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Plato's *Sophist* in the Epistemology of Clement of Alexandria*

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1. The “Gigantomachia”; 2. The True Dialectic

As it is well known, Clement of Alexandria's “miscellaneous” work *Stromateis* is a real treasury of quotes from ancient philosophy and literature, in which a place of honour is reserved for Plato.¹ The method of incorporating Platonic ideas into a new synthesis inspired by the biblical religion is already to be found in Clement's Jewish predecessor Philo of Alexandria.² As a theoretical basis for this operation, Clement

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1 See Albert Outler, “The «Platonism» of Clement of Alexandria”, in *The Journal of Religion* 20 (1940), 217-240, here 222-224; Eric F. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria*, diss. Cambridge 1957, 97-100; Dietmar Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung in den Stromateis des Clemens von Alexandrien* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 53), W. De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 1983; Christoph Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 26), W. De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 1987, 116, n. 3.

2 See Anita Méasson, *Du char ailé de Zeus à l'Arche d'Alliance: Images et mythes platoniciens chez Philon d'Alexandrie* (Série Antiquité 116), Études augustiniennes, Paris 1986. On Clement's appropriation of Philonic material, see Annewies van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and His Use of Philo in the*

offers the idea of both Jewish Law and Greek philosophy as a *praeparatio evangelica* or as two different “pedagogues” to bring Jews and Greeks unto Christ.³

In this paper, I will analyse Clement’s use of the *Sophist*, a dialogue which certainly does not belong among those most beloved by the Christian readers of Plato.⁴

Stromateis: An Early Christian Reshaping of a Jewish Model, E.J. Brill, Leiden – New York 1988.

- 3 See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* (= *Strom.*) I,5,28,3 (Otto Stählin – Ludwig Früchtel – Ursula Treu (eds.), *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, Clemens Alexandrinus* [= Cl.], II, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 41985, 18,1-5); VI,6,44,1 (Cl. II,453,16-18); VI,11,94,2 (Cl. II,479,1-5); VI,17,153,1 (Cl. II,510,21-24). Cf. Gal 3:24. See Joseph Muckle, “Clement of Alexandria on Philosophy as a Divine Testament for the Greeks”, in *Phoenix* 5 (1951), 79-86.

- 4 According to the database *Plato apud posteros* (Academia Platonica septima Monasteriensis), the *Sophist* is quoted only by John Philoponos (*In Arist. Anal. post.* CAG 13/3, 150,28 and 191,22, cf. *Soph.* 229b; *In Arist. Categ.*, CAG 13/1, 30,2of., cf. *Soph.* 235c), who also mentions its title (*In Arist. Phys.* CAG 16, 49,23, 62,30; *In Arist. De an.*, CAG 15,27,16). Apart from Clement, the dialogue is supposed to be (vaguely) alluded to by Justin, Tertullian, Origen, (Ps.)Hippolytus, Methodius of Olympus, Isidore of Pelusium, Dionysius the Arepagite:

<https://www1.ivvi.uni-muenster.de/litw3/platon/indexPoi.htm>

As far as I could find, the editors sometimes refer to the *Sophist* for rather general wordings; see e.g. John Behr (ed.), *Origen, On First Principles*, I, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017, 31; Miroslav Marcovich (ed.), *Origen, Contra Celsum*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 54, Brill, Leiden – Boston – Köln 2011, 492; Hubertus Drobner (ed.), *Gregory of Nyssa, In Hexaemeron, Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, IV/1, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2009, 19; 39; 78; Klaus-Detlef Daur (ed.) *Augustine, De magistro*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 29, Brepols, Turnhout 1970, 158; 194. The dialogue was translated into Latin by Marsilio Ficino, who also summarised its content (Ioannes Mertout (ed.), *Platonis Opera Marsilio Ficino interprete*, Lyon 1588, 121-137). Even for this Platonist of the Florentine Renaissance the *Sophist* does not seem to be his favourite of Plato’s dialogues; in his ed. James Hankins, *Platonic Theology*, see two passages, VIII,15,1; XVII,2,4 (vol. II; VI, Harvard University Press, London 2002; 2006).

1. The "Gigantomachia"

In his account of faith in the second book of *Stromateis*, Clement quotes the passage of Plato's *Sophist* concerning the "gigantomachia" of the "sons of the earth" (οἱ γηγενεῖς) against the "friends of Forms" (οἱ τῶν εἰδῶν φίλοι), as Plato calls them:⁶

It looks as if those who have no faith, in Plato's words, "aim to drag everything down to earth out of the invisible and the unseen, literally grasping rocks and trees in their hands. They lay hold upon everything of this sort and maintain that real being belongs only to that which can be handled and offers resistance to the touch. They define being as the same thing as body." "But their adversaries are very wary in defending their position somewhere in the heights of the unseen, maintaining with all their force that true being consists in certain intelligible and bodiless Forms."⁷

According to Plato, the "sons of the earth" are philosophers "who violently drag everything on the level of the body",⁸ i.e. who identify

5 Plato, *Sophista* (= *Soph.*), 246a4 in John Burnet (ed.), *Platonis Opera*, I, Clarendon, Oxford 1900, reprinted 1967.

6 *Soph.* 248c1-2; 248a4.

7 *Strom.* II,4,15,1-2 (Cl. II,120,8-15): οἱ δὲ ἄπιστοι, ὡς ἔοικεν, «ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀοράτου πάντα ἔλκουσιν εἰς γῆν, ταῖς χερσὶν ἀτεχνῶς πέτρας καὶ δρυὸς περιλαμβάνοντες» κατὰ τὸν Πλάτωνα. «τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐφαπτόμενοι πάντων δισχυρίζονται τοῦτ' εἶναι μόνον, ὃ παρέχει προσβολὴν καὶ ἐπαφὴν τινα, ταῦτὸν σῶμα καὶ οὐσίαν ὀριζόμενοι.» «<οἱ δὲ> πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀμφισβητοῦντες μάλα εὐλαβῶς ἄνωθεν ἐξ ἀοράτου ποθὲν ἀμύνονται, νοητὰ ἅττα καὶ ἀσώματα εἶδη βιαζόμενοι τὴν ἀληθινὴν οὐσίαν εἶναι.» Cf. *Soph.* 246a7-b1.6-8. (I use the translations by Francis M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge: The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato translated with a running commentary*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London 1935, 230, and John Ferguson, *Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis, Books 1-3*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 1991, 167, respectively, modifying both.) Veronika Černušková finds a distant echo of this passage even in Clement's *Paedagogus* II,15,4 (Cl. I,157,11n.): Χαλεπώτατον δὲ πάντων πτωμάτων τὴν ἄπτωτον ἀγάπην ἄνωθεν ἐξ οὐρανῶν ἐπὶ τοὺς ζῶμους ρίπτεσθαι χαμαί. Cf. Veronika Černušková, *Klement Alexandrijský, Vychovatel*, OIKOYMENH, Praha 2019, 42; 294

8 *Soph.* 246c9f.: ... παρὰ δὲ τῶν εἰς σῶμα πάντα ἐλκόντων βίᾳ.

being with body (σῶμα).⁹ In its “improved version” (as presented in the sequel of the dialogue),¹⁰ this doctrine holds that “to be” implies the capacity to act or to be acted upon (δύναμιν εἶτ’ εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν ... εἶτ’ εἰς τὸ παθεῖν), i.e. that “being is nothing but a potency/power/capacity” (τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι πλὴν δύναμις).¹¹

The position of the “friends of Forms”, on the other hand, regards only “a kind of noetic and incorporeal forms” (νοητὰ ἄττα καὶ ἀσώματα εἶδη) as real being,¹² and thus relies on something invisible and unchangeable. In the course of the dialogue, this doctrine, too, is corrected, so that it can admit the perfect being (παντελῶς ὄν) as a noetic world, in which there is life, knowledge, and even movement.¹³ In some respects, the improved doctrine of the “friends of forms” thus approaches the modified position of the “sons of the earth”, since being seems to act or to be acted upon in both of them, if it is true that even knowledge affects things known and thus makes them change.¹⁴

9 *Soph.* 246b1.

10 *Soph.* 246d-247e.

11 *Soph.* 247d8-e4.

12 *Soph.* 246b7f.

13 *Soph.* 248e6-249a2: Τί δὲ πρὸς Διός; ὡς ἀληθῶς κίνησιν καὶ ζωὴν καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ φρόνησιν ἢ ῥαδίως πεισθησόμεθα τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι μὴ παρῆναι, μηδὲ ζῆν αὐτὸ μηδὲ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ σεμνὸν καὶ ἅγιον, νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον, ἀκίνητον ἑστὸς εἶναι; Some interpreters assume the παντελῶς ὄν to include both the intelligible and corporeal being; see James A. Philip, “The «Megista Gene» of the «Sophistes»”, in *Phoenix* 23 (1969), 89-103, 95-98, 103; Filip Karfik, *Pantelós on and megista gené (Plato, Soph. 242c-259b)*, in Aleš Havlíček – Filip Karfik (eds.), *Plato’s Sophist: Proceedings of the Seventh Symposium Platonicum Pragense*, OIKOYMENH, Praha 2011, 120-145, here 125f., 139. This assumption can be understood as the outcome of Plato’s account of *megista gené* but in discussing the position of the friends of Forms Plato does not say so. Here, the *pantelós on* seems to designate the noetic world, and in what follows I use this term in this sense.

14 On this “battle of materialists and idealists”, where Plato gives critical consideration to his own position as well, see Francis Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 228-248; J. A. Philip, “The «Megista Gene»”, 92-95; F. Karfik, *Pantelós on*, 122-129.

Plato does not seem to identify with any of these positions, not even in their reformed versions as proposed by the “Visitor of Elea”.¹⁵ For even the improved positions lead to an *aporia* of impossible knowledge as things in flux cannot be known.¹⁶ The only way out of this trap will be Plato’s account of the highest genera (μέγιστα τῶν γενῶν),¹⁷ which implies that being is neither in motion nor at rest necessarily, although identity and difference necessarily belong to it.¹⁸

In this very interesting passage, the Visitor of Elea shows that the key concepts of the pre-Socratic philosophical schools, movement and rest (κίνησις καὶ στάσις), though mutually exclusive (ἐναντιώτατα),¹⁹ both participate in being (τὸ ὄν).²⁰ In addition, rest and movement can only be thought of insofar as they both participate in identity and difference (ταὐτόν καὶ θάτερον). In different respects, movement is both “the same” (ταὐτόν) and “not the same” (μὴ ταὐτόν), i.e. “different” (ἕτερον). It is the same in relation to itself but different from all other genera.²¹

15 On the meaning of ξένος (a guest or stranger) which, in the present context, is to be understood as “guest”, see Thomas Szlezák, *Die Aufgabe des Gastes aus Elea: Zur Bedeutung der Eingangsszene des Sophistes (216a-218a)*, in A. Havlíček – F. Karfík (eds.), *Plato's Sophist*, 11-34, here 15. An analysis of the entire passage is given, e.g., by Monique Dixsaut, *Platon: Le Sophiste, Introduction, traduction (texte grec en regard), notes et commentaire*, J. Vrin, Paris 2022, 513-544.

16 *Soph.* 249b.

17 *Soph.* 254d4. Concerning Plato’s account, compared to Aristotelian categories, see F. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, 273-297. An analysis of this passage and its problems can be found in F. Karfík, *Pantelós on*, 133-145.

18 Another interpretation of movement in being is given, e.g., by Francesco Fronterotta, “L’être et la participation de l’autre: Une nouvelle ontologie dans le Sophiste”, in *Les études philosophiques* 3 (1995), 311-353, or Walter Mesch, *Die Bewegung des Seienden in Platons Sophistes*, in A. Havlíček – F. Karfík (eds.), *Plato's Sophist*, 96-119.

19 *Soph.* 250a8.

20 *Soph.* 250a-254d.

21 *Soph.* 254e-257a.

In this deliberation, “the different” proves to be identical with “non-being” (τὸ μὴ ὄν), for whatever is must be different from everything which it is not. As the different, non-being does not seem to be the “opposite” (ἐναντίον) of being but only “different” (ἕτερον) from it. It even necessarily has a share in being, just as being has a share in difference.²²

However, the reduction of non-being to difference does not mean the reduction of being to identity, since in this case, all being would have to be identical.²³ Moreover, a being “is not” all which it is not, only *because* it is identical to itself; and it is what it is *because* it is not everything else. Its difference (i.e. non-being) and its identity must be held simultaneously. Therefore, the highest genera, far from being only movement and rest, seem rather to be being, difference, and identity.²⁴ Identity means “unity”, although not as Plato’s “murdered father” Parmenides²⁵ had it, but in the sense of identity necessarily accompanied by difference:

We find then, that being “is not” in so many respects as there are other things; for, not being those others, while it is its single self (ἐν μὲν αὐτό ἐστιν), it “is not” all that indefinite number of other things.²⁶

22 *Soph.* 257b-259b.

23 *Soph.* 255bc.

24 Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 35a1-6. See Francis Cornford, *Plato’s Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato*, Routledge, London 1935 (reprinted Hackett Pub. & Co., Indianapolis 1997), 59-66; F. Karfík, *Pantelós on*, 142f. J. A. Philip (“The «Megista Gene»”, 101) calls the three genera, being, difference, and identity, “logical kinds”.

25 *Soph.* 241d, 258cd.

26 *Soph.* 257a4-6: Καὶ τὸ ὄν ἄρ’ ἡμῖν, ὅσαπέρ ἐστι τὰ ἄλλα, κατὰ τοσαῦτα οὐκ ἔστιν. ἐκεῖνα γὰρ οὐκ ὄν ἐν μὲν αὐτό ἐστιν, ἀπέραντα δὲ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τᾶλλα οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτό. English translation by F. Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 289 (modified). On the notion of being in Plato’s *Sophist* in its ontological meaning, see Francesco Fronterotta, *Some Remarks on the Senses of Being in the Sophist*, in A. Havlíček – F. Karfík (eds.), *Plato’s Sophist*, 35-62.

In its necessary blending with difference and thus with non-being as well as in its mutual relations and penetration with other Forms,²⁷ being allows for false connections when spoken of.²⁸ Unlike the philosopher, the sophist does not aim at imitating the real relations of being but at producing an illusion based on mere opinion.²⁹

So far the argumentation in Plato's *Sophist* has been simplified for the purpose of the present analysis. Let us turn to Clement's application thereof to be able to see how far (or how little) he can use Plato's ideas for his own deliberation of faith in both its epistemic and religious sense.

In his epistemology, Clement is not satisfied with the above-mentioned positions of the "sons of the earth" or the "friends of Forms" as mutually exclusive options. Instead, he develops an epistemology based on faith, which includes both the sense perception of the "sons of the earth" and the contemplation of the principles, as he interprets the position of the "friends of Forms".³⁰ It is only in their combination that sense perception (αἴσθησις) and intellect (νοῦς) can produce scientific knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). At the same time, they are inspired and even completed by faith (πίστις),³¹ which Clement presents as both Epicurean precognition (πρόληψις), interpreted as an anticipation of insight, and Stoic assent (συγκατάθεσις), understood as a voluntary approval of a convincing hypothesis equally aiming at knowledge.³²

27 *Soph.* 259a-b.

28 *Soph.* 260c. On the dangers to which speech is exposed, cf. Štěpán Špinka, *Das Sein des Nicht-Seins: Einige Thesen zur strukturellen Ontologie im Dialog Sophistes*, in A. Havlíček – F. Karfík (eds.), *Plato's Sophist*, 221-239, 223-228.

29 *Soph.* 267a-c.

30 Cf. *Soph.* 248a10-12: Καὶ σώματι μὲν ἡμᾶς γενέσει δι' αἰσθήσεως κοινωνεῖν, διὰ λογισμοῦ δὲ ψυχῇ πρὸς τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν, ἣν αἰεὶ κατὰ ταῦτα ὡσαύτως ἔχειν φατέ. On Clement's interpretation of the "Gigantomachia", see D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 152-156.

31 *Strom.* II,4,13,2-14,1 (Cl. II,119,22-32).

32 *Strom.* II,2,8,4-9,2 (Cl. II,117,8-18); II,6,27,4-28,1 (Cl. II,127,30-128,2); II,12,55,1 (Cl. II,142,28-30); II,4,16,3-17,3 (Cl. II,121,9-22). On Clement's reinterpretation

In addition, the first unprovable principles (*αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἀναπόδεικτοι*) can only be comprehended by faith.³³ Rational knowledge thus both presupposes and substantiates faith in its epistemic meaning.

In its religious sense, faith, as a free and divinely inspired option, is a new sensibility towards the Logos.³⁴ Moving from assent as trust and conviction to religious understanding, this option demands rational training. But even at the climax of religious knowledge, faith remains the criterion.³⁵ In their religious sense, too, faith and knowledge are thus mutually dependent; each presupposes, implies, and completes the other. As Clement puts it: “Knowledge (*γνώσις*) is imbued with faith, and faith with knowledge, through a mutual divine succession.”³⁶

Clement’s key objection is thus not the mistaken ontology of both parts of the “gigantomachia” as was the case in Plato, but their inadequate epistemology, the “missing faith” (*ἄπιστοι*),³⁷ faith being a necessary component of knowledge in his eyes.

This epistemology shares with that of Plato the progression from mere belief to argumentative knowledge and the touching of the

of both terms, see Salvatore R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*, Oxford University Press, London 1971, 127-129; Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005, 184-186.

33 *Strom.* II,4,13,4 (Cl. II,119,28); II,4,14,1 (Cl. II,119,30f.); VII,95,6 (Cl. III,67,25f.); VIII,6,7-7,2 (Cl. III,83,16-20). On Clement’s idea of faith, see K. Prümm, “Glaube und Erkenntnis im zweiten Buch der Stromata des Klemens von Alexandrien”, in *Scholastik* 12 (1937), 17-57; S. R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 118-142; E. Osborn, *The Philosophy*, 127-145; Josef Lössl, “Der Glaubensbegriff des Klemens von Alexandrien im Kontext der hellenistischen Philosophie”, in *Theologie und Philosophie* 77 (2002), 321-337.

34 *Strom.* II,4,15,3 (Cl. II,120,16-19).

35 *Strom.* II,4,15,5 (Cl. II,120,26f.).

36 *Strom.* II,4,16,2 (Cl. II,121,7f.): *πιστὴ τοῖνον ἢ γνῶσις, γνωστὴ δὲ ἢ πίστις θεία τινὶ ἀκολουθία τε καὶ ἀντακολουθία γίνεται.* On the reciprocity of faith and knowledge, see E. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria*, 161-169; 182-196.

37 *Strom.* II,4,15,1 (Cl. II,120,8).

first principle,³⁸ as well as the necessary task of persuading the soul,³⁹ although Clement emphasises the role of faith in the entire epistemic process much more than his predecessor did.

As Clement puts it, again alluding to the *Sophist*, faith (πίστις) differs from mere guesswork (εἰκασία), just as a tamed dog does from a wild wolf.⁴⁰ With this metaphor of a dog and wolf, the Visitor of Elea in Plato's *Sophist* illustrates the difference between argumentative scrutiny (ἐλεγχος) as the most efficacious way of purifying the soul, on the one hand, and false sophistic argumentation, which follows other goals although using similar tools, on the other.⁴¹ Clement supplements the metaphor of a dog and wolf with that of a friend and flatterer, to emphasise that faith, which is the basis of his epistemology, is far from being an untamed and fallacious "weak assumption" (ἀσθενὴς ὑπόληψις), as applied by the sophists.⁴²

2. *The True Dialectic*

Like Plato, Clement explicitly warns against the harmful sophistic art, which passes the false off as true, and he tries to distinguish it from rhetoric, i.e. the art of persuading (πειθώ), and even the eristic, i.e. the art of verbal combat (τὸ ἀγωνιστικόν), as used in philosophy.⁴³ In this passage from the first book of *Stromateis*, Clement proves to be inspired, among other sources, again by Plato's *Sophist*,⁴⁴ and he

38 Plato, *Respublica* VI, 509d-511e.

39 Plato, *Phaedo* 77e; 83a2-b2; *Symposium* 212b; *Leges* IV,722b-723b; X,903a-b.

40 *Strom.* II,4,16,1 (Cl. II,120,28-121,1); cf. *Soph.* 231a6.

41 *Soph.* 230d-231b.

42 *Strom.* II,4,16,1 (Cl. II,120,28).

43 *Strom.* I,8,39,1 (Cl. II,25,30-26,2).

44 *Soph.* 226a; 236c; 240d. On Clement's Aristotelian and Stoic sources in this topic, see Jean Pépin, *La vraie dialectique selon Clément d'Alexandrie*, in Jacques Fontaine – Charles Kannengiesser (eds.), *Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts au cardinal Jean Daniélou*, Beauchesne, Paris 1972, 375-383, 375-377, 380, n. 39.

shares Plato's care to distinguish the philosophical search for the truth from the sophistic approach based on a semblance (τὸ φαινόμενον) and aiming at making an impression (ἢ ἐκπληξίς).⁴⁵

Plato finds true philosophy in the art of the dialectic⁴⁶ being able to “divide according to the kinds, not taking the same Form for a different one or a different one for the same”.⁴⁷ In the fourth book of *Stromateis*, Clement attests to his high esteem for the art of the dialectic when, with the Socrates of Plato's *Sophist* but without his irony, he introduces the Visitor of Elea as “a god” (τινα θεόν, Clement even θεόν) because of his knowledge of the dialectic art (διαλεκτικὸν ὄντα).⁴⁸ Following Plato and even more fully than him, Clement quotes Homer speaking about “gods”, who, “in the guise of strangers from afar” (ξείνοισιν ἐοικότες ἀλλοδαποῖσι), visit cities, in this context:⁴⁹

In the *Sophist*, Socrates calls the Visitor of Elea, who was a dialectician, “god”: “Such are the gods who, in the guise of strangers from afar,” visit cities. For when the soul, rising above the sphere of becoming, is by itself and communicates with Forms, ... it becomes as an angel and will be with Christ, dwelling in contemplation and ever keeping in view the will of God.⁵⁰

45 *Strom.* I,8,39,4 (Cl. II, 26,9-11).

46 *Soph.* 253e.

47 *Soph.* 253d1-2: Τὸ κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι καὶ μήτε ταῦτὸν εἶδος ἕτερον ἠγήσασθαι μήτε ἕτερον ὄν ταῦτὸν.

48 *Strom.* IV,25,155,3 (Cl. II,317,13f.); καὶ ἐν τῷ Σοφιστῇ δὲ τὸν Ἐλεάτην ξένον διαλεκτικὸν ὄντα ὁ Σωκράτης θεὸν ὠνόμασεν. Cf. *Soph.* 216a5: ... οὐ ξένον ἀλλὰ τινα θεόν. On Clement's interpretation of this passage, see D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 293f.

49 *Strom.* IV,25,155,3 (Cl. II,317,14f.); cf. *Soph.* 216a6; c5; Homer, *Odyssey* XVII,485.

50 *Strom.* IV,25,155,3-4 (Cl. II,317,13-19): καὶ ἐν τῷ Σοφιστῇ δὲ τὸν Ἐλεάτην ξένον διαλεκτικὸν ὄντα ὁ Σωκράτης θεὸν ὠνόμασεν, οἷους τοὺς θεοὺς «ξείνοισιν ἐοικότας ἀλλοδαποῖσιν» ἐπιφοιτῶντας τοῖς ἄστεσιν **. ὅταν γὰρ ψυχὴ γενέσεως ὑπεξαναβάσῃ καθ' ἑαυτὴν τε ἢ καὶ ὁμιλῇ τοῖς εἶδεσιν, ... οἷον ἄγγελος ἤδη γενόμενος σὺν Χριστῷ [τε] ἔσται, θεωρητικὸς ὢν, αἰεὶ τὸ βούλημα τοῦ θεοῦ σκοπῶν.

In this passage, Clement abandons the frame in which the dialectic art is presented in the *Sophist* to ascend, again inspired by Plato,⁵¹ “above the sphere of becoming” (γενέσεως ὑπέξαναβάσα), to “communicate with Forms” (ὀμιλῆ τοῖς εἶδεσιν) and to approach Christ. Elsewhere in the *Stromateis*, Clement’s dialectic even “ventures to transcend” from Christ to God (the Father),⁵² as Plato progresses from the realm of Forms to the Form of the Good as its fundament and principle.⁵³

Unlike Plato, but with the Middle Platonists, Clement posits the Forms as present in God’s intellect: “The place of Forms is the intellect; and God is the intellect.”⁵⁴ Therefore, he can derive the godlike nature of the dialecticians from their ability to contemplate these Forms and thus approach God. His idea of knowing the unprovable principles by

51 See Plato, *Respublica* 517b4-5; b8-c1; 511b3-c2; *Symposium* 210a4-211d1.

52 *Strom.* I,28,177,1 (Cl. II,109, 5-9): μικτὴ δὲ φιλοσοφία οὕσα τῇ ἀληθείῃ ἢ ἀληθῆς διαλεκτικῇ ἐπισκοποῦσα τὰ πράγματα καὶ τὰς δυνάμεις καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας δοκιμάζουσα ὑπέξαναβαίνει ἐπὶ τὴν πάντων κρατίστην οὐσίαν τολμᾷ τε ἐπέκεινα ἐπὶ τὸν τῶν ὄλων θεόν. On the angelic “powers”, see 1Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 3:10; Col 1:16; 1Pt 3:22; on Christ the Almighty, see Apoc 1:8. On the stages of this anabasis, see Pierre Nautin, “Notes sur le Stromate I de Clément d’Alexandrie”, in *Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique* 47 (1952), 618-631, 630f.

53 See Plato, *Respublica* 517c1-5.

54 *Strom.* IV,25,155,2 (Cl. II,317,11): νοῦς δὲ χώρα ἰδεῶν, νοῦς δὲ ὁ θεός. Similarly, *Strom.* V,3,16,3 (Cl. II,336,8f.): ἡ δὲ ἰδέα ἐννόημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅπερ οἱ βάρβαροι λόγον εἰρήκασιν τοῦ θεοῦ. Cf. Alkinoos, *Didasc.* 9 (163,14-17); on this passage, see John Dillon (ed.), *Alcinous, The Handbook of Platonism: translated with an introduction and commentary*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1993, 93-100. The idea of Forms as the archetypes in the mind of God can also be found in Philo of Alexandria, *De opif.* 5,20. See Salvatore Lilla, *Die Lehre von den Ideen als den Gedanken Gottes im griechischen patristischen Denken*, in Herbert Eisenberger (ed.), *ERMHNEYMATÄ: Festschrift für Hadwig Hörner zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, C. Winter, Heidelberg 1990, 27-50, 27-32, 36-38. Roberto Radice even assumes Philo to be the originator of this idea; see Roberto Radice, “Observations on the Theory of the Ideas as the Thoughts of God in Philo of Alexandria”, in *Studia Philonica* 3 (1991), 126-134.

faith is thus completed by the knowledge of Forms in God's intellect, by the ascending dialectic of Platonic tradition.

Some scholars even suppose that Clement identifies the Forms, i.e. the contents of the intelligible world, with angels, being inspired in this option by, among other sources, Plato's idea of *pantelôs on* (the intelligible world) as a living being in the *Sophist*.⁵⁵ Clement's ascending dialectic in the first book of *Stromateis* actually starts from analysing the things of our world (τὰ πράγματα)⁵⁶ and, considering the angels (τὰς δυνάμεις καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας) and coming to Christ as the mightiest of beings (τὴν πάντων κρατίστην οὐσίαν), it "ventures to transcend to God" (the Father), as we have already heard.⁵⁷ Whether the intelligible world of Forms should be identified with angels,⁵⁸ the "analysed things"⁵⁹ or Christ, the Logos,⁶⁰ Clement hopes for the soul elevated above the world of becoming "to communicate with Forms" (ὁμιλῆ τοῖς εἰδέσιν),⁶¹ just as the Visitor of Elea presupposes that the friends of

55 *Soph.* 248e6-249a2 (quoted above), n. 13 See J. Pépin, *La vraie dialectique*, 381f.

56 So presupposes J. Pépin, *La vraie dialectique*, 381: "considération du monde empirique".

57 *Strom.* I,28,177,1 (Cl. II,109,5-9), quoted above, n. 52.

58 See J. Pépin, *La vraie dialectique*, 381f. Similarly, E. Osborn, *The Philosophy*, 153: "The 'powers' of Clement fulfil the function of the forms of Plato."

59 See D. Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung*, 128. The author understands the *pragmata* (Cl. II,109,7) as the things analysed in their kinds in the dialectical process. Therefore, he feels justified in identifying them with forms.

60 Clement ascribes the identification of Platonic Forms with the divine Logos to the "barbarians", i.e. probably Philo of Alexandria (e.g. *De opif.* 24). Cf. *Strom.* V,3,16,3 (Cl. II,336,8f.) (quoted above), n. 54. This, however, does not mean that he would not share the idea himself. See S. Lilla, *Die Lehre von den Ideen*, 37; E. Osborn, *The Philosophy*, 157.

61 *Strom.* IV,25,155,4 (Cl. II,317,16). As Jehler Wytzes suggests on the basis of Philo's accounts, Clement could have meant communication with celestial powers. See Jehler Wytzes, "The Twofold Way (II): Platonic Influences in the Work of Clement of Alexandria", in *Vigiliae Christianae* 14 (1960), 129-153, 132f. On the possible identification of the forms in God's intellect with the spiritual

ideas “share” with the real being (κοινωνεῖν ... πρὸς τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν) in Plato's *Sophist*.⁶² In any case, Clement seems to understand the realm of Forms as a living being, thus approaching, intentionally or not, the *pantelôs on* of the improved “friends of Forms” in the *Sophist*.

Besides the above-mentioned elements of his epistemology borrowed from Plato's *Sophist*, Clement alludes to this dialogue several times in his *Stromateis*, referring to its title,⁶³ to the “Ionian Muses” quoting Heraclitus, as Plato did in the *Sophist*,⁶⁴ or to the “great Parmenides” of Elea as mentioned by Plato, too.⁶⁵

“powers”, cf. Philo, *De opif.* 20; *De conf.* 172; *De somn.* I,62. See S. Lilla, *Die Lehre von den Ideen*, 31.

62 *Soph.* 248a10-12: Καὶ σώματι μὲν ἡμᾶς γενέσει δι' αἰσθήσεως κοινωνεῖν, διὰ λογισμοῦ δὲ ψυχῇ πρὸς τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν, ἣν αἰεὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχειν φατέ.

63 *Strom.* IV,25,155,3 (Cl. II,317,13); V,14,112,2 (Cl. II,402,6).

64 *Strom.* V,9,59,4 (Cl. II,366,8): Ἰάδες μοῦσαι. Cf. *Soph.* 242d6-7. In the next part of the text, Clement quotes Heraclitus, 22B 104 (Hermann Diels – Walther Kranz (eds.) [= DK], *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Berlin, 9th edition 1960, I, 174,5f.): ... εἰδότας ὅτι «πολλοὶ κακοί, ὀλίγοι δὲ ἀγαθοί» (Cl. II,366,9f.) and 22B 29 (DK I, 157,7-9): «αἰρεῦνται γάρ ... ἐν ἀντι πάντων οἱ ἄριστοι κλέος ἀέναον θνητῶν, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ κεκόρηται ὅπως κτήνεα» (Cl. II,366,11f.). Concerning these quotes, see Alain Le Boulluec (ed.), *Clément d'Alexandrie, Les Stromates, V/2: Commentaire, bibliographie et index* (Sources Chrétiennes 279), Cerf, Paris 1981, 220f.

65 *Strom.* V,9,59,6 (Cl. II,366,14); V,14,112,2 (Cl. II,402,6): Παρμενίδης ὁ μέγας. Cf. *Soph.* 237a4-5. It is not quite clear that Clement mistakes the following quote from Parmenides as being cited by Plato in the *Sophist* too, as Anthony Outler (*The “Platonism”*, 224) assumes. The borrowing from the *Sophist* can be limited to the honorary title the “great Parmenides”. Cf. *Strom.* V,14,112,2 (Cl. II,402,6-9): Παρμενίδης δὲ ὁ μέγας, ὡς φησιν ἐν Σοφιστῇ Πλάτων, ὧδέ πως περὶ τοῦ θείου γράφει· «πολλὰ μάλ', ὡς ἀγέννητον ἐὸν καὶ ἀνώλεθρόν ἐστιν, / οὐλον μουνογενές τε καὶ ἀτρεμές ἦδ' ἀγέννητον.» Cf. Parmenides, 28B 8,3f. (DK I, 235). Concerning this quote, see Alain Le Boulluec, *Les Stromates, V/2,335f.* To be sure, Plato cites Parmenides in his dialogue, see *Soph.* 237a8-9; 258d2-3; cf. Parmenides, 28B 7,1f. (DK I,234,31f.). This particular quote, however, cannot be found in the *Sophist*.

In the *Paedagogus*, addressed to the readers at the early stage of their Christian life, Clement invokes Plato's words from the *Sophist* to show that ἔλεγχος, in the mouth of the Visitor of Elea a method of cross-questioning and refuting, in Clement's interpretation "correction", is the best means of purification.⁶⁶ Even in his moral treatise *Quis dives salvetur*, Clement anonymously alludes to the *Sophist* speaking about the enemy which resides inside the soul in the form of inappropriate desires and which, being all the time present in the soul, is even more dangerous than external persecution.⁶⁷

All the above-mentioned borrowings and allusions document Clement's knowledge of the *Sophist*, although he does not seem to be interested in the ontological impact of the "gigantomachia" but in its epistemic implications in the first place. In his account of the true dialectic art, Clement openly alludes to the *Sophist*, but develops the intended "communication with Forms" from the middle Platonic idea of Forms in the divine intellect, alien to Plato, although coming close to the *pantelós on* of the *Sophist*.

66 *Paedagogus* I,9,82,3 (Cl. I,138,11-15): Ταύτη τοι καὶ Πλάτων τὴν μεγίστην τῆς ἐπανορθώσεως δύναμιν καὶ τὴν κυριωτάτην κάθαρσιν τὸν ἔλεγχον εἰδῶς ἀκολούθως τῷ λόγῳ τὸν τὰ μέγιστα ἀκάθαρτον ὄντα ἀπαιδευτόν τε καὶ αἰσχρὸν γεγονέναι διὰ τὸ ἀνέλεγκτον εἶναι βούλεται, ἢ καθαρῶτατον καὶ κάλλιστον ἔπρεπεν τὸν ὄντως ἐσόμενον εὐδαιμόνα εἶναι. Cf. *Soph.* 230d6-e3: Διὰ ταῦτα δὴ πάντα ἡμῖν, ὦ Θεαίτητε, καὶ τὸν ἔλεγχον λεκτέον ὡς ἄρα μεγίστη καὶ κυριωτάτη τῶν καθάρσεων ἐστὶ, καὶ τὸν ἀνέλεγκτον αὐ νομιστέον, ἂν καὶ τυγχάνῃ βασιλεὺς ὁ μέγας ὢν, τὰ μέγιστα ἀκάθαρτον ὄντα, ἀπαιδευτόν τε καὶ αἰσχρὸν γεγονέναι ταῦτα ἂ καθαρῶτατον καὶ κάλλιστον ἔπρεπε τὸν ὄντως ἐσόμενον εὐδαιμόνα εἶναι.

67 *Quis dives salvetur* 25,5 (Cl. III,176,15): τὸν γὰρ ἐχθρὸν ἐν ἑαυτῷ περιάγει πανταχοῦ. Cf. *Soph.* 252c7-9: τὸν πολέμιον καὶ ἐναντιωσόμενον ἔχοντες, ἐντὸς ὑποφθεγγόμενον ὡσπερ τὸν ἄτοπον Εὐρυκλέα περιφέροντες ἀεὶ πορεύονται.

Zusammenfassung

In seiner Analyse des Glaubens in *Stromateis* II,4,15,1-2 zitiert Clemens von Alexandrien die Stelle aus Platons *Sophistes* 246a9-b1.6-8 über die "Gigantomachia" der "Söhne der Erde" gegen die "Formen-Freunde", wie Platon sie nennt, und spielt mehrfach auf Platons *Sophistes* an. Clemens' zentraler Einwand in der "Gigantomachia" ist nicht die von Platon selbst kritisierte falsche Ontologie beider Parteien, sondern eine unzureichende Epistemologie, der "fehlende Glaube" (*Strom.* II,4,15,1), da der Glaube, so Clemens, ein notwendiger Bestandteil der Erkenntnis ist. In *Strom.* IV,25,155,3 bezeugt Clemens seine hohe Wertschätzung für die Kunst der Dialektik, wenn er mit dem Sokrates aus Platons *Sophistes* den "Gast" aus Elea als einen "Gott" vorstellt (*Soph.* 216a5). Anders als Platon, aber mit den Mittelplatonikern, setzt Clemens die Formen als im Intellekt Gottes anwesend voraus. Daher kann er die Gottähnlichkeit der Dialektiker aus ihrer Fähigkeit ableiten, diese Formen zu betrachten und sich so Gott zu nähern.



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