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IONIAN PHILOSOPHY AND ITALIC PHILOSOPHY: FROM DIOGENES LAERTIUS TO DIELS

This paper traces the history of a particular cliché of scholarship on the Presocratic philosophers which has persisted from ancient commentators until the present day, and in whose development Hermann Diels' work constitutes an important stage. This cliché concerns the division of early Greek philosophy into an Ionian tradition founded by Thales and an Italic one founded by Pythagoras – although a tripartite division is also often found, in texts in which the Eleatic lineage is also given a certain importance and autonomy. I examine in detail how this model, which was originally inspired simply by considerations regarding the different places in which the traditions flourished, developed in various phases of ancient and modern philosophy along with reflections on the distinct theoretical characteristics of the different traditions and on their relations to Plato, whose philosophical system has generally been seen as a synthesis of them. However, even in its simplest, geographical form the model contributed to shape and preserve the tradition of Presocratic thought.

My aim in this article is to trace the history of a *cliché* of Presocratic studies which has persisted from the ancients until the present day, in whose development (for reasons I will consider towards the end of the article) Hermann Diels's work constitutes an important stage. This *cliché* is the well known division of the first phase of Greek philosophy into an Ionian tradition founded by Thales and an Italic one founded by Pythagoras (without forgetting that a separate Eleatic lineage, founded by Xenophanes, is often to emerge from such a division).

This framework, apparently based on geographical considerations, often encouraged ancient and modern scholars to stress corresponding philosophical differences: on the one hand, the lively exploration of the sensible world which is characteristic of Ionian culture in general and which begins in philosophy with the "Milesian School", and, on the other, in Italy, a special attention to the formal structures of reality which displays elements of religious revelation (and this not only among the Pythagoreans, as Parmenides' Proem shows). One example of the presupposition of this framework is *The Presocratic Philosophers* by Kirk and Raven (Cambridge 1957), which is quite representative of the situation in the last few decades. The section dedicated to the "Italian Schools", written by Raven, is introduced as follows (Kirk & Raven 1957, 216):

"The original motive and character of Italian thought differ widely from those of the Milesians. Whereas the Milesians were impelled by innate intellectual

curiosity and dissatisfaction with the old mythological accounts to attempt a rational explanation of physical phenomena, the impulse underlying Pythagoreanism seems to have been a religious and emotional one (...). The Pythagorean cosmology is concerned, at the outset at any rate, more with the form or structure of the world than with its mere matter”.

For the second edition of the volume (Cambridge 1983), these pages were completely re-written by Schofield, who replaced the words “Italian Schools” with “Philosophy in the West”, but maintained the same framework. For instance, he writes in his introduction (Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 213):

“It is tempting to conjecture that (...) differences between western Greek and Ionian philosophy are connected with, or even functions of, differences in the social and political conditions of life in these distant parts of the Greek world. Certainly South Italy and Sicily were the home of mystery cults concerned with death and with worship of the gods of the underworld, whereas we hear little of this sort of religious activity in the cities of the Ionian seaboard”.

The scholar reading such a confident distinction will immediately wonder to what extent he or she moved within these co-ordinates more or less consciously, or whether he or she considers them to have been proved or disproved in the research carried out by his or her own research on the Ionians, Pythagoreans or Eleatics. (To give a particular example of my own, I always feel tempted to identify and underline, in the “Italic line”, a peculiar inter-weaving of cults and religious representations of *Magna Graecia* in Pythagoras’ philosophy or Parmenides’ Proem).¹ This is not the place to examine one’s conscience. But it is worth raising the question of the origins and fortunes of this historiographic framework, and this undoubtedly has implications for the clarity of one’s method and objectives, and thus for one’s work ‘in the field’.

I. THE TWO (OR THREE?) BEGINNINGS OF PHILOSOPHY

The proem of Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives* is surely the best starting point for our study, for, although it is not the only ancient source which refers to the distinction between Ionians and Italics, it offers the most detailed account of it, and is also – along with the account by Clement of Alexandria, which we will consider later – the most widely read example and the most important one for modern scholars. Furthermore, this text is particularly informed by the problem of the origin of Greek philosophy, and uses arguments and methods which it is necessary to consider. Diogenes begins with a

In this essay I partly present, and partly integrate and develop claims made in Sassi 1989 and 1994. I am grateful to Anthony Grafton, André Laks, Glenn Most, and Oliver Primavesi for their precious comments on the occasion of the Colloquium.

1 On this, see Sassi 2006c. Of course archaeological evidence concerning cults in South Italy has no comparison with other areas of the ancient world: nevertheless, historical research may also allow (as it increasingly does) to emphasize the possible influence of sociopolitical conditions of 7th and 6th centuries B. C. Asia Minor on the Ionian thinkers (on Anaximander’s Miletos, see Sassi 2006a).

polemic against “some people” (which we can now identify as Stoics or Platonists) who state that philosophical activity had its beginnings among the barbaric peoples (that is, among the Magi, Chaldaeans, Gymnosophists or Druids). He had previously opposed this view on the grounds of the priority of the genuinely Greek wisdom of Musaeus and Linus (Diog. Laert. I 3), and later (I 13) that of the Seven Sages, listing among others Thales, Anacharsis, Pherecydes, and Epimenides, as well as other representatives of what we today call archaic wisdom. Here Diogenes explains what, in his opinion, were the two beginnings (*duo... archai*) of philosophy, one being Anaximander, Thales’ disciple, and the other being Pythagoras, who is mentioned in the previous chapter as the *primus inventor* of the word “philosophy”² and is now related – in a relation of discipleship symmetrical to that between Thales and Anaximander – to his master Pherecydes (a relation which is also mentioned in the *Life* of Pythagoras, Diog. Laert. VIII 2). Anaximander marks the beginning of a tradition called Ionian (because Thales was from Ionia) and continued by Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Archelaos, and then Socrates, disciple of Archelaos. Socrates added the discovery of ethics, and through his teaching the tradition developed in many different directions – on the one hand, the Cynic school led into the Stoic one, while on the other the lineage led to Plato, from which both the Academy and Aristotle and his school derived.³ Pythagoras heads the tradition called Italic because he carried on most of his philosophic activity in Italy. This tradition includes, in further relationships of discipleship, Pythagoras’ son Telauges and Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno, Leucippus, Democritus and the latter’s disciples, followed lastly by Epicurus.

It is widely supposed that this framework dates back (through an epitome by Heraclides Lembus) to the *Successions of Philosophers* by Sotion of Alexandria.⁴ But this attribution reflects a tendency to read Diogenes Laertius’ text as a *pastiche* of quotations, and thus to see its author as a mere compiler, to be evaluated, as well as possible, according to the accuracy of the information that he provides. However, some time ago now, Diogenes’ working method was reconsidered as possibly intended to provide a personal discourse (some lines of this kind are to be found in his proem), and this can be shown by focusing on the quality of his materials and how these are organised, rather than on the names of his sources, the reliability of which often derives from more or less uncertain attributions hiding rather “nebulous” figures, as is the case, for example, with Sotion.⁵ The account in the proem continues

- 2 The *topos* of the discovery is a favourite one of Diogenes, and it also influences his accounts of the beginnings of the different schools (Shalev 2006). On the role of heurmatography in ancient history of science (and philosophy) see Zhmud 2006.
- 3 Three figures are here presented as final points (Chrysippus for the Stoics, Lacydes for the Academy, and Theophrastus for the Peripatos), which do not correspond to the real ends of the respective schools, nor, in two cases out of three, to the framework devised in the *Lives* (the history of Aristotle’s school in the fifth book is followed up to Lycon, and a missing part of the seventh book, about the Stoics, apparently arrived at Cornutus). The delimitation carried out in the first book obviously depends on the writer Diogenes used as a source for the occasion (on the possible judgements of value influencing the writer, see Schwartz 1903, 755–756).
- 4 See, for example, von Kienle 1961; Giannattasio Andria 1989.
- 5 Desbordes 1990 carries out an accurate dismantling of this and other works of “Quellenforschung”, by tracing its history. Gigon 1960 and Aronadio 1990 agree in revealing the selectivity

to be ascribed to Sotion by force of habit, but such attribution is debatable. One notes, for example, that while Parmenides' apprenticeship with Xenophanes in the first book plays a major role in the Italic succession,⁶ Sotion is mentioned in the *Life* of Parmenides precisely for having separated Parmenides from Xenophanes, and having emphasized the former's dependence on the Pythagorean Ameinias (who, rather than Xenophanes, is claimed to have lead Parmenides to the ideal of *hesychia*: Diog. Laert. IX 21).⁷ Moreover, a sceptical interpretation of Xenophanes is ascribed to Sotion in the *Life* of Xenophanes (IX 20), accompanied by the idea that he was contemporary with Anaximander, and did not have any masters (IX 18).⁸

But, leaving aside the question of Sotion (which might lead us back to the "Quellenforschung" syndrome), let us return to the dichotomy between Ionian and Italic philosophy. It is important to emphasize here that, after Diogenes, this dichotomy occurs in its purest form only in Epiphanius (*Adv. haer.* III 1 ss.) and Augustine (*De civ. dei* VIII 2).⁹ In antiquity a tripartite framework is more often found, in which an Eleatic succession, beginning with Xenophanes and carried on by the Atomists, breaks away from the Italic succession, and the latter comes to coincide with the Pythagoreans' lineage. Indeed, one notes that the Eleatic line is given its own autonomy in various doxographic texts.¹⁰ Something similar occurs also in the first book of Hippolytus' *Refutatio*, in which, however, the lines of the model are complicated and obscured by his grouping all fourteen Presocratic philosophers (in chapters 1 to 16) under the category of *physikoi* (since he prefers to focus on the division of philosophy into physics, ethics and dialectics).¹¹ Thus, after discussing Thales, considered as the

of Diogenes regarding his sources (in particular, see Gigon's judgement, p. 37, on the "obscurity" of Sotion's historical personality). See also the general view on the Laertian proem expressed by Frede 1992, 318–319.

- 6 This is obviously an after effect of the connection between Xenophanes and Parmenides, as monists, made both by Plato (*Soph.* 242d) and Aristotle (*Met.* I 5: 986b22).
- 7 This is noted by Wehrli 1978, 19.
- 8 On the interpretation of Xenophanes as the 'first skeptic' (a product of the Academy rather than of Pyrrhonism) see Decleva Caizzi 1992, especially 4227–4230, and, more generally, Brittain & Palmer 2001, especially 60–63.
- 9 In his talk at the meeting, Marc-Aeilko Aris noted that John of Salisbury takes the notion of a Ionian succession in his *Policraticus* from Augustine's passage. A history of the reception of this theme in the Middle Ages would certainly be interesting.
- 10 Cf. Aët., *Plac.* I 3; Eus., *PE* X 4, 17; 14, 10–16, etc.; Theodoret., *Graec. aff. cur.* V 61; [Gal.], *Hist. phil.* 3, 598 ss. Diels; [Iustin.], *Coh. ad gent.* 3 ss. These texts show an interweaving between an organization according to *diadochai* and a doxography of Aristotelian origin, enriched by Peripatos biographic elements (for the sources of Aët. I 3, in particular, see Alt 1973, 137 ff.). Previously in Theophrastus, but also in Eudemos, the exposition of *doxai* was combined with an interest for personal relations (mostly deduced from doctrinal affinities, real or supposed), and this interest, too, is derived from Aristotle (along with the Parmenides-Xenophanes connection in *Met.* I 5: 986b22, see the Heraclitus-Cratylus connection, *ibid.*, I 6: 987a32, and also the introduction of the concept of *diadoche* in *Soph. El.* 183b 30). Here we cannot consider this problematic issue, which has only recently been tackled (for example by Aronadio 1990, 214 ff., 223 ff.).
- 11 Regarding the antecedents of this division see *infra*, note 17. For Eusebius, too, *PE* X 14, all philosophers before Socrates, including Pythagoras and Xenophanes, are *physikoi*. It is also interesting to note that Xenophanes is called *physikos* in the Vasek Polak Chronicle (col. IIB.30;

initiator of the study of nature, Hippolytus mentions Pythagoras as the founder of “another philosophy”, which was called Italic because Pythagoras, after escaping from Samos, had spent the rest of his life in Italy. Hippolytus then mentions Empedocles and Heraclitus as Pythagoras’ successors, and, in a single section dedicated to “other” important philosophers of nature, he rather curiously groups together, in an odd order, Parmenides, Leucippus, Democritus, Xenophanes, Ecphantos, and Hippias.¹²

Still, the tripartite distinction is clearly present in the proem of the *Stromata* by Clement of Alexandria, who refers to “three schools of philosophy, named after the places where they developed: the Italic, founded by Pythagoras, the Ionian, by Thales, and the Eleatic, by Xenophanes”, and adds that Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, a descendant of the Ionian line, moved his school to Athens, where Archelaos, teacher of Socrates, succeeded him (*Strom.* I 14, 62–64). This account is notable for two important reasons. Firstly, Clement combines the notion of the three beginnings of Greek philosophy with the view (objected to by Diogenes Laertius) that this was preceded by more ancient oriental wisdom (in particular, Jewish), and the possible “barbaric origin” of Thales and Pythagoras is also often mentioned. Secondly, Clement is, as is well known, the Diogenes’ main ‘competitor’ as the source of the rediscovery of the Presocratic *doxai* which began in the late fifteenth century, and, at least until Brucker, the choice of a bipartite or tripartite version of the beginnings of philosophy essentially depended on which of these two authors one preliminarily preferred.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES AND MAPS OF THE TRADITION

Here we must turn to the beginning of the story. This beginning should be seen in the catalogue of different theories regarding the number of the principles outlined by Plato in the *Sophist* (242c–e). Plato refers to the “Eleatic *ethnos*, beginning with Xenophanes and even earlier”, and then to the “Ionian Muses”, who are “more strenuous” (i. e., Heraclitus), and to “the milder Sicilian ones” (i. e., Empedocles), and it is noteworthy that geographical and theoretical criteria of classification are here already at work. However, Aristotle’s considerations are, as usual, more articulated in combining historical and systematical principles, and therefore have more directly influenced ancient history of philosophy.¹³

The Pythagoreans are often called *Italikoi* in Aristotle’s writings, and this is an obvious reference to the locations of Pythagoras’ school.¹⁴ However, the Py-

in IIB.17 Anaximander also comes out as *physikos*), an *excerptum* (dated first century A. D., like its source) from the so called *Chronikon Romanum*, whose main source regarding the period until first century A. D. was Apollodorus’ *Chronika* (Burstein 1984).

12 On the use of sources in this section of Hippolytus’ writing, see Osborne 1987, 187–211, and Mueller 1992, 4357–4360.

13 Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* I 5: 987a10; I 6: 987a31; I 7: 988a26; *Meteor.* 342b30; *Cael.* 293a20. See Zhmud 2006, 153–165. An accurate analysis of Aristotle’s complex procedures of distinction is carried out by Leszl 2006, see especially 362–366.

14 Cicero may be thinking of Aristotle when he hints at an ancient denomination of Pythagoreans as Italics (*De sen.* 78: *Audiebam Pythagoram pythagoreosque, incolas paene nostros, qui es-*

thagoreans also have a distinct character for Aristotle. Indeed, while sharing with other naturalists (*physikoi* or *physiologoi*, from Thales to Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Leucippus, and Democritus) the identification of the realm of being with that of nature, the Pythagoreans differ in their appeal to principles and elements far from the sensible realm, and thus anticipate the interest in the formal cause.¹⁵ Xenophanes, Parmenides and Melissus are also opposed to the *physikoi* because they removed motion from their analysis of being by neglecting the data of sensation.¹⁶

Aristotle therefore recognizes three main groups in the earlier tradition of the study of nature – namely, the naturalists *stricto sensu*, the Pythagoreans and the Eleatics – corresponding to three specific intellectual options. I think it quite likely that this general account, mediated by the historiographic work of the Lyceum, inspired the Successions literature. Other elements of this literature also give clues of its Aristotelian origins. For example, the continuity of the Ionian lineage, which moves towards ethics with Socrates, is confirmed by a *vulgata* (accepted among others by Diog. Laert. II 16) which presents Socrates as a disciple of Archelaus (who was in his turn a disciple of Anaxagoras), on the grounds of his youthful interest in the investigation on nature before he turned, unsatisfied, to the study of man.¹⁷ Moreover, the connection between Democritus and the Eleatics might derive from Aristotle's view of the close link between the conception of atoms and emptiness and the terms in which the question of being and non-being had been posed by Parmenides.¹⁸

There are also new elements in the *Diadochai* literature, however, which are complementary and can be explained by the authors' concern to provide an erudite classification. Firstly, Aristotle only mentions the "Italics", referring to the places of Pythagoras' teaching, whereas the adjectives "Ionian" and "Eleatic", along with

sent Italici philosophi quondam nominati, numquam dubitasse quin ex universa mente divina delibatos animos haberemus).

15 See Aristotle, *Met.* I 8: 989b29; XIII 4: 1078b20.

16 See Aristotle, *Met.* I 5: 986b14; *Phys.* I 2: 184b16; *Gen. Corr.* 325a13.

17 The well known remarks in Plato's *Phaedo* and Xenophon's work were valuable sources for Socrates' intellectual biography. The division of the successions must have soon been combined with the tripartite division of physics, ethics, and dialectics which appears in the first book of the *Metaphysics* as a method of periodizing philosophy – physics being started by Thales, ethics by Socrates, dialectics by Plato (983b20, 987b1, 987b31). Thales' position as the first *physikos* was particularly firm and frequently emphasized (see also Theophr., *Phys. Op.* fr. 1 [in *Simpl.*, *In Phys.* 184b15] Diels [DG 23, 29]; Eus., *PE* X 14: 10e14; [Justin.] *Coh. ad gent.* 3). Diogenes Laertius (I 18) endorses this view, with the variation (which can be also ascribed to Aristotle, see Diog. Laert. VIII 57) according to which Zeno of Elea is "the inventor" of dialectics. Plato is commonly presented as the one who fulfilled philosophy in all its parts, by personally adding dialectics (Diog. Laert. III 56; Hippol., *Haer.* I 18 *fin.*, 19 *fin.*; but *ibid.*, I 5 *fin.*, the paternity of dialectics is ascribed to Aristotle), or who synthesized the three already existing lines (Atticus, fr. 1). Physics may be represented by Pythagoreanism, in contexts in which it is conceived as a science in which much importance is given to the non-sensible principles of nature: cf. Apul., *De Plat.* I 3, 187, as well as *Anonymus Photii* and Augustine, cited *infra* (p. 28, n. 34.38).

18 Cf. Aristotle, *Gen. Corr.* 325a25; Gigon 1960, 58, without mentioning the possible role of Aristotle's passage, makes the interesting conjecture that the diverging of the atomists from the Ionian (or, by then, Ionian-Attic) lineage was due to the peculiar position of the Epicurean school in the *post-Socrates* panorama.

the geographical explanation of them, appear after him. Secondly, differences of an intellectual kind become less important. We look in vain, in the doxographic layout, for explicit connections between Ionians and physical investigation, or between Italics or Eleatics and the study of non-sensible entities. We also find no comments on the eschatologic themes so characteristic of *Magna Graecia* (mainly Pythagorean) philosophy, those themes which Plato's work had emphasized. Notably, Plato had often claimed his debt to *Magna Graecia*, as the place that had inspired his wisdom. One thinks of the famous passage in the *Gorgias*, interspersed with references to Orphic and Pythagorean beliefs on the fate of the soul, in which the tale of the last judgement in the underworld is told by "a clever man, a Sicilian or maybe an Italic, who reasoned about myths".¹⁹ One also thinks of the *Timaeus*, in which a man coming from Locri, where he had reached "the summit of all philosophic thoughts" (20a), is chosen as the spokesman of Plato's cosmology (which is particularly significant, if we think of the important, long-lasting position of the *Timaeus* in the *curriculum* of readings in Platonic schools).

Of course, such a view is far from a mere listing of *doxai* or successions. However, it is possible that both, *Diadochai* and doxographies, preserve some traces of those ancient characterizations, even if it is impossible for us to identify them precisely. For example, Hippolytus recalls, in the first book of the *Refutatio*, that the "other philosophy" of the "physicist" Pythagoras, "called Italic" after the place where he lived, is characterized by a peculiar "mix" of mathematical science and the investigation of nature (*Haer.* I 2, 1–2). It may likewise be significant that Pseudo-Galen (*Hist. phil.* 3 Diels [DG 601.3]) characterizes the two lists of philosophers of Italy and Elea as "nobler" (although this passage is unfortunately corrupt). That is, it may be possible that this kind of literature offered something more than a mere listing of biographical or doctrinal data, and reflected patterns of interpretation deriving from 'higher' centres of reflection on the philosophical tradition.²⁰

The existence of two versions of the beginnings of philosophy, differing over whether there are two or three branches, can also be explained in these terms. The tripartite division may be considered as the oldest, being closest to Aristotle's,²¹ while the bipartite one may have been conceived later on, by subsuming the Eleatics in one Italic branch (a move compatible with Aristotle, who grouped the Eleatics and the Pythagoreans together, on the grounds that they shared a common interest in the formal aspect of reality). Now, I suggest that this grafting of the Eleatic branch onto the Pythagorean trunk could be explained as a collateral outcome of the success of the Pythagorean thought in later philosophy. Elsewhere I have attempted to describe in detail the various paths taken by the Pythagorean *revival* from the Hellenistic age

19 See Plato, *Gorg.* 493a. Whether the man is to be identified as Empedocles or Philolaus is not important here.

20 In my view, such an hypothesis is consistent with a reconstruction of Hellenistic erudition which emphasizes the reciprocal relationship, rather than the division, between its genres (doxography, *Diadochai*, *Peri haireseon*, *Bioi*, and also chronography: on the latter see also *supra*, n. 11). This is well described, for example, by Runia 1999.

21 Here I adopt an hypothesis from Mansfeld 1992, 30 n. 12, which is itself taken from von Kienle 1961, 32.

to Neoplatonism, to which I believe the predominance of the “Italic” tradition over the “Eleatic” can be traced. Here I will simply mention the relevant data.²²

First of all, one cannot ignore the role played by Aristoxenus in this context, even if this role is difficult to determine precisely. For one reason or another, in his ‘Pythagorean’ writings Aristoxenus worked on recuperating apologetically the philosophical tradition of the place where he came from, while disparaging the Socrates-Plato lineage on the biographical and theoretical plane. Aristoxenus, in fr. 67 Wehrli (= Diog. Laert. III 37), started the tendency to accuse Plato of plagiarizing other people’s doctrines, perhaps the story of Plato copying the *Timaeus* from one of Philolaus’ works (Diog. Laert. VIII 15, accepted by Wehrli as fr. 43). The anti-Athenian thesis that Pythagoras came from one of the islands from which the Athenians had driven out the Tyrrhenians also derives from Aristoxenus (fr. 11a Wehrli, in Diog. Laert. VIII 1),²³ as perhaps does the story about the philosopher’s success among Lucans, Messapii, Peucetii and Romans, and his influence on the legislation of Zaleuchus and Charondas.²⁴ On these grounds it has even been supposed that the tradition presenting Numa Pompilius as a disciple of Pythagoras, common from the beginning of the first century B. C. onwards, is to be ascribed to Aristoxenus (or any other author of Southern Italy, which in the second half of the fourth century B. C. was concerned with absorbing Rome culturally).²⁵

Finally, it must be remembered that many scholars tend to ascribe to Aristoxenus the Catalogue of the Pythagoreans which concludes Iamblichus’ *Pythagorean Life*, for, among other reasons, the noticeable presence of Italic material in it.²⁶ It is important to note that Empedocles and Parmenides are here included among the Pythagoreans (Iamb., *VP* 104, 113 f., 166; cf. Porph. *VP* 30). One is tempted to suppose that this inclusion, which aims to emphasize a Pythagorean monopoly in *Magna Graecia*, is drawn from Aristoxenus – as we have seen, he is responsible for a similar operation concerning Zaleuchus and Charondas (who are also included in Iamblichus’ list). This derivation from Aristoxenus cannot be proved with certainty for this, as for other elements in the Catalogue. Yet the propensity to relate Empedocles to Parmenides, and both of them to the Pythagorean school, is also witnessed by other authors of the fourth century, who must have been influenced by considerations on geographical, rather than theoretical, contiguity. Diogenes Laertius, who considers Empedocles to be a “sporadic” thinker (that is, as one not belonging to any particular school), nonetheless presents him after Pythagoras because “some people” thought he was the latter’s student (Diog. Laert. VIII 50) – he mentions, among others,

22 For more sources and a bibliography, see Sassi 1994, 36–47.

23 It may be significant that Diogenes puts emphasis on his passing from Ionian philosophy to Italic philosophy in the preamble of the eighth book, dedicated to Pythagoras, a little before mentioning the different traditions regarding the philosopher’s birthplace.

24 Cf. fr. 17 Wehrli, in Porph., *VP* 22; fr. 43 Wehrli, in Diog. Laert. VIII 16; see Diog. Laert. VIII 14 *fin.*; Porph., *VP* 19; Iamb., *VP* 33–34. 37. 241.

25 The Numa legend depends on an anachronism which was already noted as such in ancient sources, but the link between Pythagoras and Zaleuchus and Charondas is also anachronistic (see Gabba 1967, 154 ff., and, more recently, Storchi Marino 1999, with a preface by Gabba).

26 See Timpanaro Cardini 1964, 38 f.; Burkert 1972, 105 n. 40; Giangiulio 1991, 445.

Timaeus (VIII 54) and Alcidas, according to whom, however, Empedocles had Parmenides and Zeno as his teachers (VIII 55–56). Theophrastus is also mentioned here (VIII 55) for his recalling Empedocles' admiration for Parmenides.²⁷

Regarding Parmenides' apprenticeship with the Pythagoreans, there is no testimony previous to that regarding Ameinias, which Diogenes takes from Sotion. Given the 'Pythagorization' of Empedocles, however, we can suppose that a similar process also occurred for Parmenides, beginning between the fourth and third centuries B. C. – that is, about a century before the composition of the *Successions* is believed to have begun.²⁸ We do not have sufficient evidence to establish a link between this process and the notion of Italic philosophy, 'enlarged' through the connection between Telauges and Xenophanes, which is presented in Diogenes' proem. Indeed, as we will see, such a notion would be better explained in a context in which the metaphysical and religious aspects of Pythagoreanism are particularly emphasized, whereas Aristoxenus' image of Pythagoras is a rationalistic one, from which he had attempted to remove all residues of superstition. Nonetheless, even though evaluating Aristoxenus' contribution is difficult, we can certainly detect in some of his writings traces of a kind of "westernization"²⁹ of Pythagorean philosophy, specified through opposing it to Socratic-Platonic philosophy.

However, in antiquity the Italic tradition was also interpreted in terms which at first sight seem different from those endorsed by Aristoxenus. There was a conception of Pythagoreanism as continuing, rather than opposing, Plato's philosophy. Indeed, this conception informed much of Hellenistic and Imperial philosophy.³⁰

An important moment for this approach was the break of Antiochus of Ascalon in the first century B. C. from the skeptical tradition started in the Academy by Arcesilaus (a tradition which had highlighted Socrates' 'skepticism'), in order to return

27 For the idea that Empedocles combined the influence of Parmenides and the Pythagoreans, see also Theophr., *Phys. Op.* fr. 3 (in Simpl., *In Phys.* 184b15 Diels [DG 25, 19]).

28 This process leads also to the well known reference by Strabo (VI 1, 1) to Parmenides and Zeno as "Pythagorean men", influential on the good government of Elea. It must be noted that the tradition regarding Parmenides as a legislator in Elea (which might imply a connection with the Pythagoreans' politics) is drawn from Speusippus (Diog. Laert. IX 23 = fr. 118 Isnardi Parente). The idea that Zeno was willing to stay in his small town, despising the splendour of Athens (Diog. Laert. IX 28), could also be dated back to the fourth century B. C., since Demetrius of Phaleron mentions a similar attitude regarding Heraclitus (fr. 92 Wehrli, in Diog. Laert. IX 15) and Democritus (fr. 93 Wehrli, in Diog. Laert. IX 37) in his *Apology of Socrates* (contra see Democritus' B 116 D.-K., and of course Plato's *Parmenides* and Plut., *Per.* 5, 3 [29 A 11 and A 17 D.-K.], as regards Zeno's presence in Athens). Dover 1976, 38 f., sees these statements as expressing a criticism of Athens as a place where philosophers were persecuted. However this may be, the information on Zeno is significant as a representation, present in Aristotle's circle, of the autonomy of an Italic philosopher towards the Attic culture. Finally, one notes that in Ephesos the 'autodidact' Heraclitus escapes any 'Pythagorization' (see Mueller 1992, 4359; Declava Caizzi 1992, 4224–4226), even if he is associated with the Pythagorean Hippasus from Aristotle onwards, on the grounds of their shared identification of fire as *arche* (*Met.* I 3: 984a7–8).

29 I take this term from Cassio 1985, 46.

30 I deliberately avoid terms such as 'Middle-Platonism' or 'Neo-Pythagoreanism', which have recently been questioned and which, in any case, are irrelevant to our particular topic.

to a dogmatic Plato.³¹ In the ‘rewriting’ of the history of the Academy that followed this turning point, Pythagoras’ philosophy was incorporated into it, as is shown by Numenius. Numenius accused the first disciples of Plato of degenerating his philosophy, stating that Plato deserved as much respect as Pythagoras had received from his school, the former being “neither better nor worse than the latter”.³² According to Numenius, it was necessary to recover Plato’s pure “Pythagorizing”, i. e., his “keeping realities chained together in an uncommon way not bound to evidence”. Numenius further claimed that Socrates too depended on Pythagoras in this regard. Yet Plato is described in the following terms, which conclude the fragment (fr. 24, 73–79 Des Places):

“[Plato was] halfway between Pythagoras and Socrates because he made the former’s solemnity more human and raised the latter’s subtle games from irony to a solemn dignity. So, mixing Pythagoras and Socrates together, he appeared more easygoing than the former and more solemn than the latter”.

This claim reminds one of Aristotle’s interpretation of Platonism as a synthesis of Pythagorean and Socratic elements.³³ This interpretation had previously been expressed by Dicaearchus by the image of a mixture of personal features (fr. 41 Wehrli, in *Plut., Quaest. conv.* VIII, 719a), which appears to have become common in Numenius’ time.³⁴ However, Numenius employs it (as Proclus does later on, as we will see) for his own ends, namely, to relate his own thought to both Plato and Pythagoras.³⁵

In other areas of Platonism, for example in Alexandria in the first century B. C.,³⁶ a reevaluation of the ontologic core of Platonism took place, accompanied by a recovery of Pythagorean (or supposedly Pythagorean) elements.³⁷ A rich set of texts shows that a Pythagorean numerological system based on the polarity of monad (form) and indefinite dyad (matter) was elaborated, and presented as the source of the Platonic concept of One, thus establishing a link between Pythagoras and Plato.³⁸ The *Diadochai* literature would seem to be insensitive to such a link, since the

31 See Frede 1992, 316–318.

32 See Numenius, *On the Academics’ dissent from Plato*, fr. 24 Des Places, in Eusebius, *PE* XIV 4, 16–59.

33 See *infra*, p. 29.

34 See also Cic., *Rep.* I 10, 16 (and *Fin.* V 29, 87). Augustine, in *C. Acad.* III 17. 37, draws this image from Cicero, according to Solignac 1958, 116f. However, he preserves better than Cicero the theoretical essence of Aristotle’s ‘archetype’, once again presenting Platonic thought as a synthesis of Socratic ethics, Pythagorean interest in nature (including divine nature), and dialectics, which completes philosophy (cf. *De civ. dei* VIII 4).

35 See also fr. 1a, 7 Des Places.

36 Here I am thinking particularly of Eudorus, regarding which see Mansfeld 1988, who traces some ‘Pythagorean’ characteristics of Xenophanes’ theology back to Eudorus, and Bonazzi 2002.

37 We can also explain in this context the diffusion of Pythagorean apocrypha ascribed to Timaeus, Archytas or Ocellus, in which a mixture of Platonic-Peripatetic doctrines was presented as a product of Pythagoras and his school.

38 See the *excerptum* which Alexander Polyhistor, in the first century B. C., derives from an anonymous text, the *Pythagorean Memoirs*, in Diog. Laert. VIII 24–35; and the *Life of Pythagoras* summarized in Photius’ *Bibliotheca*, cod. 249, 438b15–441b14; Aët., *Plac.* I 3, 8; Sext., *Adv. math.* X 248 ff.

connecting of Plato to the Ionians, through Socrates, prevails in the texts we have mentioned so far. However, according to Diogenes Laertius, Alexander Polyhistor presented his platonizing doxography precisely in his *Successions of philosophers*, which again suggests supposing a certain flexibility in the borders between the *Dia-dochai* literature and the doxographies.³⁹ In any case, we may claim that connecting Pythagoras to Plato implies a strong emphasis on the primeval originality of Pythagoreanism. Such a connection relied on the authority of Aristotle, who in the widely read sixth chapter of the first book of the *Metaphysics* had presented Plato's theory as a synthesis of the Pythagorean discovery of the number-cause, Socratic ethics and Plato's personal addition of dialectics.⁴⁰ So, in the *Life of Pythagoras* summarized by Photius, Pythagoras is placed at the beginning of a list which includes Plato in ninth place (as a disciple of the "older" Archytas) and Aristotle in tenth (Phot. *Bibl.* 438b).⁴¹ A few lines later (*Bibl.* 439a), we read that it was in Italy that Plato learnt theoretical philosophy and physics from the Pythagoreans (the reference is to the theological cosmology of the *Timaeus*), while learning ethics from Socrates above all, and being instilled with "the seeds of logic" by Zeno and Parmenides, who were Eleatic, but came from the Pythagorean *diatribe*.⁴²

Both Numenius' polemic and the *Anonymus Photii* testify that Pythagoras played a pivotal role in the sophisticated consideration of Platonic metaphysics which took place between the second century B. C. and the second century A. D.⁴³ It is plausible to assume that the extension of the Italic line to the Eleatics – through a Pythagorean teacher of Xenophanes – also took place in this context, in which the bipartite model of Greek philosophy which is found in Diogenes had also been produced. It is now worth considering another important element in this story, namely, the Neoplatonic interpretation of Pythagoreanism.

39 See *supra* 25, and Runia 1999, 43 and n. 48 *ibid*.

40 Here Aristotle mentions, as is well known, the role of Heraclitus' conception of the sensible flux. The triad of Heraclitus, Pythagoreans, and Socrates appears again in Diog. Laert. III 8 to describe the origin of Platonic thought. See also Philop., *De aet. mundi* II 2 (a paraphrase of the *Metaphysics* passage).

41 The intermediary rings in the chain, with the exception of Telauges, are not mentioned. According to Immisch 1919, 34 ff. Plato's ninth position might suggest a lineage whose first part coincides with the Italic succession of Laertius' proem: Pythagoras – Telauges – Xenophanes – Parmenides – Zeno [see Diog. Laert. I 13] – Empedocles [see Diog. Laert. VIII 53 ff.] – Epicharmus [see Diog. Laert. VIII 78] – Philolaus – Archytas. Certainly, the long history of the Pythagorean movement provided material for many other similar lists (Hippolytus probably hints at this, *Haer.* I 5: see Mansfeld 1992, 27). Another one is preserved in Iamblichus' *Pythagorean Life* (Iambl. *VP* 265): Pythagoras ("seven generations older than Plato") – Aristaeus – Mnemarchus – Boulagoras – Gartidas – Aresas – Diodorus of Aspendos. Diodorus, popularizer of Pythagorean philosophy in Greece, thus ensures the continuity which is also Iamblichus' concern. In Sext., *Adv. math.* X 284 the Pythagoreans are introduced as οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας φυσικοί, but no interest in any specific aspects of *Magna Graecia* culture is shown.

42 Theiler 1965 also ascribes the division into physics, ethics and logic to Eudorus, but this division, as is well known, was shared with much of Hellenic culture, and was variously combined with particular periodizations of the philosophical tradition (see Hadot 1979).

43 Interestingly, Plutarch's work presents both a 'Pythagorean' and a Skeptical-Academic genealogy of Platonism, and Pythagoras is absent from the latter. See Sassi 1994, 44, and Donini 1999.

When Plotinus supports his theory by appealing to the “divine men” who had, prior to him, conceived of the supreme divine principle as the One and the Intellect – namely, Pythagoras and Parmenides, along with Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras – he employs a periodization that begins with the “ancients”, addressees of a partial divine revelation, and passes through Plato, the real “hierophant” of the truth, in order to finally arrive at himself, presented as the philosopher who rediscovered this truth after a long period of neglect. For Plotinus, the authority of ancient philosophies is to be measured according to their proximity to the truth of Platonism. However, Pythagoras also plays a primary role in this history of the philosophical truth, a role comparable only with that of Parmenides.⁴⁴ After this, Iamblichus and Proclus identify Pythagoreanism as the source of a mathematical theology which continued with Plato, or as the link in a mysteriosophical tradition matching with the barbaric revelations of the “Chaldaean oracles”, begun in Greece by Orpheus and culminating in Plato (the latter is Proclus’ view, and originated in Syrianus, if not in Plutarch of Athens).⁴⁵ It is no coincidence that we find in these authors the reference, revived in all its conceptual density, to a polarity between the Ionian tradition, entirely devoted to the investigation of nature, and an Italic tradition focused on the intelligible world. The impression here is of a radical and unprecedented re-interpretation of the Hellenistic successions. This impression may be due to the Neoplatonic works’ very good state of preservation, but one is nonetheless tempted to suppose that the Neoplatonic concern for authentic origins was particularly apt to produce such a substantial reconstruction of the philosophical tradition.

A good example is Iamblichus’ *Protrepticus*. In his introduction, Iamblichus states that he aims at providing an invitation to philosophy in general, independently from specific systems of thought. Nevertheless, his discussion gradually moves, as if on a bridge or up a ladder, to a more sublime height, that is towards the doctrinal core of the Pythagorean sect. Indeed, in the last section of the work, dedicated to interpreting the *akousmata* with reference to the cults and rituals of the Pythagorean community, he stresses the identity between philosophy and the contemplation of incorporeal and intellegible realities, claiming that the best example of this is Pythagoras. Iamblichus reads the obscure rule that one is to “prefer the geometrical figure and its base to the figure paid three obols” as an invitation to despise what most people like and appreciate, and therefore to choose “the Italic philosophy which contemplates the incorporeal realities in themselves, rather than the Ionian one which favours bodies” (*Protr.* 125, 4–8).

As regards Proclus, in his *Platonic theology* he does not seem at all interested in the varieties of Presocratic philosophy – with the exception of Pythagoras. Indeed, in this work, Proclus reconstructs Greek philosophy with the aim of demonstrating its coincidence with theology, thus placing it side by side, on the same level of authenticity, with both Chaldaean and Egyptian theology. He presents philosophy as dividing into two strands in Greece after the originator Orpheus: a poetical and mythological strand, passing through Homer and Hesiod, and a philosophical one

44 See Plotinus, *Enneads* V 1 [10], 8–9, especially 9.28–32.

45 Cf. O’Meara 1989, 145 ff., 210 ff.; Saffrey 1992.

passing through Aglaophamus and Pythagoras. Both strands lead ultimately to Plato, considered as the perfection of philosophy.⁴⁶ In Proclus' commentary on *Parmenides*, however, we find a different view. Here, in the proem and at the beginning of the first book, Proclus offers an allegoric interpretation of the characters in the dialogue which is based on a hermeneutical model of the philosophic tradition – according to this account, Cephalus and “the philosophers of Clazomenae” represent the Ionian *didaskaleion*, the focus of which is on natural phenomena, whereas Parmenides and Zeno (whose membership of the Pythagorean school is stressed by Proclus earlier in the book)⁴⁷ represent Italic philosophy's concentration on the intelligible. Here one reads the following (Proclus, *In Parm.* 629–630, transl. by Morrow & Dillon 1987, 28):

“Cephalus and the philosophers from Clazomenae are like individual souls which are conversant with Nature; and they have a similar role in this work because the philosophers from Clazomenae are themselves students of Nature. This interest in Nature is characteristic of the whole Ionian School as contrasted with the Italian; for the latter was always striving to apprehend the being of intelligibles, in which it saw all other things causally, whereas the Ionian school occupied itself with Nature, i. e. with physical actions and effects, and regarded this study as being the whole of philosophy. The Attic school, being midway between the two, corrected the Ionian philosophy and developed the views of the Italians [...] the plot involves bringing to Athens the men from Italy to impart to the Athenians their traditional doctrines, and bringing the men from Ionia, that they may share in the Italian teachings. Clazomenae is in Ionia and Elea in Italy [...]”.

Besides the usual two alternatives, there is a *tertium* here, namely, Attic philosophy, which on the one hand corrects the Ionian strand (as according to Proclus Socrates does in criticizing Anaxagoras in the *Phaedo*), and on the other develops the Italic one (as Plato considers Socrates to do in the *Sophist*). Further on (Procl., *In Parm.* 659–660), Proclus states once again that Socrates and Plato supplemented the “defective” Ionian line by introducing the Forms, while at the same time better articulating the “higher” line by adding a theory of the sensible world. Athens, being halfway between Ionia, “*symbolon* of nature”, and Italy, “*symbolon* of the intelligible essence”, thus symbolizes the place where souls find the way to ascend to *nous*.

In his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Proclus instead sees Plato as the philosopher who reconciles the Pythagorean and Socratic styles, with the former providing the inspired and sublime tones of the *Timaeus* and the strong connection with the intelligible world, and the latter providing kindness and Plato's interest in morality. Here Proclus also combines Pythagorean dogmatism with the Socratic concern for demonstration (*to apodeiktikon*: Procl., *In Tim.* I 7.17–8.4). It is remarkable how he

46 See Westerink 1987. Pythagoras' ‘orphization’, through Aglaophamus, was carried out by Iamblichus: see Brisson 2000.

47 See Proclus, *In Parm.* 619. Nicomachus of Gerasa, who probably gave importance to Parmenides and Zeno in his pythagorized Platonism, is quoted as the source for this point.

reformulates here the ancient *topos* of Plato as ‘half-Pythagoras and half-Socrates’⁴⁸ within a strongly theoretical frame. Analogously, in his commentary on *Parmenides*, Proclus adopts the well-worked opposition between Ionia and Italy, but (re)charges it with a conceptual meaning, in relation to the peculiar position he ascribes to Attic philosophy, which is finally cut loose from the Ionian line to which it was subordinated in the Successions literature.⁴⁹

A passage in the *Prolegomena philosophiae platonicae* shows that Proclus’ frame provided introductory guidelines for the teaching of philosophy. Here we find a division of Greek philosophy into a poetic strand started by Orpheus, an Ionian, “physical” one and a strand which, although it is not called Italic, includes both Pythagoras and Parmenides.⁵⁰ It is claimed that Plato proved superior to the poets in regards to demonstration, and superior to the Ionians in regards to inspiration, that in regards to demonstration and clarity he even surpassed Pythagoras (from whom he had learnt the numerical understanding of reality), and that he also surpassed Parmenides by identifying the One, rather than Being, as the principle of all things.

But the Neoplatonic rethinking of tradition went even further. We find traces of it in Michael Psellus’ commentary on the first book of Aristotle’s *Physics*, in which Psellus observes – rather surprisingly from an exegetical point of view – that Aristotle considers Parmenides and Melissus to be different from the naturalists, because they (Psell., *In Phys.* 184b15)

“were of the Italic school, where theology was practised, while the physicists belonged to the Ionian one, in which nature and its phenomena were investigated”.

No such remark is to be found in the corresponding passages of Simplicius’ and Philoponus’ commentaries, or in Themistius’ paraphrase. However, Psellus speaks here more as a Platonist emphasizing the superiority of the discourse on the divine than as a reader of Aristotle, and, in any case, his commentary on the *Physics* was probably intended for teaching purposes, within an ordered *curriculum* in which physics had a propedeutic function with regard to metaphysics and theology.⁵¹

To conclude the part of my story relating to antiquity, then, I hope to have shown that in the ancient texts which refer to the different lines of thought in the

48 See *supra*, p. 28.

49 Proclus does not separate Plato from Socrates. Both Attic philosophers, in his view, endorse a synthesis based completely on metaphysics, unlike the ‘historic’ synthesis of physics, (Socratic) ethics, and dialectics which other texts attribute to Plato (cf. *supra*, n. 17).

50 Cf. Proclus, *Proleg. in Plat. phil.* II 7–8. Westerink 1962 considers it impossible to identify the author of this text. He points out, however, that it was an introduction to philosophy for teaching which was not meant to be published, and he relates it to the Neoplatonic environment of sixth century A. D. Alexandria.

51 In the fourth volume of Bekker’s edition of Aristotle, Brandis published only very few *excerpta* of this commentary (from Cod. Vat. Gr. 1730), with no indication of the author (Brandis 1836). Psellus’ authorship, which was first proposed by Bidez in 1928, has been repeatedly defended by Benakis on the grounds of manuscript evidence, most recently in his edition (Benakis 2008) of this remarkable text (*contra*, however, Golitsis 2007). See also Benakis 1964. Psellus’ voracity as a reader of Aristotle, Plato and Neoplatonists is well-known (see O’Meara 1989, 53 ff., on his activity as *excerptor* of the V–VII books of Iamblichus’ *On Pythagoreanism*).

Preplatonic age in some cases the mere reference to geographic diversity prevails (which is nonetheless a sort of *degré zéro* of historiography, with a testimony value of its own), while in other cases the concern for conceptual differences does. Such a concern is more significant in more theoretical fields, and particularly in those in which the author intends to relate Plato to Pythagoras in a broad historical picture – moreover, the division into two lines seems to work better whenever the author’s aim is defining Plato’s position. As we will now see, a similar range of views and motivations characterizes the first modern writers of histories of ancient philosophy.

III. THE PRESOCRATICS FROM THE *DIADOCHAI* TO THE SCHOOL

It is well known that many elements of Neoplatonic thought, whether directly or through the work of Michael Psellus and George Gemistus Pletho, passed into Florentine Humanism.⁵² In particular, the concept of a single theological tradition passing through Pythagoras and culminating in Plato was particularly influential, since it lent itself to the recuperation of much of pagan thought as anticipating the Christian truth. In this regard, a letter of Ficino to Giovanni Pannonio is often mentioned, in which Ficino presents Platonism as a synthesis of ancient religious wisdom. Here he writes that this “*pia [...] philosophia*”, which was born in Persia with Zoroaster and in Egypt with Hermes Trismegistus and was fostered in Thrace by Orpheus and Aglaophamus, grew up in Italy with Pythagoras and was eventually fully realized in Athens by the divine Plato (after whom Plotinus revealed the hidden meanings of this philosophy, which had previously been veiled in symbols and poetic metaphors).⁵³

But there are many texts which make such claims.⁵⁴ The idea of a *perennis philosophia*, passing through the barbaric age as well as the Greek and Christian ones, proved extremely important for Giovanni Pico, Agostino Steuco and numerous Renaissance scholars, in Italy and elsewhere, and contributed, among other things, to the establishment of a genuine intellectual myth – namely, the notion of an ‘Italic wisdom’, originating with Pythagoras, and supposed to have been variously incarnated in, for instance, the cosmic numerology of Fludd, the Kepler’s system, Vico’s *antiquissima Italorum sapientia*, and the ideological rhetoric of the “*primato degli Italiani*” promoted in the Italian Risorgimento by Vincenzo Gioberti.⁵⁵

At least in the texts that I know of, in Ficino’s writings there are no references to Ionia as a land of naturalists, or to the idea of an Athenian ‘synthesis’ of Ionian

52 On Ficino’s acquaintance with Proclus’ *Platonic Theology* and his commentary of *Parmenides* (if not in Greek, at least in Moerbeke’s translation), see Sicherl 1966, and Kristeller 1987.

53 See Ficinus 1959, 871.

54 Similar claims are also found in another letter of Ficino, in which Philolaus is mentioned after Pythagoras (see Garin 1966, 378f.). Zoroaster was already presented in the ancient sources as Pythagoras’ teacher: see Clem., *Strom.* I 15, 69, 6–70, 1. On the theme of philosophical *concordia* see Purnell 1986; on that of *perennis philosophia*, see Malusa in: Bottin & alii 1981, 14–25.

55 This complicated history has been accurately reconstructed by Casini 1998, and I also deal with some aspects of it in Sassi 1993. On *Platone in Italia* by Vincenzo Cuoco (1804), see most recently Isnardi Parente 2006.

and Italic philosophy, even though such claims are made in his Neoplatonic sources. Rather, the reference to a *prisca theologia* is dominant, and Pythagoras' Italy is considered as a stage on a path that links Athens directly to the East. Nevertheless, the *diadochai* model enjoyed a new success (and was interweaved with that of the "sects") in the histories of philosophy which flourished from Ficino onwards, on the wave of the rediscovery of the sources of ancient historiography. Most important of these was Diogenes Laertius – countless editions of his *Lives of Philosophers* were published between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in Greek or in bilingual editions, since the Latin translation by Ambrogio Traversari [1433] appeared in 1472.⁵⁶ But Clement's *Stromata* (edited by Piero Vettori, 1550) and Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica* (translated by George of Trebizond, 1470) were also highly significant.⁵⁷ In particular, Clement's work showed how the idea of the successions could find a place in a framework in which Greek philosophy was seen as the final phase of the rediscovery of elements of original barbaric wisdom, which were scattered before being revived through Christian revelation.⁵⁸

In this phase, the terms 'Ionian' and 'Italic' tend to have a merely geographical sense, without any explicit conceptual implications, and whether the "Eleatic" lineage, when mentioned, is considered independent seems to depend on the ancient source referred to, rather than on a reasoned choice of the author. This seems to be the case, to take some random examples from different areas of European culture, in the *De initiis, sectis et laudibus philosophiae* by Ludovico Vives (1518), which combines the Laertian model of the two successions with that of the passage (through Socrates) from physics to ethics; the *De antiquis philosophis* by the Spanish Jesuit Benito Pereyra (the fourth book of a commentary on Aristotle's *Physics* published in Rome in 1576); the *De philosophorum sectis* by Johannes Gerhard Voss (1657); Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, which also takes from Florentine Neoplatonism the central idea of an original revelation (Cudworth 1678, I, 108); the *Compendium Historiae philosophicae* by Buddeus (1731, two years after the author's death); and Brucker himself, both in *Kurtze Fragen aus der philosophischen Historie* (1731–1736) and in the later *Historia critica philosophiae*.⁵⁹

However, there are also interesting exceptions to this propensity to base historical accounts of Presocratic philosophy on geographical criteria. These exceptions occur, unsurprisingly, where the philosophical preferences of the author are more apparent. For example, in his *Examen vanitatis doctrinae gentium*, published in Miranda in 1520, Gianfrancesco Pico mentions the division by successions, as well as the division between physics, ethics and dialectics, but, following the skeptical tradition headed by Sextus Empiricus, he prefers not to adopt any unifying standards and dwells particularly on the internal differences between the Ionian and the Italic

56 The *editio princeps* of the Greek text is by Frobenius, 1533.

57 Tolomio 1981, 156–163, gives a valuable review of the modern editions of Laertius. See Bottin & al. 1979 and 1981 for a broader documentation of the themes I deal with here, and see also Grafton 1988.

58 See Isnardi Parente 1986, 50 ff. (=1991, 271 ff.).

59 See more on Brucker, as well as on Tiedemann und Tennemann, in Georg Rechenauer's paper in this volume.

currents, emphasizing the former's interest in phenomena, but also the freedom and sophistication of its doctrines, and the latter's rigid dogmatism. Francesco Patrizi, being a follower of the idea of *philosophia perennis*, regards philosophy as unitarian wisdom, and Plato as the philosopher who receives and reunites the scattered elements of the Preplatonic and barbarian heritages. Thus he has no interest in the traditional division according to successions or sects, and aims instead at rehabilitating particular naturalists, such as Democritus, Anaxagoras, and Empedocles, against the *damnatio* caused, in his opinion, by Aristotle's "rage".⁶⁰ On the other hand, Scipione Aquiliano, lecturer of philosophy at the Studio of Pisa, adopts an authentically Aristotelian criterion, taken from the first books of the *Physics*. He explicitly avoids the traditional divisions (Aquilianus 1620, 3–4), and classifies the naturalists according to the finite or infinite number of the principles they adopted.⁶¹ And here too the list could go on.

However, it is not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the ancient model of two or three *diadochai* takes on again – albeit in a new way – the sense of a strong opposition between philosophical approaches. Such a development is particularly noticeable in August Boeckh's work on Philolaus, a milestone in scholarship on this philosopher. Boeckh identifies the "Hellenische Eigentümlichkeit" in a dualism between Ionians and Dorians which permeates all levels of Greek culture, but is most clearly expressed in the philosophical consciousness, precisely in the opposition between Ionian and Pythagorean philosophy, the latter being "die ächt Dorische Form der Philosophie". While the Ionian "Sinnlichkeit" is reflected in a materialistic philosophy, unable to conceive of principles of unity (the Atomists, for example) or stability (Heraclitus, for instance), the ethical character of the Dorian "Volk" produces a search for formal unity and order beneath becoming, which has its concrete counterpart in the organization of the Pythagorean school, which was very similar to that of a religious order. Pythagoreanism is considered by Boeckh as halfway between Ionian sensism and pure Socratic-Platonic conceptualism. Such conceptualism might seem to be anticipated by the Eleatics, but for Boeckh the latter are just one-sided forerunners, while Pythagoreanism, by finding a balance between the interest in sensible things and the search for rational principles, is the most complete form of Hellenic "Geist".⁶²

A few years later these suggestions were developed in the mighty work on the Dorians by Boeckh's most famous disciple, Karl Otfried Müller. Here the "ethical nature" of the Dorians is reconceived on the basis of various evidence about their history, religion, mythology, state organization, customs, and art. Müller does not dedicate any space to philosophy in particular, on the grounds that this is for specialists to consider, but in concluding the chapter on Apollo he observes that "in recent times Pythagorean philosophy has been treated as Dorian".⁶³ Müller then links the

60 See Muccillo 1975. The four volumes of Patrizi's *Discussiones* were published in Basel in 1581.

61 Aquiliano's work is mentioned just once in Bottini & al. 1981 (in Longo's essay, Longo 1981, 600), with regard to its being criticized by Brucker. I consulted it directly, and I think it deserves serious study, because of its careful and often subtle account of Presocratic conceptions of nature.

62 Boeckh 1819, 39–42.

63 He may be referring to Ritter, quoted by Müller on the previous page, or to Boeckh's *Philolaos*, mentioned in the following pages.

Pythagorean concern for formal unity and cosmic harmony to the relationship between Pythagoras and what Müller regards as the Dorian god *par excellence*, Apollo. The cult of music as a means of purification that restores harmony is also considered as a fruit of the abstraction which is characteristic of Apollinian religion.⁶⁴ Returning to the subject in his *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur*, Müller states that Pythagoras, although he was not uninterested to nature because of his Ionian birth, was later influenced by Dorians in Southern Italy. Although Müller considers classifying the Eleatics here not to be easy, since Elea was a Ionian colony, he includes them in the Dorian cult of form, as opposed to the Ionian cult of matter.⁶⁵

The equation of Ionians with “Werden” and Dorians with “Sein” had many precedents, which have been identified, for instance, in Friedrich Schlegel’s and Henrik Steffens’ work, and, in general, this equation obviously had its roots in the Romantic theme of “Volksgeist”.⁶⁶ Furthermore, both Boeckh and Müller were obviously enforcing Friedrich August Wolf’s conception of “Altertumswissenschaft” as an unitarian study of ancient civilization in all its parts. Let’s recall, in particular, the role given by Wolf to geography as not just subsidiary but a “part of history”. According to Wolf, the human nature peculiar to the antiquity may be better understood through deep acquaintance with the places where the most famous peoples of the antiquity lived and acted.⁶⁷ Finally, one better understands Boeckh’s and Müller’s remarks by also placing them in the context of the project of a systematic history of philosophy begun by Schleiermacher, who was, one should not forget, Boeckh’s teacher. In his lectures on ancient philosophy, the notes on which date back to 1812 and were published posthumously, Schleiermacher considered and evaluated the ancient division of philosophy into physics, ethics and dialectics, and proposed a clear correspondence between Ionians and physical speculation (in which the meaning of nature is more significant than that of man), Dorians and ethics (in which, instead, the meaning of man prevails), and Eleatics and dialectics. For Schleiermacher, the division and isolation of these different strands in the Presocratic age reflected a historic situation of national division (“Nationaltrennung”), which was then unified in the Attic milieu – “the more Athens thrived, the more Ionians and Dorians withdrew”, he claimed.⁶⁸

Schleiermacher thus locates the various ‘ethnic’ trends of philosophy in a model of historical progress that culminates in the Socratic-Platonic synthesis. The same model is also assumed in two of the most important textbooks of ancient philosophy of the first half of the nineteenth century – those, that is, which Zeller will take

64 Müller & Schneidewin 1844, I, 368 ff. See also II, 384 ff., where the presence of Dorian elements or Dorian Achaeans in Croton is stressed, and II, 493, where the reference to the “ethische Betrachtungsweise der alten Dialekte” typical of the Dorians derives from Iambl., *VP* 34.

65 Müller 1841, see all chapter XVII, *passim*.

66 On Steffens cf. Wittenburg 1984, 1034 ff.; on Schlegel see Cambiano 1984, 1048 f. See also Cassio 1984. However, Novalis, in the early 1790’s, was not acquainted with this approach. His concise *Entwurf zu einer Geschichte der alten Philosophie* mentions the division into Ionian (“oder der Physiker”), Italic, and Eleatic sects, without hinting at any further considerations. See Novalis 1998, 357–358.

67 Cf. Wolf 1807, 50 f.

68 Ritter 1839, see especially 18 ff. and 71.

account of. These texts were written by two students of Schleiermacher, namely, Heinrich Ritter and August Brandis.⁶⁹ Ritter, for example, traces the interest in physical becoming and the interest in the inner development of phenomena back to Ionian “softness” and Dorian “hardness” respectively. Although he realized that the Eleatics did not fit into this framework, since they were not Dorian, he traced the inner motivation of Eleatic thought to the “necessity” to fill a gap left by the other schools, namely by their neglect of logic. The general framework is the one Schleiermacher had previously set out, to which Ritter adds the particularly effective notion of a temporal evolution, culminating in Attic philosophy, interwoven with the spatial convergence of all theories originating in peripheral areas in Athens, the centre of the Greek world.⁷⁰

Brandis also aims at a systematic and all-embracing account, in which the synchronic and diachronic dimensions are combined to illuminate the juxtaposition in the Presocratic age of elements which, integrating with each other, later characterize the entire course of Greek philosophy. Indeed, Brandis takes a further step along this path, by not only endorsing the relation between, on the one hand, the distinction of the Ionian concern with becoming from the Dorian concern with being and, on the other, the tripartite division between physics, ethics, and dialectics, but also by reassembling and supporting it through the scheme of the successions. According to his account, physics originates among the Ionians, while ethics and dialectics originate among the Dorians, with the Pythagoreans and the Eleatics respectively. Both ethics and dialectics deal with being, but the former regards being as an act of knowledge, while the latter regards it as a mere object. The notion of a timeless and spaceless being central to Eleatic dialectics is considered more important, but nonetheless the various trends merge in the end in Athens, just as epic poetry (Ionian) and lyrical poetry (Dorian) do in Attic drama.⁷¹

The cost of this model is clearly neglecting the Ionian origin of Elea in order to present the Italic environment as Dorian *tout court*. But the model nonetheless was very successful and was widely accepted when Eduard Zeller began writing his history of Greek philosophy around the middle of the nineteenth century. In the first part of his work, when discussing the division of Greek philosophy into periods, Zeller continually distances himself from the triad of physics, ethics, and dialectics. In his account, strongly influenced by Hegel, philosophy is born as an investigation of nature, and ethical and dialectical concerns are only secondary and derivative. Zeller therefore includes both Pythagorean numbers and Eleatic being in

69 Ritter 1829–34; Brandis 1835–66. It is noteworthy that Antonio Rosmini also reformulates in Italy in those years the opposition of the Italic and the Ionian schools, in terms which seem, however, due to his personal theoretical perspective. Rosmini states that the Italic school favoured analysis while the Ionians focused on synthesis, and his preference as a Platonist obviously goes to the Italic school, “journeying in the pure regions of the spirit”, whereas “Ionians started from Nature and struggled in vain to escape from matter”. Of course Plato, “a descendant of Pythagoras through Archytas and of Thales through Socrates, combined both types of teaching” (Rosmini 1830, sect. IV, § 276).

70 Cf. Ritter 1829–34, I, 189 ff.

71 Cf. Brandis 1835–66, I, 40 ff., and especially 47.

the category of the natural objects, even though they are more abstract than objects of the pure Ionian kind, so as to be halfway between the latter and pure thought, which becomes the real end of philosophy only with Socrates. In this framework Zeller also distances himself from the opposition between Ionian realism and Italic idealism. With his characteristic tempering of *a priori* distinctions by careful factual considerations, he simply notes that Elea was a Greek colony, that Pythagoras came from Samos in Ionia, and that only Philolaus and Archytas may be genuinely called Dorians by birth.⁷²

However, in less polemical contexts, Zeller follows Müller in noting the influence of Dorian institutions and customs on Pythagorean philosophy. He even adds that the particular environment of Southern Italy must have conditioned not only the Ionian Pythagoras, but also the Ionian Xenophanes. Still, he takes care to distinguish the possible influence of the Italic peoples (about which he thinks only tentative hypotheses are possible) from that of the Greek colonies there (Zeller 1856, 480–488). Overall, then, Zeller reformulates the opposition between Ionian and Italic philosophy in more flexible terms, due to his aim to place them in a single line of development within Presocratic *naturalism*, a naturalism which he regarded, moreover, as unresponsive to ethical-religious and epistemological concerns.

As is well known, this view had a great influence on the development of scholarship on the Presocratics. It is no coincidence that scholars who have opposed Zeller's view have insisted on the *variety* of Presocratic philosophies, determined geographically if not ethnically, rather than on a progressive *historical* development, leading directly to a Socratic-Platonic synthesis. For these reasons, the pre-Zellerian distinction between Ionians and Italics has repeatedly re-emerged⁷³ – as, for instance, it does in the volume by Kirk, Raven, and Schofield to which I referred in my introduction.

But how could this model survive, not only beyond Zeller's admittedly rather gentle revision of it, but, more importantly, beyond Nietzsche's criticism of Sotion's work as a thorough mystification?⁷⁴ I suspect that it survived with the help of the famous essay by Hermann Diels, *Ueber die ältesten Schulen der Griechen*, published in 1887 in a "Festschrift" dedicated to Zeller.⁷⁵ Here Diels refers explicitly to an

72 Cf. Zeller 1856, 111 ff. and 127 ff. On Zeller's work and its relation to the contemporary theory and practice of the history of philosophy, see Gadamer & Mathieu 1975, 25–41; Isnardi Parente 1985/1986; Isnardi Parente 1989; Leszl 1989; Scholtz 1979; Steindler 1992. The complicated relation of Zeller's work to Hegel is carefully analysed in the essay by Walter Leszl in this volume.

73 Elsewhere I have attempted to show that this pattern influenced such different writers as Joël Burnet, Cornford (Raven's teacher), and Rostagni (Sassi 1994, 246–261).

74 In his Basel courses of 1872 and following years, whose notes were published posthumously, *Die vorplatonischen Philosophen* (Nietzsche 1913, 125–234 = KGW II, 4, 207–362), and in his article discussing precisely the *Diadochai*, which was probably written in 1873, and was also published in 1913 ("Grossoktav-Ausgabe", XIX). Fronterotta 1994, 63–70, by examining Nietzsche's arguments in detail, shows that in Nietzsche's view the only kind of relations one may establish between the Preplatonic philosophers is theoretical – whereas Diels tends to accept and exploit evidence of *personal* relations.

75 In Vischer 1887, 239–260.

essay that Hermann Usener had written a few years earlier on the organization of scientific research in Greece, *Organization der wissenschaftlichen Arbeit. Bilder aus der Geschichte der Wissenschaft* (Usener 1884). Usener had identified the Academy and the Lyceum as two important moments of collective research, informed by the strong personalities at the heads of the schools, and closely related to pedagogical aims. His student Diels takes up these suggestions and extends them to the Presocratic period, underlining the importance for the individual thinkers of the common work carried out by the “Corporation”. According to Diels, the same holds for the Milesian thinkers, and later for the Pythagorean school, the Eleatic one, and among the Atomists.

In support of his interpretation, Diels appeals to the self-presentation of Greek philosophy found in the *Successions of philosophers*. This may appear odd, given that he himself, in his *Doxographi Graeci*, had deconstructed these classifications of ancient historiography by retracing their genealogy from Sotion to Laertius. But one might suspect that Diels, like Usener before him, is projecting into the ancient context characteristics which were peculiar to the German university system of the second half of the nineteenth century, and in particular to the “Altertumswissenschaft”.⁷⁶ In other words, Diels ‘translates’ the model of the successions into a version appropriate for the state of nineteenth century scholarship, thus legitimizing and consolidating it once again.⁷⁷

This should not be altogether surprising. In the last few decades of research on the Presocratics, a particular approach has emerged, of which Geoffrey Lloyd has been the most consistent and able defender, which completely denies the value of the Greek self-presentation of the beginnings of philosophy, and, indeed, that there existed ‘schools’ of philosophers at all, and insists instead on competition and individualism as the characteristic elements of early Greek philosophy, giving it a sort of “egotistic” colour.⁷⁸ The notion of “egotism” is certainly a fruitful one, and therefore much more successful today than the labels of “Ionian” and “Italic” philosophy, yet I wonder if it in turn may be seen as the projection of a view of scholarly work which is characteristic of the contemporary academic world. However this may be, I think that we should not underestimate the effectiveness of the ancient historiographical models, which, in different ways and different ages, have allowed us to preserve the tradition of Presocratic thought.

76 This point is carefully made in Cambiano 1982.

77 See, for example, Paul Tannery’s apparent mitigation of his own dislike of the notion of ‘school’, following the publication of Diels’ article (cf. Betegh, in this volume).

78 Laks 2005 considers in depth the implications of Diels’ view on the one hand and Lloyd’s on the other.

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