XENOCRATES, FR. 15

Basándose principalmente en el fr. 15, el autor sostiene que para Jenócrates el ámbito del *nous*-mónada-Dios está por encima de la esfera de las estrellas fijas y el ámbito del alma-mundo-díada está por debajo, un ámbito éste que incluye a la vez el mundo supra-lunar y el sub-lunar. Dios controla el alma del mundo y, a través de ella, gobierna también el universo. Se incluye un debate sobre los *daimones* como almas humanas y se hacen algunas reflexiones sobre las intuiciones escatológicas de Jenócrates con la conclusión de que el *nous* en el hombre puede ser considerado feliz cuando está próximo al *nous*-Dios, y esta proximidad –en el universo de Jenócrates– se alcanza cuando se vive en una estrella en el cielo que está cerca del lugar donde habita Dios, que está fuera del cielo.

Xenocrates, the head of the Academy after Plato and Speusippus, restored to a large extent Plato's orthodoxy and placed a heavy emphasis on theology.

First of all, Xenocrates restores the ideas (forms). He says that a form is "a paradigmatic cause of naturally constituted things … a separate and divine cause" (Proclus, *In Parm.* 888.15-19 = fr. 30 Heinze). If this definition is not merely Xenocrates' report of Plato's philosophy, we can assume that Xenocrates himself retains forms in his own system, unlike Speusippus. Idea is not a creative cause, but a cause only as far as it is a paradigm, as also confirmed by Proclus' comment on Xenocrates' definition. In this, Xenocrates' definition agrees with Plato's view of the Demiurge creating the world using ideas as models.[1]

Xenocrates also retains only ideal numbers, rejecting mathematical numbers, as circumstantial evidence indicates. Aristotle mentions "those who say that forms and numbers have the same nature and the rest depend on them, namely lines, surfaces and so on until it comes to the heavens and sensibles."[2] That the fragment refers to Xenocrates is indicated by Asclepius (*In Met.* 379.17 = fr. 34),[3] and by the Theophrastus' statement in which Xenocrates is praised for his comprehensive explanations of the universe by deriving

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1 R. Heinze, *Xenokrates*, Leipzig 1892 [reimpr. Hildesheim 1965], 51. The definition, by the way, is used by Middle Platonists. For example, Albinus says that an idea is "an eternal paradigm of natural things," J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, Ithaca 1996, 281.

2 1028b24-27 = fr. 34; 1069a33, 1076a19 = fr. 34.

3 By itself, this conformation may be too weak as due to an educated guest that may have been made by Asclepius, since Plato and Speusippus are mentioned by name by Aristotle in this fragment, Heinze, *op. cit.*, 48-49 note 3.

everything from the one and indefinite dyad when "he somehow assigns everything its place in the universe, alike sensibles, intelligibles, mathematicals, and divine things as well" (*Met.* 6b7-9 = fr. 26). Aristotle's statement can be taken to mean that because all numbers are of the same nature as ideas, there is no room in Xenocrates' universe for mathematical numbers and thus only ideal numbers are retained. Aristotle also mentions the view that mathematical and ideal numbers are the same (1080b21, 1086a5 = fr. 34) and condemns such an identification as the worst interpretation of Plato's views (1083b2). That he means Xenocrates is stated only by commentators, pseudo-Alexander and Syrianus.

In a crucial theological fragment, Xenocrates considers "the monad and the dyad to be gods; the one [the monad] as a male [principle] has the role of a father that rules in heaven, and calls it Zeus, the odd, and *nous*, that is for him the first god; the other [the dyad] as a female [principle] in the manner of the mother of gods rules over the region below the heaven, and she is for him the soul of the all. Also heaven is a god and so fiery stars are Olympian gods and other sublunary and invisible *daimones*. He also says that there are <some divine forces> that permeate material elements. One of them he calls <Hades because of air that is> invisible, another, because of wetness - Poseidon, and another, because of earth - planting trees Demeter. These [teachings] he passed on to the Stoics; the first part he considered after Plato" (Aetius 1.7.30 = fr. 15). A tripartite division of the universe is presented here: above heaven - heaven - below heaven. The same division is also found in Sextus' report in which we read that "Xenocrates says that there are three beings: the sensible, the intelligible, and synthesized [which is also] the object of opinion (δοξαστός). The sensible [being] is inside the heaven, the intelligible –everything outside the heaven, *doxastos* and synthesized– [being] of the heaven itself; for it can be seen by senses and by reason through astronomy" (Sextus, *Adv. math.* 7.147 = fr. 5).

That the teachings of fr. 15 are "considered after Plato" is fairly clear. Although nowhere does Plato call the Demiurge *nous*, he comes very close to it (for instance, *Tim.* 39e).[4] Also, Plato recognizes that "in the nature of Zeus there is the soul of a king and a king's *nous*" (*Philebus* 30d). Moreover, the Demiurge is never called Zeus, but, like Zeus, the Demiurge is father (*Tim.* 28c, 27c, 37c, 41a, 42e, cf. *Ep.* 323d) and king (*Crat.* 396a, cf. *Rep.* 509d, *Ep.* 312e). This allows us to conclude that Xenocrates' first God directly corresponds to Plato's Demiurge.

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[4] In fact, there is a doxographic tradition that attributes to Plato the view that God is *nous* (Aetius 1.7.31 which is a passage that immediately follows Xenocrates' fr. 15). Cf. Krämer, *Der Ursprung*, 59; M. Baltes, "Zur Theologie des Xenokrates", in R. van den Broek, T. Baarda, J. Mansfeld (eds.), *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman world*, Leiden 1988, 45 note 7.

As for "the soul of the all," for Plato, the world soul has a control over the earth and the heavens and their movements (*Laws* 897b). It is also called "the soul of the all" (*Tim.* 41d). It can be called female because the Demiurge "fashioned inside it all that is corporeal" (36de). The world soul extends through "the whole body" of the universe created by God, to its "outermost limits" (34b, 36e). Also, because the world soul is a mother of all gods, it should be a mother of the star-gods as well. Therefore, it seems natural to interpret the heaven in fr. 15 as the sphere of fixed stars so that the realm of the monad-*nous* is above the sphere (which corresponds to "the place beyond heaven" of *Phaedrus* 247c), and the realm of the dyad-world-soul is below it, that latter realm including both the supralunary and sublunary worlds.[5] In this interpretation, however, there is a departure from Plato's image because Plato's world soul covers the body of the world on the outside and all that is corporeal is inside it (34b, 36de). However, the discrepancy can be explained by accepting the *presence* of the world soul also outside the fixed stars, as in the *Timaeus*, but its *rule* is limited to the realm of the stars and what is beneath them. Although it physically is also outside the heaven, the world soul exercises no activity there.[6] It seems that this overlap of presences of God and world soul outside the heaven is not accidental. In this way, God can control the world soul and through it, rule also in the universe. In this way, the position of the monad-*nous* as the supreme divinity is enhanced. But also, it shows how Xenocrates does not overlook the fact that the Demiurge withdrew from the affairs of the world into his eternal rest and submitted the continuation of his work to the world soul and other divinities. The outer realm of the universe is the Demiurge's eternal respite; however, the Demiurge does not completely cut himself off from the world, but maintains a contact through the world soul, whose part is also in the domain of the Demiurge. It seems thus no need to interpret fr. 15 so as to merge the two gods into one so that the divine *nous* and the divine world soul would be two inseparable principles.[7] This would really require making the same claim for Plato himself, which is more in the spirit of the didactic treatment of the *Timaeus* than in the spirit of Plato's original intent. There are some suggestions in Plato's dialogues that such unifying interpretation is plausible, but they can be interpreted in a more traditional vein. For example, the claim that *nous* cannot exist without a soul (*Philebus* 30c) can be resolved by seeing God as a

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5 A. B. Krische, *Die theologischen Lehren der griechischen Denker*, Göttingen 1840, 316; Heinze, *op. cit.*, 75; Dillon, *op. cit.*, 25-26; Baltes, *op. cit.*, 47-48.

6 H. J. Krämer, *Platonismus und hellenistische Philosophie*, Berlin 1971, 125, mentions different *Wirkungsbereiche* of the two gods, but he limits the dyad's *Wirkungsbereich* to the sublunary world alone.

7 As suggested by Baltes, *op. cit.*, 50.

soul with *nous*.[8] The world soul is then created, and it is a lesser soul if only by the fact that it is created, not ungenerated, like God himself.

Fr. 15 calls the heaven a god, but Plato considers only the stars as gods, not the sphere as a whole (*Tim.* 40ab, *Laws* 899b).[9] However, the world as a whole is called a god, even perceptible god, because of its structure, its "grandness, goodness, beauty and perfection" (*Tim.* 92c) and because it is filled with gods.[10] Xenocrates espouses the same view when he "considers planets as seven gods, the cosmos composed of them all is the eighth god" (Clement, *Protr.* 5 = fr. 17). Xenocrates could only extend this view to the heaven: because it is a structured and harmonious whole and full of gods, the heaven is a god as well.

It is interesting that fr. 15 does not mention ideas, which do exist in the Xenocratean world. Ideas are important for Plato in two respects. They serve the Demiurge as models when creating the world. However, fr. 15 presumably describes the situation after fashioning the world using these eternal models was completed by the Demiurge. At that point, ideas are less important to the Demiurge. But they can be assumed to exist in the intelligible realm along with the Demiurge outside the sphere of fixed stars. They are independent entities in Plato's world and seem to remain such for Xenocrates as well. This is a more likely assumption than placing ideas in the mind of God which becomes common for the Middle Platonists.[11]

Ideas are also important from an epistemological point of view as models of true knowledge. Fr. 15 does not even allude to epistemological issues, and thus there is no need to refer to ideas. Even epistemologically oriented fr. 5 does not mention ideas explicitly. But it does state that the intelligible is "everything outside the heaven." There would be no need to say "everything," if only God-*nous* was meant. It can be assumed that "everything" covers ideas that are located outside the sphere of fixed stars.

Closely connected with Xenocrates' theology is his psychology.

The soul is defined as a self-moving number (frs. 60-65). Among other things, this definition means that "in the act of cognition, the soul operates by counting and computing, while the whole of cognition is at least differentiating and counting."[12] This connection is implicit in Aristotle, who before giving

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8 A. Drozdek, "The four kinds of reality in the *Timaeus* and *Philebus*", *Diálogos* 76 (2000), 125-126.

9 Baltes, *op. cit.*, 56.

10 J. A. Wojtczak, *O filozofii Ksenokratesa z Chalcedonu*, Warszawa 1980, 62.

11 Krämer, *Der Ursprung*, ch. 1, makes a great effort to prove the validity of such an assumption; but impressive as the proof is, it is still very unconvincing; Krämer is largely followed by Wojtczak, *op. cit.*, ch. 1. A dissenting opinion is expressed by J. P. Kenney, *Mystical monotheism: a study in ancient Platonic theology*, Hanover 1991, 27.

12 Krämer, *Platonismus*, 349.

Xenocrates' definition of the soul (without naming him) makes a comment that this definition is done by those for whom "the soul is both originative of movement and cognitive" (*De anima* 404b27-28 = fr. 60). Plato never called the soul a number as already observed by Plutarch (*De an. procr.* 1013c = fr. 68). The definition does have a definite Pythagorean ring, and already Nemesius stated that it was taken from Pythagoras who defined soul as a self-moving number which was not intended to mean that the soul is literally a number but that "it includes an idea of growth" and is able to make distinctions between things in the cognitive process (*De nat. hom.* 17 = fr. 63). However, from Plato comes the concept of the self-moving soul, the soul divided according to harmonious relations. These harmonious relations can be reflected in the concept of number. So, the soul is not literally a number, because numbers for Xenocrates are ideas, but a harmoniously molded entity that is the seat of self-motion. As it was well put by Plutarch, "by means of number and proportion and *harmonia* he (Plato) ordered its substance underlying and receiving the best form, that arises through them."

That the soul is a compound entity is undeniable because "Xenocrates called one part of the soul sensory element and another part, intelligible element" (Theodoretus, *Cur. aff. Graec.* 19 = fr. 70). He reasoned that "if the soul does not nourish itself, and each body does nourish itself, then the soul cannot be body." We can at best say that knowledge (μαθήματα) is the soul's nourishment (Nemesius, *De nat. hom.* 12 = fr. 66). This may be a reflection of the Platonic doctrine that the soul is made out of material and immaterial elements, and a mixture of the two (*Tim.* 34b-36c). In this, the soul is intermediate between materiality of the sublunary world and spirituality of the superlunary realm. Moreover, our *nous* comes to us from the outside and is divine (Aetius 4.5.1 = fr. 69). He believed that "even the animals without reason" have some "sense (ἔννοια) of the divine" (Clement, *Strom.* 5.87 = fr. 21). The compound makeup of the soul explains its movement and the coordinated character of the movement. The material element in soul is the source of movement, but this movement is coordinated and steered by its intelligible part: soul's "movement stems from matter, however, not irrational matter but reason is the source of 'programming' the movement."[13]

Like Speusippus, Xenocrates believes in immortality of both rational and irrational soul (Olympiodorus, *In Phaed.* 98 = fr. 75).[14] Also, he places a strong emphasis on ethics which was not only a matter of theoretical interest, but there

[13] Wojtczak, *op. cit.*, 65.

[14] It is suggested that Plato's remark –"even if it decays, some parts of the body, namely bones and sinews and the like, are nevertheless, one may say, deathless" (*Phaedo* 80d)– can be taken to mean that immortality does not necessarily has to mean eternal duration, Heinze, *op. cit.*, 138, 141.

are many witnesses that his life was exemplary, even austere when it comes to moral conduct. Which means that we may expect some eschatological doctrine associated with ethics. However, very little is known about this doctrine although it is fairly clear that the doctrine is associated with *daimones*.

Already Heraclitus and Democritus described man's soul as a *daimon* and we learn from an etymological divagation that "happy (εὐδαίμων) is whose *daimon* is in a good state (σπουδαῖος) - as Xenocrates says, he is happy who has his soul in a good state; for everyone's [soul] is [his] *daimon*" (Aristotle, *Top.* 112a36-38 = fr. 81). To leave out any doubt about the inference, Alexander says that good (εὖ) is the soul that is in a good state (*In Top.* 176 = fr. 81). This is not unlike Plato's image of the rational soul, "the highest part of the soul, as God's gift to us, given to be our *daimon*" (*Tim.* 90a).

On the other hand, Xenocrates, with Plato and the Orphics, clearly distinguishes *daimones* from the gods. They are intermediate beings between perfect gods and imperfect humans.[15] Following popular beliefs, he distinguishes two classes of *daimones*, good and evil. Evil *daimones* can be propitiated with religious services.[16] But, although it is not clearly stated, it seems that *daimones* are human souls. Plutarch says that there are degrees of virtue in people and *daimones*; "in some, there is a weak and obscure remnant and leftover of the sensory (*pathetikos*) and the irrational, in some, [there is] a lot [of it] and cannot be subdued" (Plutarch, *De def. orac.* 417b = fr. 24). By that testimony, the "remnant and leftover" can only be the irrational from the human soul.[17]

Fr. 15 mentions sublunary *daimones*. Are there also supralunary ones? This is not impossible. Plato taught that souls can live on the stars (*Tim.* 42b). This would be a desirable state for *daimones*, a blissful state to be acquired for eternity. If so, sublunary *daimones* would have a way to go before reaching this state. Probably after death the ethical rules are not suspended and the *daimones* would have to do their best to free themselves from the sensory and irrational level of life. We learn that "guarding/imprisonment (φρουρά) is nothing good, as some [think] … but, as Xenocrates [thought], it is Titanic and leads to Dionysus" (Olympiodorus, *In Phaed.* 62b = fr. 20). This cryptic statement may mean that one –whether as a human or as a *daimon*– has to be freed from the Titanic element to become pure and be moved to a higher level of the universe,

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15 Plutarch, *De Is. et Os.* 25, 360d = fr. 24, *De def. orac.* 416c = fr. 23.

16 Plutarch, *De def. orac.* 419a = fr. 24, *De Is. et Os.* 26, 361b = fr. 25.

17 Heinze, *op. cit.*, 83; O. Reverdin, *La religion de la cité platonicienne*, Paris 1945, 138. To some extent, Boyancé agrees that *daimones* are human souls when he says that Titanic gods are *daimones* among which on the lowest level of the hierarchy there are humans," P. Boyancé, "Xénocrate et les Orphiques", *Revue des Itudes Anciennes* 50 (1948), 224.

the level of fixed stars.[18] The *nous* in man can be considered happy when it is close to God-*nous*, and this closeness is –in the Xenocratean universe– attained when dwelling on a star in the heaven that is next to the dwelling place of God that is outside the heaven. In this, the transcendence of God is not compromised and the eternal happiness of the soul after shedding its Titanic element is assured. Such closeness may even enable some intellectual contact between God-*nous* and individual *noes*.[19]

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[18] Or, as interpreted by E. Zeller, *Plato and the Older Academy*, New York 1962, 601, "to free ourselves from the bondage of sensuous life, to conquer the Titanic element in human nature by means of the divine, is our problem." The fragment is seen as suggesting the "divinization of the soul" by M.J. Lagrange, "Les doctrines religieuses successives de l'Académie fondée par Platon", *Revue Thomiste* 34 (1929), 324 note 2. Cf. some remarks on Xenocrates' eschatological made by Heinze, *op. cit.*, 139-140 and Wojtczak, *op. cit.*, 71-72.

[19] Self-contemplation of the Demiurge, and nothing but self-contemplation, as suggested by Dillon, *op. cit.*, 24, 29, is incompatible with Platonism. Aristotelian divinity is self-contemplating which excludes any knowledge of the existence of the world. Plato's - and Platonists' - Demiurge does know the world, he even creates it so he must know it and this knowledge may be extended to the knowledge of individual *noes* populating the stars.