Apistos. In no. 4 Asklepios orders an unbeliever to sacrifice a silver sow as a “testimony of her stupidity.” This is the same terminology and ideology as we see in the confession texts of the second centuries AD. In *TAM* V, 1, 179b, a person is punished διὰ τὸ ἀπιστῆν (‘because of his disbelief’). On the idea of *pistis* in the New Testament see: Chr.D. Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark’s Narrative* (Cambridge 1989). All this by no means implies that the term and notion of ‘belief’ should have no bearing on classical Greek or Roman religion: see Appendix IV.

¹⁸⁴ The term may have been borrowed from the *Bacchae* of Euripides. Cf. J.R.C. Cousland, Dionysus “theomachos”? *Biblica* 82 (2001) 539–548.

and recognize their error" (*videant irreligiosi, videant et errorem suum recognoscant*), says the Isis priest after Lucius' miraculous recovery in Apul. *Metam.* 11.15.¹⁸⁵ The Maeonian confession inscriptions, where trespasses against gods or humans are preferably explained as tokens of deficient faith and therefore as contempt of the god, often end with the formula: "I warn all mankind not to hold the god in contempt, for they shall have this *stele* as an admonition." Apparently, the theme of the impious unbeliever becomes relevant only when it concerns either a god who still has to conquer a place in the cult, or one whose claims are substantially higher than those of the ancient gods of the *polis*, whose cult formed an unquestioned part of *polis* tradition. In these cases the words of a Sarapis devotee apply: "for a mortal cannot contradict Lord Sarapis."¹⁸⁶

7. Any attempt to match oneself against a god is a fatal folly. Gods are invincible and the human rebel is doomed to get the worst of it. Characteristically, this theme, though not unknown (Tantalus, Sisyphos etc.), was not exploited for propagandistic ends in classical times. In that period it was deemed superfluous to substantiate the invincibility of a god. Conversely, the epithet 'invincible' (Gr. *anikētos*, Lat. *invictus*) became very popular in the Hellenistic and Roman periods,¹⁸⁷ particularly in the competition between various henotheistic movements in imperial times: 'Sarapis overcomes'¹⁸⁸ is a common variant of the acclamations 'Great' or 'One (is) Sarapis'. The futility of resisting a god and the divine triumph over atheists or sinners is a *topos* in the Maeonian confession texts and related genres,¹⁸⁹ where, as we have

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *P.Oxy* 1381 (Totti 1985 no. 15) ll. 204 f., after an incitement to propagate the faith in Imouthes Asclepius (following a miraculous cure) the pious are welcomed, whereas conversely: "Go hence, o envious and impious." Vettius Valens 9 pr., p. 331, 12, hopes that his exposition will convince the ἀμαθεῖς καὶ θεομάχοι ('ignorants and fighters against god'). See for more interesting examples: Norden 1923, 6 ff., 134 ff.; Nock 1933, 4; 88; Gwyn Griffiths *ad* Apul. *Metam.* 11.15. Cf. above n. 183.

¹⁸⁶ *P.Michigan* inv. 4686. Ed. H.C. Youtie & J.G. Winter, *P.Mich.* 8, 511; Totti 1985 no. 49.

¹⁸⁷ The evidence in S. Weinstock, Victor and Invictus, *HTHR* 50 (1957) 211–247; *idem*, *RE* VIII A2 (1958) 2485–2500 and 2501–2542, s.v. 'victor' and 'victoria'.

¹⁸⁸ Weinreich 1969, I, 426 ff.; 438 ff., also on the Christian response; Peterson 1926, 152–163. Cf. H. Engelmann, *The Delian Aretalogy of Sarapis* (Leiden 1975) 24, where, in l. 27, the god says to his priest: "We shall win."

¹⁸⁹ A very important related text is the well-known sacred law of a cult group round the goddess Agdistis at Philadelphia in Lydia (*LSAM* 20, 2nd/1st century BC). After the basic discussion by O. Weinreich, *SbHeidelberg* 1919, there is a good treatment by S.C. Barton & G.H.R. Horsley, *A Hellenistic Cult Group and the New Testament*

seen, the consequences of human resistance have the function of an 'admonition' or 'testimony'.

8. *Theomachoi* are severely punished. Both in myth and legend—but only rarely in history—we find above all blindness and madness,¹⁹⁰ besides other kinds of illnesses and afflictions, as specific expressions of divine wrath.¹⁹¹ Historically, however, the punishment of mortals who resist (the coming of) a god does not become topical until the Hellenistic and imperial periods.¹⁹² The forerunners, as we saw, are discernable in some Epidaurian inscriptions praising the god Asklepios¹⁹³ and we have seen examples in the resistance legends around Sarapis, especially the Delian aretalogy, in which the adversaries of the god are "like statues struck by the god" and cannot utter a sound. Saul, who was (temporarily) blinded, is structurally to be equated with Apuleius' Lucius who became a donkey. The punishments are explicitly referred to as demonstrations of the powerfulness of the particular god in question. Divine triumph or punishment is called "worthy of his power or majesty" in various texts.¹⁹⁴ Whoever wishes to be convinced

Churches, *JbAC* 24 (1981) 7–41. In line 31 ff. we read that a man or woman who are guilty of aforementioned acts shall not enter the *oikos* in which the cult is celebrated: "for great are the gods set up in it, they watch over these things and will not tolerate those who transgress the ordinances" and in ll. 50 ff.: "they shall hate such people and inflict upon them great punishments."

¹⁹⁰ Full documentation in: *TER UNUS* 202. On illnesses in confession texts: Chaniotis, 1995, 323–344. Cf. also next note.

¹⁹¹ W. Speyer, Fluch, *RAC* 7 (1969) 1179 f.; 1112 ff.; *idem*, Gottesfeind, *RAC* 11 (1981) 996–1043, espec. 1017 ff.; 1025 f.; 1037 ff.; *idem*, Zorn der Gottheit, Vergeltung und Sühne, in: U. Mann (ed.), *Theologie und Religionswissenschaft* (Darmstadt 1973), *passim*; B.W. Vickers, *Towards Greek Tragedy* (London 1973) 252–255; L. Robert, *Hellenica* XI–XII, 439. In Christian context: E. Heck, *Mê theomachein oder: Die Bestrafung des Gottesverächters. Untersuchungen zu Bekämpfung und Aneignung römischer Religio bei Tertullian, Cyprian und Lactanz* (Frankfurt 1987). The numerous oracles concerning personal or epidemic diseases and afflictions attributed to divine anger generally pertain to trespasses against religious or ritual rules, and are especially concerned with purity. Cf. particularly the subtle discussion by Parker 1983, 235–256, and Chaniotis 1997b.

¹⁹² It is significant that Weinreich 1909, s.v. "Strafwunder", besides some well-known mythical and legendary miracles (especially the ones performed by images of heroes, as e.g. the famous case of Theagenes, and the instances from Epidaurus mentioned above), takes his entire evidence from Hellenistic and above all Roman times. Parker 1983 stresses the fatalistic views on illness etc. in the archaic period and for the classical period draws our attention to the complex attitudes to divine (though often amoral) and natural causation in cases of illness.

¹⁹³ See above n. 183 and cf. Weinreich 1909, 88.

¹⁹⁴ Delian Sarapis aretalogy l. 27/8. In a bronze tablet from Asia Minor, the Mother of the Gods is requested to "punish [some unknown thieves] in a way worthy of her

of the ubiquity of punitive miracles in Hellenistic and imperial times will find rich evidence in such sources as the collections of Maeonian confession texts and in Lactantius *De mortibus persecutorum*.¹⁹⁵ A recently found dedication from a sanctuary of Mes (= the god Men) somewhere in Lydia¹⁹⁶ combines the elements listed under nos. 7 and 8 here by praising the god with the words: “Great is your justice! Great is your victory! Great your punishing power!”

9. Public confession of guilt towards the god, either as a token of reverence or as an instrument of propaganda or both, is not found in our sources before the 4th century miracle records from Epidaurus.¹⁹⁷ In this collection there are three instances of people who confess their mistakes and subsequently are healed by the god.¹⁹⁸ These scattered and incidental instances are the first hesitant signs of a mentality which in its institutionalized form and with much greater rigidity became particularly typical of (though by no means restricted to) the Maeonian confession texts, who took their name from it.¹⁹⁹ These texts, which are

power”. A Latin curse tablet from Belo (Spain) asks the goddess: *fac tuo numini maestati exemplaria*. A variant expression on a Delian lead tablet, where the Syrian gods are implored to “punish and give expression to your wondrous power”: Ph. Bruneau, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l'époque hellénistique et à l'époque impériale* (Paris 1970) 650 ff. A prayer of revenge asks for retaliation “that I may see your power”: G. Björck, *Der Fluch des Christen Sabinus (Papyrus Upsaliensis 8)* (Uppsala 1938) p. 46 no. 24; another asks “let the evildoers be pursued... Lord, quickly show them your might” (Björck 6). On these expressions and the concomitant nature of ‘prayers for justice’ see: Versnel 1991 and 2009.

¹⁹⁵ See generally Weinreich 1909.

¹⁹⁶ H. Malay, A Praise on Men Artemidorou Axiottenos, *EA* 36 (2003), 13–18 (SEG 53, 1344; AD. 57). Discussion: A. Chaniotis, Ritual Performances of Divine Justice: The Epigraphy of Confession, Atonement, and Exaltation in Roman Asia Minor, in: H. Cotton *et alii* (edd.), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (Cambridge 2009) 118–125, 140 ff.; cf. *idem* 2010, 122 f.

¹⁹⁷ R. Pettazzoni, Confession of Sins and the Classics, *HThR* 30 (1937) 7 ff., mentions Menander fr. 544 K (Porphy. *De abst.* IV, 15) on the followers of the Dea Syria as the first *literary* record of public confession of sins. Cf. S. Eitrem, Kultsünden und Gottesverleugner, *SMSR* 13 (1937) 244 f.; MacMullen 1981, 32.

¹⁹⁸ They are discussed by F. Kudlien, Beichte und Heilung, *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 13 (1978) 1–14, espec. 5 f. Cf. above n. 183.

¹⁹⁹ I follow here the argument of Pleket 1981, 180 and n. 135. On confession of sins in antiquity see the fundamental work of R. Pettazzoni, *La confessione dei peccati*, especially III, 2 (Bologna 1936). The confession inscriptions in: Petzl 1994. Outside the Lydian-Phrygian inscriptions the practice of public confession is particularly prominent in the religion of the Egyptian gods and of the Dea Syria. See for example Ovid *Ex Ponto* 1.1.51 ff., who states: *talia caelestes fieri praeconia gaudent ut sua quid valeant numina teste probent* (“The gods rejoice in such heraldings that witnesses may attest their power”). This mentality is also apparent in Jewish literature. Afflicted by a horrible

essentially concise aretalogies and accordingly frequently begin with a *megas* acclamation, offer reasons for their own inscription: as a rule an offence against a god or human being; next the punishment by the god, mostly in the form of illness or even death; the public confession of the lapse, sometimes followed by an act of divine mercy, for instance the recovery from illness; and finally the formulary recognition of the divine majesty: “and from now on I praise the god” or, in Phrygian texts, the formula of warning quoted above.

4. *The nature of oneness in henotheistic religion*

Altogether, our enquiry into the nature of henotheistic religiosity has revealed one central message: the god involved is superior, uniquely great, towering above other gods. The divine superiority manifests itself in two ways, first, as an unrestricted capacity to perform matchless miracles and creative acts—‘to do anything (s)he wants’ (so particularly in the aretalogies)—and secondly, as a status of absolute and autocratic authority over world and cosmos: ‘controlling everything that is’. With this we are ready to turn our attention from the themes of ‘greatness’ and ‘superiority’ to the more specific aspect of ‘oneness’ as most patently obvious in the acclamation *heis ho theos* (‘one is the god’). As I mentioned earlier, it is easier to determine what the expression does not mean than exactly what it does. Everybody agrees that this type of oneness cannot be simply equated with monotheism (once more leaving aside the question whether pure monotheism ever existed in any ancient civilization). As is immediately apparent from various hymnic texts where Isis may be accompanied by Sarapis, by Osiris and many other gods, the deity who is acclaimed as *heis* is not (necessarily) *monos* in the sense of ‘the only god that exists’.²⁰⁰ But by thus putting the problem, we already run the risk of distorting the Greek term *monos* in applying *our* concept of ‘monotheism’.²⁰¹ In fact, the term *monos* is by no means absent from these praises and, indeed,

disease Antiochus IV promises that, if the God of the Jews will deliver him from his pains, he will visit every inhabited place to proclaim God’s might (2 Macc. 9:17).

²⁰⁰ Very illustrative is also the oath of the mystes in the Isis mysteries as cited above Ch. I n. 410. Isis may be lauded as the unique *pantokrateira* and within this perspective she may unite the other great gods in a syncretistic ‘one and all’ construction. But as soon as one abandons this focus the other, lesser, gods are back on the retina and smoothly function side by side with the one and only.

²⁰¹ Generally on the risks of using terms such as monotheism in the context of the present issue Belayche 2010, 142–147, and see above p. 288 f.

we already encountered it in an Isis aretalogy. What is more, it is a common term in hymnody in general and especially current in hymns for henotheistic gods. A glance at its functions will advance our insight into the connotations of its twin-term *heis*, which, being more restricted to an acclamative function, does not prominently occur in hymns. On the other hand Latin *unus* does, and, henotheism being a phenomenon that spread far and wide in the Roman empire, we shall from now on indiscriminately rely on both Latin and Greek material.²⁰²

A quick perusal of a few aretalogies, hymns and other panegyric texts reveals that terms like (Greek) *monos* and (Lat.) *unus, solus*, may have two different functions,²⁰³ although they cannot always be clearly distinguished. The first is the function apparent in such acclamations as: “you alone are able to do this (*tu sola potes*)”, or “you alone have the power over a certain domain,” e.g. “Hail, Roma, . . . to you alone, o most venerable, the Moirai granted fame . . .”²⁰⁴ or in the claim we already met: “I, Isis, am the *one and only* sovereign of this era”. In these formulas, which belong to the most popular hymnic devices, those qualities of the revered god that make him *exceptional* are emphasized. (S)he is the only one who can do things that all others cannot or the only one who rules over the world, which does not imply that (s)he is the only existing god(dess). Likewise Hellenistic rulers could claim that they were the ‘great’ or the ‘only’ king, although they were perfectly aware of the irritating existence of plenty of competitive colleagues around.²⁰⁵

In this sense, Greek *monos* and Latin *solus* have a contrastive and relative force pertaining to quality, not an ontologically exclusive or all-embracing one. As a translation the term ‘unique(ly)’ comes closest. In the same sense the terms are also very frequent in relative formulas for famous mortals: generals, emperors, athletes, etc., both in Greece and Rome. This, then, seems to be the dominant meaning that both Greek

²⁰² In what follows I summarize my findings as expounded in the third chapter of *TER UNUS*.

²⁰³ On this difference cf. Nock 1972 I, 39 f. and Nock-Festugière 1972 I, 57. Weirich 1969 I, 434, too, distinguishes between henotheistic and ‘relative’ functions.

²⁰⁴ Lucretius 1, 31, and *Hymn of Melinno to Rome. Stob. Flor.* 1 p. 312 (H) respectively; cf. Norden 1923, 160.

²⁰⁵ As, in the mid-second century B.C., the Graeco-Bactrian king Euthydemus was designated in an epigram (*SEG* 54.1596), which possibly reflects acclamations such as ‘the greatest of all kings.’ See: G. Rougemont, *Dédicace d’Héliodotos à Hestia pour le salut d’Euthydème et de Démétrios, JdS* (2004), 333–337, as mentioned by Chaniotis 2010, 130.

heis or *monos* and Latin *unus* or *solus* have in the hundreds of acclamations and invocations, most emphatically in the *heis theos* cheers.²⁰⁶ One of the arguments for this specific meaning is that acclamations with *heis*, *monos* and *prôtos*, and various combinations of these terms are specifically frequent in the agonistic sphere.²⁰⁷ Very popular was εἶς ἅπ' αἰῶνος or πρῶτος καὶ μόνος ἅπ' αἰῶνος, which according to Tertullian, *De spect.* 25, was the usual cheer at games and contests.²⁰⁸ Most probably this means something like “the uniquely first since all eternity” or more colloquially: “we have never seen such a miraculous star.” Similar acclamations existed in Latin.²⁰⁹

Less obvious is the intended meaning of the notoriously enigmatic bi-, tri-, and quadripartite acclamations (all from the second and third centuries AD) such as: *heis Zeus Serapis*, or *heis Zeus Serapis Asklepios Soter*, or *heis Zeus Mitras Helios*. Peterson has devoted a thorough investigation to the entire complex. He postulated a Chaldaean astrological origin, which came into its own in later solar theology.²¹⁰ Sup-

²⁰⁶ Wengst 1967, 128 ff. gives the Christian evidence for *heis* and *monos* as indications for the unicity of God as god and especially as creator. It is a “Terminus Technicus der frühchristlichen Heidenmission” and no doubt originated as an anti-acclamation against the pre-existent pagan *heis theos* acclamations. There is also a good brief survey of the pagan evidence. However, even in the NT the terms offer no warrant of a pure monotheism. See above n. 8 and n. 144.

²⁰⁷ Collected and discussed by M.N. Tod, Greek Record-keeping and Record-breaking, *CQ* 43 (1949) 106–112, espec. 111 f. More recently J.H. Neyrey, “First”, “Only”, “One of a Few”, and “No One Else”: The Rhetoric of Uniqueness and the Doxologies in 1 Timothy, *Biblica* 86 (2005) 59–87 (= Neyrey 2007, 112–143), unaware of the current discussion on the issue (the notion *heis* including the entire relevant literature is conspicuously absent in his paper), discusses comparable NT (and OT) expressions of praise based on the “principle of incomparability.” He adduces interesting samples taken from ancient theoreticians of Greek rhetoric from Aristotle to Quintilian who developed a rhetorical theory of “uniqueness.”

²⁰⁸ This text has been amply discussed by L. Robert, *Études épigraphiques et philologiques* (Paris 1938) 108–111, who several times returns to these acclamations: *Hellenica* X, 61; XIII, 216; Les épigrammes satiriques de Lucillius sur les athlètes: parodie et réalités, in: *L'épigramme grecque* (Entretiens Hardt XIV [Genève 1967]) 275 f.

²⁰⁹ S. Mrozek, *Primus omnium* sur les inscriptions des municipes italiens, *Epigraphica* 33 (1971) 60–69, discusses some Latin expressions, without realizing, or so it seems, that they go back to Hellenistic Greek prototypes. Cf. *sui temporis primus et solus factionarius* in an inscription from 275 AD (*CIL* VI, 10060). Martial 8, 66, 6, has: *rerum prima salus et una, Caesar*.

²¹⁰ Peterson 1926, 227–256. See most recently: W. Fauth, *Helios Megistos. Zur synkretistischen Theologie der Spätantike* (Leiden 1995) 74–77; L. Bricault, Zeus Hélios Mégas Sarapis, in: *Michel Malaise in honorem, Acta Orientalia Belgica* 18 (Bruxelles 2005) 243–254.

ported by an abundance of data²¹¹ Peterson argued that they are *not* syncretistic confessions expressing the unity or identity of the gods mentioned. On the contrary, he claims, they are acclamations emphasizing the exceptional character and greatness of the god or gods invoked. In other words, just as single *heis theos*, they represent the elative, not the unifying force of the word *heis*.²¹² On the other hand, it is hard to avoid the impression that with the extension of the formula to several names of gods the unifying-henotheistic element gradually increased at the cost of the acclamatory-elative component. After all, the various gods mentioned in these formulas did undergo a rapid and profound process of syncretism in late antiquity. However, the difference is not always easy to trace and perhaps it is not such a good idea to expect—and hence search for—precise semantic distinctions.

In this connection we should bear in mind that acclamations typically belong to what in sociolinguistics is called ‘phatic’ or ‘expressive’ language, a form of communication which, in opposition to descriptive expression, does not normally bear a precise and well-defined meaning. What did Israelites *and* Greeks *and* Romans mean when they wished that their kings and emperors ‘may live for ever or in eternity, as Caracalla (*SEG* 48.1961 f., 1964 f.)’, or what the Chinese, with their slogan—hardly an offspring from a Mediterranean tradition—‘May Chairman Mao live for ever?’ The fact that *heis* may refer either to hierarchy (‘the first’, ‘unique’) or to ontology (‘the only one that *is*’ or ‘the one that is all’) makes the term eminently liable to manipulation and ambiguous application. We should at least consider the possibility that these cheers did not have any precise ‘intended meaning’ at all, but expressed only a vague notion of magnification. It is only when the shouter comes to reflect on what he is shouting—but how many

²¹¹ For instance a graffito adduced by Peterson 230: “one is Zeus Sarapis, great is Isis the Lady” (εἷς Ζεὺς Σάραπις, μεγάλη ἡ Ἴσις ἡ κυρία), which suffices to show how the term *heis* defies any narrow monolithic ‘translation’. “Es geht hier nicht um eine begriffliche Definition, sondern um eine Hoheitsaussage” (*ibid.* p. 132). See now also Belayche 2010.

²¹² L. Robert, *Opera minora selecta* (Amsterdam 1969) I 427 n. 101, in this connection speaks of “le caractère de superlatif de l’acclamation *heis théos*.” With Peterson he contests Cumont’s interpretation ‘dieu unique’. It is rather ‘dieu suprême’ and there is an “équivalence pratique entre *heis* et *meGas*.” As opposed to French ‘unique’, the English word ‘unique’ like Dutch ‘enig’ combines the two notions that can be distinguished as the superlative and the ‘exclusive’. The same is true of the Latin *unicus*. On which see *TER UNUS* pp. 235, 249.

ever did (or do)?—that the construction of distinct (and divergent) meanings can commence.

This brings us to the second of the two different functions announced above. An inscription from Capua hails Isis as: *te tibi una quae es omnia* ('you who alone art all').²¹³ If we translate Latin *unus/una* into its Greek equivalent *heis/mia*, this expression closely resembles the one introduced by Xenophanes as discussed in the first section of this chapter, and even more its later offspring in the all-embracing Stoic and Neo-Platonic claims that their god was 'one and all' (Gr. ἓν καὶ πᾶν, Lat. *solus omnia*). But if we now ask if this similarity implies equality, the answer must be negative, at least for the henotheistic theology of the Hellenistic period. For 'one and all' here appears to have a very special frame of reference, as expressed in an exemplary way in a hymn of Isidorus 1.23 where it is said: "that you alone (*mounê*) are all other goddesses who are named by the nations."

This is as close as Hellenistic henotheism ever got to monotheism. Isis is here represented as alone embodying all the other goddesses. Further elaborations include long geographical lists of all the superior gods of each region who are there invoked by their local names but who are now unmasked as just another representation of the one and only henotheistic god.²¹⁴ This is a typical product of theological reflection. However, that theological reflection is not always the most reliable refuge in religious matters becomes apparent from the inevitable limitations inherent in this particular trope. First, henotheism is fatally gender-specific: the many different representations of Isis are inevitably all female. This irritating obstacle on the road to real monotheism is revealingly illustrated by the creative solution contrived by a hymnodist who could not choose between Isis and Sarapis: "You are *two*, but you are called *many* among the nations. In fact, life knows you *alone* (μόνους) as gods."²¹⁵ Furthermore, this construction by no

²¹³ *CIL* X, 3800; *ILS* 4362; *SIRIS* 502. Cf. V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Le culte des divinités orientales en Campanie* (Leiden 1972) 77 and 199–234; Grandjean 1975, 69 ff.

²¹⁴ Hence her inclusive Greek epithet 'Myrionyma' ('with innumerable names') is so stereotyped that it occurs both in literary texts (for instance in the *Life of Aesopus* 5 = Totti 1985, no. 18) and even in Latin inscriptions (*CIL* III, 882 and 4017; *SIRIS* 656; *CIL* V, 5080, *CIL* XIII, 3461; *ILS* 4376a; *SIRIS* 749). Turcan 1989 entitles his chapter on the goddess: 'Isis Myrionyme.' Cf. above n. 169 and Ch. I n. 122. For an exhaustive collection of epithets in demotic hymns to Isis see: H. Kockelmann *o.c.* (above n. 153).

²¹⁵ *Hymn of Maronea* ll. 19–20.

means implies that all lesser gods are ousted by this syncretistic operation. It is only the great national goddesses that are identified with Isis. Apparently the message is: Isis is the greatest goddess; consequently every other *great* goddess can only be an alias of this central deity. Those readers, finally, who find it hard to come to terms with the inevitable inconsistencies implied in the variety of connotations of the four letter word *heis*, may find some solace in Walt Whitman's famous lines in his *Song to myself*, 51: "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself (I am large, I contain multitudes)."

5. *Questions of origin*

Much of what has been demonstrated in this section is strongly reminiscent of creeds and cultic practices of Egypt and the ancient Near East. Time and again characteristic elements of aretalogies could be traced back to non-Greek models²¹⁶ and there is not one of the nine characteristics listed above that could not be readily typified as a structural phenomenon of Near Eastern religiosity rather than of archaic and classical Greek religion. Accordingly, most of them do not come well into view before the Hellenistic era, to reach their bloom only in Imperial times, especially in the 2nd/3d centuries AD. The same is true for the acclamation *heis*. There is only one pre-hellenistic testimony of this acclamation, viz. in a Gurob papyrus,²¹⁷ which has preserved a fragment of what may have been an Orphic book. It contains an

²¹⁶ Not only Egyptian ones: A. Jeremias, *Monotheistische Strömungen innerhalb der babylonischen Religion* (Leipzig 1904), W. von Soden in: *Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete* (Zürich 1953) espec. 50; 254; 258 f.; 301 f.; 395 f., and B.R. Foster, *Before the Muses* (Bethesda Maryland 1996²) 608; 619; 598; 699 ff.; 704 ff., mention several Mesopotamian hymns with 'all gods in one' and other monotheizing characteristics. Cf. B. Hartmann, *Monotheistische stromingen in de Babylonische godsdiest*, *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 20 (1965–6) 328–338; the contributions of B. Porter and S. Parpola in Porter 2000.

²¹⁷ *P.Gurob* 1,23; O. Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta* (Berlin 1922) 31; R.A. Pack, *The Greek and Latin Literary Texts from Greco-Roman Egypt* (1965²) 2464. For recent discussion see: S.I. Johnston & T.J. McNiven, *Dionysus and the Underworld* in Toledo, *MH* 53 (1996) 25–36; F. Graf & S.I. Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets* (London-New York 2007) 150–155, with a translation of the text at 188 f. The authors seem to doubt the reading "one" but do not give their arguments, in fact do not mention the word in their discussion. J. Hordern, *Notes on the Orphic Papyrus of Gurob*, *ZPE* 129 (2000) 131–140, provides a meticulous discussion of the text and notes (134): "the final prose section begins with the statement 'one Dionysus' (.) but it is difficult to insert the phrase into the hexameters here," referring to M.L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford 1983) 253.

invocation of the *Kouretes* and the password: *heis Dionusos*.²¹⁸ The papyrus is from the third century BC, but the text itself should be attributed to the fourth century at least. So, as far as we can see, Dionysos was the first god to be hailed with an acclamation that became the most characteristic identification of the great gods of later times. The problem, however, is that we have no idea about the cultural identity of the acclamation, although the text itself betrays unmistakably Orphic features. Did it originate in Greece or with a local cult group in Egypt, influenced by Egyptian conceptions? In this context it may be of interest that the first time that we see the acclamation addressed to a human—albeit semi-deified—person is in the acclamation “one like Pythios (Apollo),” addressed to the emperor Nero (Cass. Dio 61, 20, 5; cf. 63, 20, 5).²¹⁹

The term *heis* as an elative praise is not attested in classical Greece, but *monos* and *prôtos kai monos* were so ubiquitous that they are cherished material for puns in the Attic comedy and elsewhere.²²⁰ Altogether, I consider it most likely that the acclamation *heis* originated as a translation of the Egyptian word for ‘one’ and that there was a cross-fertilization with an ideology that was already *in statu nascendi* elsewhere in the Hellenistic Mediterranean. The expressions we have seen earlier—Isis as τὴν μίαν (the one) or as “you who alone (μόυνη) are all other goddesses who are named by the nations,” while Apuleius *Metam.* 11.4 speaks of her *nomen unicum*—may well betray the Egyptian Isis-name Thious ‘the one’.²²¹ However, all this does not alter the fact that it is easier, more rewarding and more relevant to draw

²¹⁸ That it is a password may be inferred from the word immediately following the acclamation: εἰς Διόνυσος σύμβολα.

²¹⁹ In *TER UNUS* I wondered: “Did Nero’s special Alexandrian ‘claqueurs’ (Suet. *Nero* 20) introduce this agonistic acclamation from Egypt?” However, the recent find of very specific and interesting Delphic acclamations εἰς Ἀπόλλων Πύθιος in graffiti of Pythian victors (late 2nd and 3d c. AD), favours a more direct relationship with the Pythian games. See: F. Queyrel, *Inscriptions et scènes figurées peintes sur le mur de fond du xyste de Delphes*, *BCH* 125 (2001), 333–387, and the discussion in Chaniotis 2010, 126 f. with the main texts in n. 60. One may wonder whether there is a connection with the speculations of Ammonios and Plutarch (Plut. *De E Delph.* espec. 393B; 388F) on the Delphic E and the Apollonian name Iëios denoting εἰς καὶ μόνος. See: R. Hirsch-Luipold, *Der eine Gott bei Philon von Alexandrien und Plutarch*, in: *idem* (ed.), *Gott und die Götter bei Plutarch* (Berlin-New York 2005) 141–167.

²²⁰ Testimonia in *TER UNUS* 248.

²²¹ Vanderlip 1972, 31; Grandjean 1975, 70 f.; Gwyn Griffiths 1975, 145. On the general diffusion of this expression among Egyptian and Near Eastern civilizations: C.H. Gordon, *His Name is ‘One’*, *JNES* 29 (1970) 198 ff.

a list of characteristics of henotheistic religiosity, as we have done, then to precisely analyse and describe what exactly *heis* is supposed to mean. In fact, the only way to discover the meaning, or rather the implications and connotations, of the word *heis* is by adducing a collection of henotheistic features.

And it is exactly by this course of action that we may justify the presence of this section in a chapter on *Greek* experiments in oneness. If the semantic roots of the verbal element *heis* must be sought in non-Greek religions, this does not mean that Greek culture has not contributed to the creation of both the phenomenological characteristics of, and the religious mentality inherent in the notion of henotheism, as we analysed them in the present section. One may for instance call to mind the popularity of the classical Greek *monos* acclamations and, more important, the fact that the earliest relevant henotheistic testimonies have all come to us in Greek texts whose *Sitz im Leben* can be traced back to Greek speaking areas. The aretalogies that we discussed display genuine Greek tropes and ideas side by side with, for instance, Egyptian ones. More generally, a culture's readiness to accommodate foreign incentives is not a passive but an active drive which may be credited to its own active involvement in cultural change and development.

Far more important, however, is that, as we have observed in our first chapter, unmistakable signs of a new henotheistic religiosity became apparent elsewhere in Greece (e.g. the Asclepius cult at Epidaurus) but above all in Athens from the late fifth century onwards. New gods were introduced and claimed a more personal devotion and exclusive type of worship than the old gods ever enjoyed. As a matter of fact these new creeds displayed a type of religiosity that closely resembles and in fact forms a prelude to the henotheistic trends of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, as we saw in Chapter I pp. 138–140.

6. *Concluding remarks*

What, then, is the overall message of our source material? This: that the lauded god is greater, more powerful than, hence absolutely superior to all other gods. In fact, henotheistic deities are *competing for omnipotence*.²²² In this respect (and many other) they have adopted

²²² It is exactly the elements of competition in henotheistic ideology and their political and social background that are in the centre of interest in the recent studies of Belayche 2010 and especially of Chaniotis 2010.

traits of Hellenistic kingship and accordingly manifest themselves as autocratic rulers to whom a mortal could only respond with an attitude of humble subservience or even slavery. This went hand in hand with the appearance of new forms of a more intense and personal relationship between god and man, sometimes accompanied by experiences and expressions of sin, guilt, confession, and mercy. In this context in particular we encounter claims that the god is 'great', indeed greater than other gods. (S)he is 'unique' and outshines all other deities by her/his greatness.

Though most of the elements analysed above can already be found sporadically in earlier periods, their amalgamation into one structural complex is specifically characteristic of the religious mentality that we have been discussing. Hymns, including those of the archaic and classical periods of Greece, are praises of a god. By definition they concentrate on one particular deity and magnify his greatness. Hence we have called them henotheistic moments in an otherwise polytheistic context. However, even allowing for its precursors in fourth-century Greece, henotheism never developed into a structural religious, let alone cultic, phenomenon before the Hellenistic period. Mythically speaking, Zeus was superior to all other Greek gods, as is most emphatically expressed in the unique aretalogical formula of omnipotence at the beginning of Hesiod's *Works and Days*.²²³ However, this had no cultic consequences whatever. In classical times, outside the sphere of philosophical monotheism,²²⁴ a permanent exclusive devotion to one god was confined to small cult groups and religious devotees in the margin of society. The dogmatic elevation of one god above all others and the concomitant *affective* exclusion of other gods are features typical of Hellenistic and later religiosity. All this is expressed in the acclamation *heis (ho) theos*.

5. CONCLUSION

Three experiments in oneness. The first two represent cosmologies 'to live by'²²⁵ and can be understood as explanatory devices, an individual one to define why things—world, kosmos, God—are as they are, and

²²³ Cf. above p. 231 and below p. 422.

²²⁴ C. Rammoux, *Sur un monothéisme grec*, *RPhL* 82 (1984) 175–198.

²²⁵ Geertz 1973, 118.

a collective one to help imagine and cope with the mechanisms that make things happen as they happen. These 'One Gods', being products of at least speculative, at times intellectual, and at best philosophical reflection, are more or less abstract principles that transcend both men and traditional gods. They establish a conceptual unity, but a unity that is not the sum of the plurality of the normal gods. In both experiments the One and the Many operate on different levels and have different tasks, preserving a complementary co-existence. After all, insight into the divine *arche* of the kosmos or into the supernatural strand of causation does not neutralize human anxiety and concern nor reduce the desire to positively influence and control the future. To *explain* the inexorable, divinity must be depersonalized: both the One god and 'the gods' are nameless and not conceived as an approachable personal authority. If at all receiving worship in terms of libation and prayer, as did the Xenophanean One god, this was a formal expression of detached deference and submission, not being launched as a personal appeal in situations of disaster. 'The gods' as a comprehensive notion were, with few exceptions, devoid of cult. The traditional personal gods, on the other hand, derived their very identity from their cultic existence, including sacrifice and prayer, and from iconography and myth. Though belonging to the same polythetic class of 'gods' the One and the Many are separate categories. In this respect they are incomparable, hence do not compete.

Contrarily, the third experiment concerns One god who shares *all* characteristics with the traditional gods, including name, cult and myth. In fact (s)he *is* a traditional god, but one who has risen to such sublime eminence, that (s)he becomes different. The difference between this One and the Many, however, is not one in quality, but in status. In origin not being the product of intellectual speculation, this One god is the focus of appeal and supplication. In order to *mollify* the inexorable, it must be personalized. Accordingly, the Hellenistic One God is personal and very much a projection of a social/political reality: the king. The human worshipper is, first and foremost, dependent, dependence being another manner of creating sense out of chaos.²²⁶ In this conception, then, all gods belong to one and the same category.

²²⁶ Burkert 1996a, 84, quoting D. Morris, *The Naked Ape: A Zoologist's Study of the Human Animal* (New York 1967) 180: "fundamental biological tendency... to submit ourselves to an all-powerful, dominant member of the group." Cf. the central role of dependency in expressions of private piety in Chapter I, pp. 128 f.

Not only are they comparable, they *are* continuously *being* compared and constantly involved in a competition for pride of place. Instead of One as opposed to the Many, there are several competing Ones among the Many. An occasional syncretistic identification of the Many with the One is the ultimate venture in the Hellenistic quest for unity in diversity.

None of the three Ones discussed in this chapter ousted or absorbed the Many. The first two, being so different, did not need to endeavour to, the third One, though not averse, did not succeed. One may well wonder if any god ever succeeds.²²⁷ The above analysis is an attempt at historical interpretation, not a dogmatic treatise. The three experiments are no impenetrable isolated systems and especially in religion borders are there to be crossed. One may try to personalize the anonymous First Principle by calling it Zeus, as we have seen. Tyche experienced a similar manipulation. As the fearsome impersonal principle of arbitrariness she was ‘overcome’ by Isis; as the powerful personified protector of good Fortune she was identified with the Egyptian goddess. Tyche never lost her ambiguous position on the brink between principle and person. In late antiquity, God and Christ were worshipped in hymns that extolled their qualities to such a degree that these Ones risked being reduced to a “Denk-, Seh-, Hör-, und Intelligenzmonstrum,” as Feyerabend characterized the Xenophanean god. It is as if these ‘experiments with experiments’ go just one bridge too far by trying to unite what is basically incompatible. Ask our theological colleagues in the Department of Philosophy of Religion: they live on this *aporia*.

²²⁷ Fortunately quite a few modern scholars in various fields have voiced their conviction that monotheism and polytheism are *never* mutually exclusive, least of all in antique cultures. Besides the references above pp. 241 f., see e.g. Th. Wiedemann, Polytheism, Monotheism, and Religious Co-existence: Paganism and Christianity in the Roman Empire, in: I. Hamnett (ed.), *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief: Studies Critical and Comparative* (London 1990) 64–78; G. Ahn, Monotheismus-Polytheismus. Grenzen und Möglichkeiten einer Klassifikation von Gottesvorstellungen, in: M. Dietrich & O. Loretz (edd.), *Mesopotamica-Ugaritica-Biblica. Festschr. K. Bergerdorf* (Neukirchen 1993) 1–24; Gladigow 2002, 8: “Die Möglichkeit einer Co-Präsenz von Monotheismen aller Art mit Polytheismen kann so als ‘Normalfall’ von Religion in komplexen Kulturen angesehen werden.” Here he speaks of “mitlaufende Polytheismen” in monotheistic systems. In an article ‘Polytheismus’, in: H.G. Kippenberg & M. Riesebroth (edd.), *Max Webers ‘Religionssystematik’* (Tübingen 2001) 131–150, espec. 146, he introduces the notion “insuläre Polytheismen,” followed by Ahn 2003, 4.

According to N. Luhmann²²⁸ one of the major functions of religion is the ‘reduction of complexity’ as a strategy to create sense in the interactions of a system with its environment. This may well be true. However, in their scholarly attempt to ‘reduce the complexity’ of their own object of study many sociologists of religion no less than specialists of Greek religion²²⁹ seem to hold the view that pre-modern societies structurally share a penchant for an all-encompassing unity of meaning²³⁰ and they tend to deny premodern religions the pluralism that, on the face of it, is so characteristic of polytheism.²³¹ I hope to have shown that this idea needs some qualification.

We ended our second chapter on the polyinterpretability of divine action with an apposite quotation of Feyerabend. Let us end the present chapter on the compatibility of the two very diverse images of deity under discussion, the many and the one, with an equally apposite passage of another scholar from a field outside our classical domain.²³²

The diversity of life’s conditions and—connected with it—the shifts in the respective affective shades of our thinking entail that there is not one single image of god: there are several, even if, when viewed in a more abstract perspective, they appear to be incompatible.

²²⁸ *The Function of Religion* (Frankfurt 1977).

²²⁹ Above n. 2. Not only *modern* specialists: Aristotle *Met.* 586a, cites a list of opposites (*sustocheia*) including *plurality-one*, that was normative in a certain branch of Pythagoreism, which all are in the opposition positive-negative.

²³⁰ K.-W. Dahm & V. Hörner, *Religiöse Sinndeutung und gesellschaftliche Komplexität*, in: R. Volp (ed.), *Chancen der Religion* (Gütersloh 1978) 81: “eine Tendenz zu einer alle Lebenszüge umfassenden Sinntotalität.” Cf. Gladigow *loc. cit.* above n. 2)

²³¹ Criticism of this modern view by Gladigow 1990b, 250 f., contesting P.L. Berger’s assertion: “Modernität schafft eine neue Situation, in der Aussuchen und Auswählen zum Imperativ wird”, on the ground that it “klammert den ‘Normalfall’ eines polytheistischen Systems aus und konstruiert monistische Entwürfe als verbindliche Form.”

²³² L. Ciompi, *Die emotionalen Grundfragen des Denkens. Entwurf einer fraktalen Affektlogik* (Göttingen 1997) 335–338, as summarized by Nicolai 2005, 24 (my translation).