
Mathilde BRÉMOND, *Lectures de Méliossos. Édition, traduction et interprétation des témoignages sur Méliossos de Samos*

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de l'épistémologie de Protagoras (« Protagoras on Epistemological Obstacles and Persons »). Dans le premier, il remet en question l'interprétation d'Anaximandre, commune depuis l'abandon de la lecture « mystique », selon laquelle le monde créé à partir de l'infini est éternel et stable, mais il soutient qu'il est destiné à disparaître ; sa lecture permet notamment de rendre compte du témoignage selon lequel la mer finira par s'assécher complètement. Dans le second article, il affirme que Protagoras soulève des problèmes épistémologiques qui concernent notre connaissance personnelle, conçue non pas à un moment précis mais comme se construisant tout au long de notre vie ; il fait ainsi de Protagoras, plus qu'un relativiste, un partisan d'une théorie de la vérité-cohérence à un niveau individuel. Cette interprétation permet d'expliquer divers propos attribués à Protagoras, en particulier la justification de son agnosticisme, ainsi que sa prétention à éduquer et convaincre. On pourrait faire remarquer (sans que cela soit nécessairement une objection) que son contemporain Gorgias, d'après un témoignage pseudo-aristotélicien (*Sur Mélissos, Xénophane et Gorgias*, 6, 980b14-16), insiste à l'inverse sur l'absence d'identité de l'individu, qui perçoit des choses différentes non seulement à des moments différents, mais aussi au même instant, au travers des divers organes des sens.

Dans l'ensemble, les études proposées dans cet ouvrage sont stimulantes et solidement argumentées, et le plus souvent convaincantes. Leur richesse et leur insistance sur les détails a certes parfois le défaut d'en rendre la lecture ardue (malgré un style toujours clair et agréable), mais cette difficulté est souvent inévitable dans le domaine des études préplatoniciennes, auquel le travail de Jaap Mansfeld, dans cet ouvrage comme ailleurs, a apporté une contribution exceptionnelle.

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Melissus of Samos has long been due an uptick in scholarly attention. His plainly worded, workmanlike Ionic prose offers a welcome contrast to Parmenides' Epic—and often deeply obscure—hexameters. Melissus, too, seems to have come to be something of a representative for Eleatic thought in antiquity and makes intriguing appearances in Plato's *Theaetetus* and, particularly, in Aristotle's dialectical accounts of his predecessors that have never quite received satisfactory treatment.

Happily, there has been a recent and very welcome increase in scholarly interest in the Eleatic marked by the publication of Jaap Mansfeld's lectures from *Eleatica* 2012, Brémond's contribution under review, and my own reconstruction of the fragments published last year (*Melissus and Eleatic Monism*, Cambridge University Press). What ties these volumes together is an insistence upon the historical and philosophical interest of Melissus himself, formed independently of any primary consideration of his value for solving the very many, and very well-studied, interpretative puzzles in Parmenides. This is all to the good.

Brémond's study is a particularly welcome contribution. The volume does not approach Melissus' surviving fragments directly but offers a comprehensive survey of his reception from Aristotle to Simplicius, including his important discussion in the mysterious treatise known as the *MXG* that survives in the Aristotelian manuscript

tradition. Texts and helpful translations are given throughout, sometimes of material not readily available elsewhere in translation. Brémond provides an *apparatus criticus* for each of her texts further cementing the usefulness of this volume as 'one-stop' resource for specialists. However, in the case of the *MXG*, a difficult and contested work from a textual point of view, a more thorough account of the principles adopted in editing and selecting between variants and conjectures would have been welcome. This is, unfortunately, relegated to the endnotes and is *ad hoc* in nature. A sound and reliable text of the *MXG* remains a (possibly infeasible) *desideratum*.

The interpretative chapter on the *MXG* is a highlight. We are provided with a thorough account of the literature and fine analyses of the author's (whoever this might be) method and the work's structure. Of particular note is Brémond's handling of those arguments found in the *MXG* that do not appear in our verbatim fragments. Here we find one of the most original claims made in the work, and it is worth looking at in detail.

Brémond takes up the argument found in the *MXG* (974a12-14) suggesting that Melissus deduced his predicate 'homogeneous' (ὁμοιον) from 'one' (ἓν). There the claim is that being unlike (heterogeneous) entails plurality and thus whatever is one is alike in every way. This is not found in the verbatim fragments, but the beginning of B7, listing the attributes of what-is, clearly suggests he has made such a deduction in a prior demonstration. Standardly, the discussion in the *MXG* is assumed to represent what has been lost from Melissus' own words.

Here Brémond suggests an alternative and points to a forthcoming article (*Ancient Philosophy*, Volume I, 2019) defending her interpretation in detail. As this contribution has appeared, I proceed from its conclusions. She focuses on the puzzle of the unity of B7, which has received some attention, particularly from Friedrich Solmsen. Melissus claims there that were there alteration, what-is could no longer be one (εἰ γάρ τι τούτων πάσχοι, οὐκ ἂν ἔτι ἓν εἴη). This is worrying because it is simply not obvious that alteration should be a threat to the uniqueness of its underlying subject. Indeed, as Brémond suggests, the homogeneity targeted by Melissus seems more sensibly to be self-identity through time rather than the spatial uniformity at any given moment usually assumed. With this in mind, we should think that it is *in* B7 itself that such temporal homogeneity is demonstrated, *not* in a previous, lost argument. The thought, then, is that it is on the basis of eternity, not uniqueness, that homogeneity is demonstrated.

There is something to say in favour of such a thesis. Much of B7, for example, turns on Melissus' prohibition of generation and destruction suggesting the temporal line. Yet there are powerful reasons to reject any such reading and, ultimately, I don't think this argument can be accepted. B8, explicitly offered as a supplemental argument to what has come before, seems to assume that plurality, understood as a spatially heterogeneous world, has already been targeted. We might turn to Parmenides, as well. One of Melissus' decisive contributions to Eleaticism is his explicit connection between spatial and temporal infinity. There is every reason to think that he followed suit in connecting spatial and temporal homogeneity. This is what Melissus means when he says that what-is is one (ἓν); we need not assume that it is ambiguous to claim that plurality is the shared contradictory of both unity and uniqueness. The richness, rather than ambiguity, of the concept of the Eleatic 'One' is Melissus' crowning achievement. We cannot simply dismiss our text because it seems 'strange' and difficult to construe when we have no compelling textual reason to do so.

Most challenging is Brémond suggestion that εἰ γάρ τι τούτων πάσχοι, οὐκ ἂν ἔτι ἓν εἴη is to be understood as a marginal notation that has crept into our text. Certainly, a strong, although not entirely persuasive, parallel argument has been raised

by Jonathan Barnes for excising ὥστε συμβαίνει μήτε ὄραν μήτε τὰ ὄντα γινώσκειν from B8. However, that case turns on the conspicuously unusual form and vocabulary of the clause. Even so, Laks and Most are probably wise to keep the clause in their Loeb edition. On the other hand, Brémond's sentence is resolutely Melissian in both form (a conditional statement with the optative) and vocabulary. It is also little more than handwaving to claim that the first sentence of B7 (οὕτως οὖν αἰδιόν ἐστι καὶ ἄπειρον καὶ ἔν καὶ ὅμοιον πᾶν) does not imply that homogeneity has already been demonstrated. I conclude that this line of interpretation does violence to the text and must be rejected. However, Brémond does usefully remind us that more caution is needed than simply assuming that the *MXG* faithfully reproduces Melissus' argument.

On the *MXG* itself, Brémond rightly emphasises its Aristotelian influence and credibly argues that the author is himself an Aristotelian, pushing back against Mansfeld's suggestion of a sceptical influence on the treatise. The discussion of *De sensu* 3 in reference to the argument against mixture I found to be suggestive, although it remains unclear to me why Pseudo-Aristotle would adapt an argument specifically focused on colour for the purposes of interpreting Melissus. The much more fertile ground of *GC* 1 10 seems a far more obvious source for the Aristotelian discussion of mixture. I mention here Mansfeld's recent attempt to find something genuine in the *MXG* discussion of mixture, where he marshals Parmenides' discussion of mixture in B16 as support. Intriguingly, in that fragment and in the *MXG* the mixtures envisioned seem equally limited in scope by implying the separation of the components in the mixture. In any case, Brémond's scepticism is probably warranted, and one might hope for a fuller treatment along these lines of the *MXG*, as a whole, in future.

One of the subtlest treatments, and I think one of its most important contributions, of the book is the analysis of Melissus' reception in Simplicius and Philoponus. As nearly all of our verbatim quotations are found in the former, this area is of particular importance. Brémond considers the possibility of a common source in Ammonius for the discussions of both Neoplatonists, but significantly offers an intriguing comparison of where the two differ. She concludes that Simplicius offers a complete, and extremely important, rehabilitation of Melissus, whereas Philoponus provides something less complete, less novel, and perhaps dependent on an unreliable source text. I found much of this chapter extremely convincing, and the value of Simplicius' commentary is rightly confirmed.

The provision of more than 300 pages of texts and translations will, no doubt, make this volume a fundamental reference point and guarantee its place on the shelves of Presocratic specialists. Of course, the comprehensiveness of such an edition means that some texts are less useful and more derivative than others. On the whole, the choice of endnotes for where arguments on textual matters and points of translation are to be found is less successful than it might have been. *Sigla* and information on the editions of the texts used are unhelpfully given in an appendix rather than in the short introductions offered before each section of the edition. This is a minor matter, of course, but the ease of use for such a reference volume is not inconsequential. A similar quibble might be raised with the rather minimal indices, although an *index locorum* is provided.

Taking stock: I am delighted to have Brémond's volume on my desk. It is fluently written, largely clear in its argumentation, and its conclusions are obviously flagged. No one interested in Melissus or the ancient reception of early Greek philosophy can safely ignore it.

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