CHAPTER 4

COSMIC RELIGION IN THE EARLY ACADEMY

The period after Plato's death is marked by a proliferation of texts with increasing focus on the divinity of astral entities. Traditional gods appear in a handful of surviving philosophical fragments and testimonies, but usually they are placed in curious mythical stories or in a proximity to the cosmic gods. It is safe to say that they sparked little philosophical interest on their own. What stands in the transition from the traditional gods of Plato, who is still committed to their distinctive identities and areas of activity, to the full cosmologisation of these gods in Stoicism, which used the names of traditional gods to indicate various items in the universe, is Plato's school, the Academy. Xenocrates and Aristotle, its highly influential students, played the key role in setting the parameters for the theological discourse in the early Hellenistic period. Their intense polemics as well as their own particular philosophical interests concerning the organisation, divinity and temporal status of the universe and its beings undeniably form the epicentre of truly fascinating post-Platonic texts. Although traditional gods are not a major topic in their work, their approach to these and other gods had a lasting effect on the later schools. However, much of what they sought to establish can be reconstructed only tentatively and even then, it requires more contextual evidence coming from the other figures of the Academy. Perhaps the most important among them for our topic is Philip of Opus, whose dialogue the *Epinomis* is the most complete surviving religious-philosophical text of this period. I believe that its theological thought is paradigmatic of the trajectory assumed by Academic theology, though there are important differences in details among these thinkers. In support of this thesis, this chapter examines the *Epinomis* and its conception of the traditional gods, whilst occasionally comparing the author of the dialogue with the other Academics. It shall revisit some of the key themes of this

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book – the theological significance of Ouranos, the distinction between the traditional and cosmic gods and the philosophical tension between cosmology and religion – with the aim of determining the degree of continuity between Plato's later dialogues and the Academic material. It is my hope to show that religious speculation continued to resurface over the period of the Early Academy by returning to the questions posed by Plato.

4.1 The *Epinomis* on Religion

The *Epinomis* survived in Plato's large corpus as an odd attachment to the *Laws*. Set as a sequel to it, the *Epinomis* was intended to prolong the leisurely walk of the Athenian Stranger and his companions Cleinias and Megillus by fulfilling their agreement to set the programme of studies for the highest Magnesian office, the Nocturnal Council. Strangely enough, such an agreement is missing in the *Laws*. The three legislators, moreover, are not found on their way to the shrine of Zeus, the final destination of the *Laws*, but taking notes in an academic environment.[1] Topics for the class are Platonic and yet they seem to be set by a stranger. Contrary to the theory of four simple bodies in the *Timaeus* (31d–32b), there are five material elements in the *Epinomis* (981b–c). The new element is aether, which constitutes the bodies of daemons, intermediary creatures responsible for communication between human beings and gods (984e–985c). These higher gods are the cosmic gods, the only divinities whose existence can be confirmed with cosmological arguments (981d–e, 983a–c). In contrast to the *Laws*, some of the traditional gods are fused with the cosmic gods by ascribing the conventional religious names to the planetary bodies (987b–c). In this way, astronomy as means to observe the divine cosmos acquires a religious dimension: it becomes the most genuine mark of reverence towards the gods (990a). This shift demands some alterations in ethics too: piety (εὐσέβεια, 989b2) returns to the pantheon of virtues and astronomy replaces dialectics as the highest science

[1] For this point, see Brisson (2005b) 19–21.

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for education of the ruling class (992c–e), contrary to the agenda of the *Republic* (6.511c–d, 7.534e–535a).

Perhaps the central innovation is the proposal to establish the framework for cosmic religion. The dialogue reproaches the contemporary religious situation in Greece, where the cosmic gods are pushed to the margins of cult practice (986e–988a). The solution is to institutionalise the worship of the cosmic gods on a parallel footing to the ritual honouring of the traditional gods. In particular, the cosmic gods are to receive sacrifices, festivals, sacred calendars and praises in hymns (983e–984a, 985a).[2] Cosmic religiosity, however, does not require all the resources of the polis. In fact, some of them might even be redundant. The cosmic gods do not need such visible representations as statues, because they are directly accessible to everyone by means of astronomical observation (986a–d). Neither do the cosmic gods need temples, because the whole sky serves as their sacred space (984a). One can conjecture that the latter aspect affects the relationship between the cosmic gods and political communities: the cosmic gods are common to all human beings, so no planet or star should be considered as an exclusive patron god of the city. Moreover, the cosmic gods do not have individual areas of activity, since they all carry out the same cosmological function, namely to partake in the orderly psychic motions of the universe. As a result, they are collectively responsible for the good outcomes of these motions. We can see that an attempt to accommodate cosmology within the civic framework creates a new tension between the personal and the political, philosophy and religion. Leonardo Tarán aptly concludes that 'though this cult of the cosmos is still proposed as a public cult of the city . . . [it] opens the way for the purely individualistic conception of the cosmic religion which comes to the fore with the Stoa and which becomes the common factor of the syncretistic thought of the Hellenistic and later ages'.[3]

For these reasons, the *Epinomis* is no longer considered to be Plato's work. It is a reception text, which engages with a number of

[2] For a detailed analysis of cosmic religion in the *Epinomis*, see Festugière (1973) 145–56.

[3] Tarán (1975) 88–9. But in spite of this tendency, Aronadio (2013) 57–8 accurately notes that the civic framework of polis remains the 'very horizon', which determines the solutions to all theological and moral questions in the *Epinomis*.

Plato's texts and where familiar themes assume new forms and lead towards unexpected conclusions. The majority of current scholars agree that the authorship belongs to Plato's secretary, Philip of Opus. The doxographic tradition presents him as the person responsible for transcribing the *Laws* from wax tablets, publishing Plato's dialogue and expanding it with an additional book. The themes of the *Epinomis* are well matched with the specific interests and philosophical profile of Philip: he was a theologian, who wrote two books on the gods, and an expert astronomer, who studied the sizes and distances of planets, the eclipses of the moon and other similar questions.[4] Philip initiates a transformative project, which picks out some of the more problematic areas of Plato's thinking and aims to dissolve the conceptual tensions by providing consistency and systematicity, a general trend that began in the Early Academy and became particularly strong under the leadership of Xenocrates, the third head of the school.[5] For instance, the author's motivation to dismiss the importance of the traditional gods might be explained by the following reasoning: if the Platonic taxonomy of living beings assumes that every class of living being has a predominant material element and if the class of divine beings are discerned by their visible fiery bodies (*Ti.* 39e–40a), then the traditional gods evidently fall short of this requirement. Combined with the fact that there is no other element left for the traditional gods, it is only too natural to suppose that the belief in the traditional gods is just an intellectual error. The dialogue tends to explain such errors as

[4] See *D. L.* 3.37; *PHerc*. 1021 Col. III 35–37; Suda, s.v. *Philosophos*. On the attribution of the dialogue to Philip, see Tarán (1975) 133–9 and Aronadio (2013) 173–8. There are still sceptical voices, for which see, for example, Brisson (2005b) 21–23. Brisson's doubts are based on the argument that Diogenes Laertius is the only credible testimony which attributes the dialogue to Philip, and there is no earlier evidence to support Diogenes' claim. But this objection is effectively countered by Dillon (2003a) 179n3: 'unlike such works as the *Alcibiades I* or the *Hippias Major*, whose authenticity had been doubted in modern times, but which were never doubted in antiquity, there was a persistent – although minority – tradition as regards the *Epinomis* in antiquity that it was not by Plato – and indeed that it was, specifically, by Philippus of Opus'.

[5] For Xenocrates' systemisation of Platonism, see Dillon (2003a) 98 and Sedley (2021a), and for its iconographical reception, see Sedley (2021b). I must note, however, that my findings on the themes of Ouranos, divine names and the *homoiōsis theōi* in Xenocrates' fragments does not confirm Sedley's thesis that Xenocrates regarded two Plato's dialogues, the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedrus*, as canonical texts rather than one, the *Timaeus*.

outcomes of flawed astronomical research (*Epin*. 986e–987a, 990a). Once the mistake is noted, one is led to conclude that the true gods are the cosmic gods. Thus, both here and throughout the *Epinomis* Philip seems to reach for philosophical coherence at the expense of cultural and religious variety.[6]

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the ways in which the *Epinomis* triangulates between the Platonic legacy, Greek religion and the theological innovations of the Academy. Our starting point is the object of the new cult, the cosmic god. Section 4.2 will investigate the primary god of the *Epinomis* and his identity, which will show that Plato's conception of Ouranos had strong following in the Early Academy. Section 4.3 will move down the ladder of theological hierarchy to explore the lower gods. It will not only analyse the strategy that assigns the names of the traditional gods to the cosmic gods, but also tackle the vexed question whether its aim was to collapse the distinction between the traditional and cosmic gods or not. Afterwards, Section 4.4 will reverse the theological perspective by looking into the worshippers of the new cult and discuss the moral and political implications of Philip's theology. Specifically, it will examine the connection between astral piety and the ideal of godlikeness, compare Philip's version of *homoiōsis theōi* with that of the other Academics, explore the place of ordinary people within the moral framework of cosmic religion, and the resulting social relations between the ordinary citizens and the elite astronomers. The last point will allow us to determine whether the Magnesia of the *Epinomis* retains the same core social structure that we found in the Magnesia of the *Laws*.

4.2 The Ouranian God in the Early Academy

The *Epinomis* begins as an enquiry into the nature of human wisdom and proposes to demonstrate that the science of numbers is the ultimate path towards it (976d–e, 977d–e). This science finds

[6] Given the potential confusion between the Athenian Stranger of the *Laws* and the Athenian Stranger of the *Epinomis* as well as the fact that the *Epinomis* is a treatise camouflaged as a dialogue, from this point onwards I shall refer to the author and not the character as the main protagonist of the subsequent theological and astronomical drama.

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its origins not in a mere accident and chance (τύχη), but in an intentional act of god, whose religious name is the following:

T29 What god am I speaking of with such solemnity, Megillus and Cleinias? *Ouranos*, the god whom above all others it is most just to pray to and to honour, as all the other divinities and gods do. We will unanimously agree that he has been the cause of all other good things for us. But we declare that he is really the one who gave us number too, and he will continue to give it, supposing that we are willing to follow him closely. If we come to contemplate him in the right way – whether we prefer to call him *Kosmos* or Olympus or *Ouranos* – let us call him as it pleases him, but let us notice carefully how by decorating himself and making the stars revolve in himself through all their orbits, he brings about the seasons and provides nourishment for all. Together with the entirety of number, he also furnishes, we would insist, everything else that involves intelligence and everything that is good. But this is the greatest thing, for a person to receive from him the gift of numbers and to examine fully the entire revolution of the heaven. (*Epin*. 977a2–b8, mod.)

τίνα δὴ καὶ σεμνύνων ποτὲ λέγω θεόν, ὦ Μέγιλλέ τε καὶ Κλεινία; σχεδὸν Οὐρανόν, ὃν καὶ δικαιότατον, ὡς σύμπαντες ἄλλοι δαίμονες ἅμα καὶ θεοί, τιμᾶν τε καὶ εὔχεσθαι διαφερόντως αὐτῷ. τὸ δὲ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἴτιον ἀγαθῶν πάντων ἡμῖν αὐτὸν γεγονέναι πάντες ἂν ὁμολογοῖμεν· δοῦναι δὲ ἅμα καὶ ἀριθμὸν ἡμεῖς γε ὄντως αὐτόν φαμεν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ δώσειν, ἐάν τις θέλῃ συνακολουθεῖν. ἐὰν γὰρ ἴῃ τις ἐπὶ θεωρίαν ὀρθὴν τὴν τοῦδε, εἴτε κόσμον εἴτε ὄλυμπον εἴτε οὐρανὸν ἐν ἡδονῇ τῳ λέγειν, λεγέτω μέν, ἀκολουθείτω δὲ ὅπῃ ποικίλλων αὐτὸν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὑτῷ στρέφων ἄστρα πάσας διεξόδους ὥρας τε καὶ τροφὴν πᾶσιν παρέχεται. καὶ τὴν ἄλλην δὲ οὖν φρόνησιν, ὡς φαῖμεν ἄν, σὺν ἀριθμῷ παντί, καὶ τἆλλ' ἀγαθά· τοῦτο δὲ μέγιστον, ἐάν τις τὴν ἀριθμῶν αὐτοῦ δόσιν δεξάμενος ἐπεξέλθῃ πᾶσαν τὴν περίοδον.

We can see that Philip elevates Ouranos to the rank of the highest god by showing how cosmic motions, climatic fluctuations and the human ability to reason confirm that the Ouranian god is the source of goodness and rational order. The passage is an undisguised reaction to religious and poetic mischaracterisations of Ouranos, which is especially emphasised by the fact that Philip considers Ouranos as a being of religious significance, indeed, the central object of worship for all living beings. The proper way to honour such a god, however, does not consist of conventional forms of performative piety, but of contemplation stemming from mathematical enquiry and a study of the cosmic periods. For Philip, this is the ethical road to virtue and happiness (*Epin*. 977c–d).

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Modern commentators were unsuccessful in discovering such a doctrine in Plato's works. Their contention is that T29 is 'un-Platonic' and an 'example of Philippus' manipulation of his sources, as *ouranos* in the *Timaeus* simply refers to the heaven, not to any deity'.[7] But it is far from being the case. The key ideas of T29 are in line with our previous findings on the *Timaeus* (see Sections 1.2–1.3 and 3.1): Ouranos is regarded as the primary cosmic god to whom the younger gods are subordinated, whose activity ensures the order in the universe and who inspires human beings to cultivate intellectual virtues. Moreover, Philip conflates the terms *ouranos* and *kosmos*, which suggests the expanded meaning of the *ouranos*, that is, 'the universe'.[8] Even the manner in which Ouranos is introduced in T29 mimics Timaeus' *prooimion* in T2, when Philip makes a pious gesture by leaving it for the god to decide which of the three names he wants to adopt. Although there are some differences between T29 and T2, such as the addition of Olympus to the list of names or the curious suggestion that the primary god is worshipped by the lower divinities, they do not make the passage entirely 'un-Platonic'.[9]

That Philip adopts Timaeus' conception of Ouranos is confirmed by one more conspicuous feature, which is the association of the Ouranian god with the world-soul. The textual evidence suggests that the powers of the two beings are coextensive. Philip

[7] See Tarán (1975) 235 and Dillon (2003a) 185n24 respectively.

[8] See for example 984d–c, 985a–b, where 'the whole *ouranos*' (ὅλον οὐρανὸν, 984c5) *qua* the universe is filled with animals made of fire, aether, air, water and earth. But cf. 983b–c, where the *ouranos qua* the heaven is listed along with the earth and the stars; 986a–b, where the *ouranos* is broader than the sphere of the fixed stars, which is just a smaller entity located in the *ouranos*, but still distinct from the universe as such. It appears that all three meanings of the term *ouranos* are present in the *Epinomis* (cf. Aristotle *Cael*. 278b9–21).

[9] This association of Ouranos and Olympus has a long history in Greek poetry and philosophy. The Derveni author was probably the first thinker who proposed viewing the two concepts as distinct (col. 12). See Kotwick (2017) 198. Another similar instance is the inauthentic testimony on Philolaus' cosmological terminology (DK44 A16), where the terms Olympus, *kosmos* and *ouranos* refer to the fixed stars, the planetary region and the sublunary region respectively. It is a valuable testimony in so far as it shows that there were some intellectuals whose usage of these terms dismantled the unity of *ouranos-kosmos*. If they were active in Plato's time or during the period of the Early Academy, then Philip's emphasis on the synonymous use of these terms may indicate not only faithfulness to Plato, but also a hostile reaction to them. However, we cannot be certain about it. For the inauthenticity of the testimony, see Huffman (1993) 396–400.

contends that the primary god is the supreme cause (cf. 983b) and the way in which Ouranos exercises his causal power is the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, which give the effect of day and night (καὶ ἑλίττων δὴ ταῦτα αὐτὰ ὅταν μὴ παύηται πολλὰς μὲν νύκτας, πολλὰς δὲ ἡμέρας [ἅς] οὐρανός, 978d1–2).[10] In addition, Philip proposes to view soul as the cause of the universe (ψυχῆς οὔσης αἰτίας τοῦ ὅλου, 988d4–5), which expresses its causal power through the generation of motion. Specifically, it makes the bodies revolve and move in orbits (περιφέρειν, 988d2).[11] Philip claims that a soul is attached to the *ouranos* (983b–c) and that the union of body and soul produces an animal (981a), which means that the cosmic animal results from a combination of the world-body and the world-soul. So, Ouranos expresses his agency through the world-soul. The broader purpose of dwelling on the relation between Ouranos and the world-soul is to prove that Ouranos is a contemplative, intelligent god (985a; cf. 981c) and to explain how he leads the beings inside him towards what is good (988d–e). The reformed vision of Ouranos, therefore, is not only preserved, but arguably even expanded in the *Epinomis*.

The surviving fragments of Plato's associates testify to the enduring importance of Ouranos in the Academy. The Epicurean critic in Cicero's testimony complains that Aristotle's *On Philosophy*, an early work written either during his time in the Academy or soon after it, confuses the readers by ascribing divinity to the intellect (*mens*), the world (*mundus*) and the heavens (*caelum*) (*ND* 1.33.1–9 = fr. 26 Rose).[12] He also claims that Heraclides of Pontus held 'the world (*mundum*) to be divine' and treated 'earth and sky (*caelum*) as gods' (*ND* 1.13.34).[13] Similarly, Aëtius gives a testimony that for Xenocrates' student Polemo

[10] Tarán (1975) 247 notes that ἅς should be excised as dittography and that 'ταῦτα αὐτὰ refers to the omitted antecedent of ἅν in c6, i.e. the heavenly bodies'.

[11] For Philip's conception of the world-soul and its relation with the *Laws*, see Dillon (2003b).

[12] On Cicero's testimony, see further Bos (1989) 185–200. For the dating of the work, see Jaeger (1962) 125–7.

[13] Both passages, however, come from a hostile speaker, who intentionally tries to muddle the doctrines of the Academics. For this point, see Guthrie (1978) 487; Gottschalk (1980) 96–7.

'*kosmos* is a god' (τὸν κόσμον θεὸν, 1.7.20 MR).[14] A line later, he reports:

T30 (1) Xenocrates of Chalcedon, son of Agathenor, [claims that] the Monad and the Dyad are gods: the former as male, having the role of father, ruling in the *ouranos*, whom he calls 'Zeus', 'Odd' and 'Intellect', which is his first god; the latter as female, in the sense of mother of the gods, ruling over the section under the *ouranos*, which is his soul of the universe. (2) He claims that *Ouranos* is a god and the fiery stars are the Olympian gods, and the others are the invisible sublunary daemons. (3) He also believes that there are divine powers and that they penetrate the material elements. Of these, he calls the one which permeates the invisible air 'Hades', the one which permeates the water 'Poseidon', the one which permeates the earth 'Demeter Seed-sower'. (4) The origins [of these theories] he adapted from Plato and then supplied to the Stoics. (Aëtius, *Plac.* 1.7.21 MR = fr. 133 IP)[15]

(1) Ξενοκράτης Ἀγαθήνορος Καλχηδόνιος τὴν μονάδα καὶ τὴν δυάδα θεούς, τὴν μὲν ὡς ἄρρενα πατρὸς ἔχουσαν τάξιν, ἐν οὐρανῷ βασιλεύουσαν, ἥντινα προσαγορεύει καὶ Ζῆνα καὶ περιττὸν καὶ νοῦν, ὅστις ἐστὶν αὐτῷ πρῶτος θεός· τὴν δ' ὡς θήλειαν μητρὸς θεῶν δίκην, τῆς ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν λήξεως ἡγουμένην, ἥτις[16] ἐστὶν αὐτῷ ψυχὴ τοῦ παντός. (2) θεὸν δ' εἶναι καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τοὺς ἀστέρας πυρώδεις Ὀλυμπίους θεούς, καὶ ἑτέρους ὑποσελήνους δαίμονας ἀοράτους. (3) ἀρέσκει δὲ καὶ αὐτῷ ⟨θείας εἶναι δυνάμεις⟩ καὶ ἐνδιήκειν τοῖς ὑλικοῖς στοιχείοις. τούτων δὲ τὴν μὲν ⟨διὰ τοῦ ἀέρος⟩ ἀειδοῦς ⟨Ἅιδην⟩[17] προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ διὰ τοῦ ὑγροῦ Ποσειδῶνα, τὴν δὲ διὰ τῆς γῆς φυτοσπόρον Δήμητραν. (4) ταῦτα δὲ χορηγήσας τοῖς Στωικοῖς τὰ πρότερα παρὰ τοῦ Πλάτωνος μεταπέφρακεν.

I shall discuss the whole passage below. For the present moment, I would like to focus on the underlined sentence. T30 implies a clear conceptual continuity between Philip and Xenocrates. Both of them postulate the same three kinds of gods – Ouranos, cosmic

[14] On its credibility see Dillon (2003a) 166.

[15] Throughout, I will generally use the Greek and Latin texts and numeration of Xenocrates' material from the latest edition of Isnardi Parente and Dorandi (2012) [IP]. The older edition is Isnardi Parente 1982. But for this particular passage, the Greek text is revised in accordance with the critical edition of Aëtius in Mansfeld and Runia (2020).

[16] I associate the feminine relative pronoun ἥτις (which) with the proximate feminine noun λήξεως (section).

[17] Isnardi Parente's collection removes all modern supplements to Aëtius' report, but at least in this case we should insert 'Hades' in order to retain the parallelism within the sentence. The name may have been interpreted by the copyist as a doublet of ἀειδοῦς and thus removed from the sentence. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for this point. Mansfeld and Runia (2020) 400 suggest that 'it is additional to the reference to Hades rather than having supplanted it'.

gods and daemons – in the same descending order, where Ouranos is singled out as the most prominent deity.[18] Both of them use the names of the traditional gods to indicate the cosmological beings [19] We can also observe an elegant symmetry between the references of T29 and T30 to the Olympians and Olympus: just as Ouranos of T29 is the seat of the cosmic gods, hence Olympus, so too the cosmic gods of T30 are seated in the heaven, hence are Olympians. In both instances, Ouranos functions as the cosmic container of gods, thus assuming a role which we have already found established in the *Timaeus*.[20]

The more pressing question now is why some of the Academics were motivated to dwell on Plato's legacy. In Chapter 1 I argued that the term *ouranos* provided a delicate way to bridge the discursive gap between the religious tradition and the novel Platonic cosmology. But our brief overview shows that the *Epinomis* does not seek to find any balance between conventional religious beliefs and philosophy. So what did Philip and the other Academics intend to achieve by naming their cosmic god 'Ouranos'? This question, I believe, has to be positioned within the context in which Plato's *Timaeus* introduced Ouranos, and the philosophical controversy surrounding it. We saw that the origins of the universe coincide with the origins of Ouranos (*Ti*. 28b–c),

[18] On Philip's daemonology, see *Epin*. 977a–b, 984d–e and Tarán (1975) 42–7. On Xenocrates' theology, see Isnardi Parente (1982) 400–6; Baltes (1999) 191–222; Dillon (2003a) 102–36; Thiel (2006) 265–88. Baltes (1999) 207 is positive that Xenocrates' fr. 133 (T30) describes Ouranos in a way standard for all philosophers of the Early Academy.

[19] See further Section 4.3.

[20] See Sections 1.3 and 1.6. I follow Dillon (1986) 48–50, who claims that Aëtius mistakenly matched the Dyad with the world-soul, which is a derivative entity and thus should be located at the cosmic level where we find Ouranos, instead of relating it to a non-derivative principle, such as the Receptacle or matter. Moreover, Aëtius was right to characterise the Dyad as 'female' and 'mother', thus giving a proper counterbalance to the Monad as 'male' and 'father', but he was also required to find corresponding concepts to 'Zeus', 'Odd' and 'Intellect'. Failing to do this, he gave a conceptually impoverished account of the Dyad. For this reason, Dillon argues that the text might contain a lacuna or depend on some murky primary source. More recently Dillon (2003a) 102–7 has argued that the original theory contained three entities: the Monad as the intellect, the Dyad as the matter and the world-soul as the intermediate being, which projects the Forms onto the physical space. My reconstruction below is compatible with Dillon's proposal in so far as the first principles are concerned. However, I argue that the function that he ascribes to the world-soul is actually retained by the Monad and, moreover, there is a tighter connection between the world-soul and the *ouranos* than Dillon admits.

which means that the Platonic cosmogony is simultaneously theogony. Although the divine universe has a beginning, there is no end to it, since the Demiurge guarantees its everlasting existence (41b). The new god, moreover, is granted the capacity for self-motion through its soul, that is, the world-soul. In this way, it receives a causal role to initiate and maintain the motions of planets and stars. This conception of created and ensouled world-god received a thorough re-examination in Aristotle's *De Caelo*.

The object of Aristotle's treatise is the universe, which is regularly referred to as *ouranos* and *kosmos*, but as both the title of the book and the terminological analysis of its content indicate, Aristotle gives preference to the term *ouranos*.[21] Aristotle questions whether *ouranos* can be generated, but everlasting. The main argument against Plato's temporal creationism concerns the ontological status of the generated things: they are capable of change, which is due to contraries and so for the generated things destructibility remains a possibility (279b17–32). It also means that the generated things have the capacity of not being, which has to be actualised at some point of (infinite) time. So, the generated things cannot be everlasting and if the universe is to be eternal, it has to be ungenerated (281b3–282a13).[22] What is more, Aristotle proposes to derive the source of cosmic motions from the doctrine of natural motions and natural places. According to it, each simple body or element has a certain natural inclination to move either upwards from or downwards to the centre of the universe. Since none of the four elements naturally partake in a circular motion around the centre of the universe like the heavenly spheres, Aristotle postulates the existence of the fifth element, aether, with precisely this quality (268b26–269b13). The heavenly spheres, which contain and carry astral bodies, have such a distinctive material nature that there is no need to assume additional kinetic input of the world-soul – the properties of aether can do the explanatory job (289a11–35, 289b30–290a24, 292b25–293a11). These two objections shake the foundations of Plato's cosmology and have significant theological implications too: the argument against temporal

[21] See the terminological analysis in Johnson (2019) 91–8. For the synonymous use of *ouranos* and *kosmos*, see e.g. *Cael*. 272a16–20, 274a26–27, 276a18–21.

[22] For a critical overview of Aristotle's argument, see Sorabji (1983) 277–8.

creationism removes the Demiurge or Intellect as the productive cause, while the argument for aether severs the link between the *ouranos* and the world-soul by making the latter superfluous in Aristotle's system.[23]

It is remarkable, however, that this critique does not immediately affect the theological status of *ouranos*. Although *De Caelo* eliminates the overarching cosmological function of *ouranos* established in the *Timaeus*, the other qualities of *ouranos*, such as immortality, perfect motion and excellent spherical body, are sufficient to guarantee its divinity:

T31 The activity of a god is immortality, that is, eternal life. Necessarily, therefore, the divine must be in eternal motion. And since the *ouranos* is of this nature (i.e. a divine body), that is why it has its circular body, which by nature moves forever in a circle. (*Cael*. 286a9–12)

Θεοῦ δ' ἐνέργεια ἀθανασία· τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ ζωὴ ἀΐδιος. ὥστ' ἀνάγκη τῷ θεῷ κίνησιν ἀΐδιον ὑπάρχειν. Ἐπεὶ δ' ὁ οὐρανὸς τοιοῦτος (σῶμα γάρ τι θεῖον), διὰ τοῦτο ἔχει τὸ ἐγκύκλιον σῶμα, ὃ φύσει κινεῖται κύκλῳ ἀεί.

T32 The sum existence of the whole *ouranos*, the sum which includes all time even to infinity, is *aeon* . . . for it is immortal and divine. . . . In the more popular philosophical works, where divinity is in question, it is often made abundantly clear by the discussion that the foremost and highest divinity must be entirely immutable, a fact which affords testimony to what we have been saying. For there is nothing superior that can move it – if there were it would be more divine – and it has no badness in it nor is lacking in any of the fairness proper to it. It is too in unceasing motion, as is reasonable; things only cease moving when they arrive at their proper places, and for the body whose motion is circular the place where it ends is also the place where it begins. (*Cael*. 279a25–b3)

τὸ τοῦ παντὸς οὐρανοῦ τέλος καὶ τὸ τὸν πάντα χρόνον καὶ τὴν ἀπειρίαν περιέχον τέλος αἰών ἐστιν . . . ἀθάνατος καὶ θεῖος. . . . Καὶ γάρ, καθάπερ ἐν τοῖς ἐγκυκλίοις φιλοσοφήμασι περὶ τὰ θεῖα, πολλάκις προφαίνεται τοῖς λόγοις ὅτι τὸ θεῖον ἀμετάβλητον ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πᾶν τὸ πρῶτον καὶ ἀκρότατον· ὃ οὕτως ἔχον μαρτυρεῖ τοῖς εἰρημένοις. Οὔτε γὰρ ἄλλο κρεῖττόν ἐστιν ὅ τι κινήσει (ἐκεῖνο γὰρ ἂν εἴη θειότερον) οὔτ' ἔχει φαῦλον οὐδέν, οὔτ' ἐνδεὲς τῶν αὑτοῦ καλῶν οὐδενός ἐστιν. Καὶ ἄπαυστον δὴ κίνησιν κινεῖται εὐλόγως· πάντα γὰρ παύεται κινούμενα

[23] In addition, Aristotle argued that the world-soul exercises its power on the world-body as a coercive force, which cannot grant a painless and blessed (ἄλυπον καὶ μακαρίαν) life to what is divine (*Cael*. 284a27–35).

ὅταν ἔλθῃ εἰς τὸν οἰκεῖον τόπον, τοῦ δὲ κύκλῳ σώματος ὁ αὐτὸς τόπος ὅθεν ἤρξατο καὶ εἰς ὃν τελευτᾷ.

It is only with the introduction of the new kind of gods, the unmoved movers, in later treatises that the status of *ouranos* became more problematic. Book 12 (Λ) of the *Metaphysics*, which discusses these gods, mentions *ouranos* several times and never refers to it as something divine.[24] The reason is that it is no longer clear, more generally, (1) whether the unmoved movers are immanent or transcendent to the heavenly spheres and, more specifically, (2) whether an astral body such as *ouranos* can count as a proper god rather than a celestial representation of the Prime Mover.[25] But in so far as *De Caelo* is concerned, we can see that Aristotle develops major cosmological objections to Plato, whilst retaining the theological significance of the term *ouranos*.

It is important to note that there is a difference between the cosmological and theological meanings of this term in Aristotle's treatise and it concerns the physical extension of *ouranos*. As a cosmological entity, it can refer to either the fixed stars or the heavens or the universe, though the last usage is the most frequent one in *De Caelo*.[26] But as a divinity, it is primarily the extreme circumference of stars.[27] To return to the passages above, the larger context of T31 concerns two motions, namely the motion of planets, which are in the supralunary spheres, and the revolution of the extreme circumference of stars, which encloses the whole universe. In T31, Aristotle explains the circular motion of the fixed stars by appealing to its eternal divine nature. It is reasonable to suppose that *ouranos* in the next passage also means the extreme circumference, because just before T32 Aristotle speaks about the boundaries of the universe (ἔξω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, 279a16) and then in T32 he refers to *ouranos* as spatially the farthest being (ἀκρότατον). This departure

[24] See for example 1072a23, 1072b14, 1074a30–37.

[25] For problem (1), see further Judson (2019) 178–86; for problem (2), see Merlan (1946) 17 and compare with Broadie (2009) 239 and Segev (2017) 94–100, who argue that the corporeal and moving cosmic entities in Aristotle's system are also gods. *Metaph.* 1074a30–31 refers to the stars as 'divine bodies' (θείων σωμάτων), but only later testimony explicitly calls them 'gods', for which see Cicero, *ND* 2.15.42 = Aristotle, fr. 23 Rose.

[26] For the three meanings of the term *ouranos*, see again *Cael.* 278b9–21.

[27] For the divinity of the fixed stars, see Ross (1924) cxxxvii and Judson (2019) 177; for a more sceptical reading, see Blyth (2015).

from the Platonic cosmic god *qua* the whole world is not that surprising in light of Aristotle's critique of the world-soul. If *ouranos* is no longer responsible for causing all the motions in the universe through the world-soul, we have to find another instance of astral movement manifesting perfection and being worthy of divine nature, and the regular motions of the fixed stars is clearly the best example of this kind.

The narrower theological use of *ouranos* in Aristotle has further ramifications: the unwandering stars, which, notwithstanding their common participation in the single motion of sameness, were still considered as individual entities, plural 'divine living beings' in the *Timaeus* (ζῷα θεῖα, 40b5), are unified and merged into a single separate divinity. This reform was successful to such an extent that the later commentators projected the same conception of the fixed stars even on Aristotle's adversaries, such as Xenocrates:

T33 Xenocrates of Chalcedon riddles that the planets are seven gods, but that the *kosmos*, which is constituted of all those that do not wander, is eighth. (Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 5.50 = fr. 135 IP)

Ξενοκράτης (Καλχηδόνιος οὗτος) ἑπτὰ μὲν θεοὺς τοὺς πλανήτας, ὄγδοον δὲ τὸν ἐκ πάντων τῶν ἀπλανῶν συνεστῶτα κόσμον αἰνίττεται.

T34 Xenocrates . . . states that there are eight gods: five are those that give name to the planets; one consisting of all the fixed stars, which are to be regarded as separate members constituting a single deity; seventh he adds the sun, and eight the moon. (Cicero. *ND* 1.13.34, trans. H. Rackham, mod. = fr. 181 IP)

Xenocrates . . . deos enim octo esse dicit, quinque eos qui in stellis vagis moventur, unum qui ex omnibus sideribus quae infixa caelo sunt ex dispersis quasi membris simplex sit putandus deus, septimum solem adiungit octavamque lunam.

On the surface, the two passages seem to entail that Xenocrates not only followed Aristotle in regarding the fixed sphere of stars as a single deity, but also in equating it with *ouranos-kosmos*, which would be truly a significant concession to Aristotle. Something comparable on the fixed stars can be found in Philip too (see T35 and its discussion below). However, the earlier report coming from Cicero does not equate *caelum* (i.e. *ouranos*) with the fixed stars. The *infixa caelo* is Cicero's extremely rare technical expression for the

fixed stars rather than a reference to the 'fixed heaven'.[28] A more literal translation of *omnibus sideribus quae infixa caelo sunt* is 'all the stars implanted in the sky' (trans. P. G. Walsh). Therefore, the two passages are similar in as much as they ascribe unity and divinity to the fixed stars, but only T33 calls them *kosmos*. My conjecture is that Clement did not have access to Xenocrates' work and his sources may have been influenced by misplaced interpolations. For Aristotle himself uses the term *ouranos* to indicate 'the heavens' or 'the world' when discussing Xenocrates' substances (e.g. Aristotle, *Metaph*. 1028b24–27 = fr. 23 IP). At any rate, we are about to see that neither Xenocrates, nor Philip were ready to abandon Plato's conception of *ouranos* undefended.

The Academics took Aristotle's critique of the world-soul and creationism seriously. In general, most of them defended Plato by accepting some form of eternalism and reinterpreting the temporal unfolding of the universe in the *Timaeus* as a didactic tool to explain the eternal cosmic structure and the causal relations between its parts. And just like Aristotle, they formulated their position in terms of ouranology. What is distinctive about their responses is that the Academics sought to rescue the organisational function of the Ouranian god in terms of its causal role and physical extension. Not every Academic succeeded, not at least in the eyes of Aristotle's school, in building a coherent model. Theophrastus complains that with the notable exception of Xenocrates, most of the other philosophers, including Speusippus, the second head of the Academy, were incapable of deriving Plato's conception of the universe from the first principles (*Metaph*. 6a23–b9 = fr. 20 IP).[29] Let me briefly show the way in which the more fruitful solutions were formulated.

[28] For this point, see Pease (1955) 246 and compare with Cicero's translation of the *Timaeus* at 36.

[29] Van Raalte (1993) 264–6 argues that Theophrastus criticises Speusippus either because of his apparent lack of interest in astronomical phenomena or because of his inability to explain 'any causal (or otherwise functional) relations between the different constituent parts of nature'. The latter seems to be the more important reason, since Theophrastus attacks Speusippus for creating an 'episodic universe' (*Metaph*., 4a13–14; cf. Aristotle, *Metaph*. 1090b14–19), where different kinds of substance result from a different set of principles (see further Happ (1971) 212–27; Tarán (1981) 49–52). It is unfortunate, however, that the surviving fragments of Speusippus contain next to nothing on the term *ouranos*. Cf. Iamblichus, *Theol*. *Ar*. 82.10–85.23 = fr. 28 Tarán, where the anonymous

Xenocrates retained the notion of Ouranos as the main cosmic god. Its eternity was derived from the two fundamental ontological principles, the Monad and the Dyad.[30] The general thread of Xenocrates' response to Aristotle's challenge is captured by the above-mentioned passage T30. Its narrative falls into four parts: first, it introduces the two basic ontological principles; second, it gives a list of cosmic beings; then, the passage concentrates on the primary elements; and finally, it gives a doxographical note, which claims that Xenocrates adopted Plato's framework. Aëtius is right on this last point, because we can see Xenocrates following the narrative of the *Timaeus*.[31] In the *prooimion*, we find an exposition of the ontological premises (27c–29d), which is then succeeded by a cosmogony describing the origins of the universe (29e–41a), and after the speech of the Demiurge, the narrative turns to the nature of elements (53c–57d). The exposition in T30 is similar and gives us a way to look at the structure of the universe through various philosophical perspectives: on an ontological level, the universe is an interaction between the Monad and the Dyad;[32] on a theological-

source makes a distinction in Speusippus' system between *to pan*, which refers to undifferentiated 'all', and *kosmikos*, which refers to the ordered elements and objects. We cannot confirm whether this passage deploys Speusippus' terminology. The source then quotes Speusippus' fragment on the nature of the decad, but the fragment itself does not use these two terms, nor explores the astronomical significance of the decad, which may leave one with the kind of disappointment that Theophrastus had. I want to thank the anonymous reviewer for helping to formulate this point.

[30] The two principles are sometimes referred to as 'the One' and 'the ever-flowing (matter)' in non-theological contexts, for which see Aëtius, *Plac*. 1.3.22 MR = fr. 21 IP and the reconstruction of the testimony in Mansfeld and Runia (2020) 229–31, 263.

[31] There is some further evidence to show that Aëtius was not carelessly trying to convey Xenocrates' system and its roots in Plato's philosophy. The portion of T30 on the Monad as the governor of gods contained ἐν οὐρανῷ finds parallels at *R*. 6.508a4–6, where Socrates refers to the gods contained ἐν οὐρανῷ and emphasises that the sun is κύριον within the *ouranos*. Although the surviving evidence does not readily identify the Monad with the good or the sun, Xenocrates may have toyed with the idea of relating the two. More importantly, Aëtius' suggestion that the *ouranos* is a god, who is coordinated with the first principles, recalls the passage at *Cra*. 396b7–c3, which etymologises the *ouranos* as 'seeing things above' (ὁρῶσα τὰ ἄνω), thus characterising the *ouranos* as the god, who looks 'up' at the principles or the Forms. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for this point.

[32] It is interesting that T30 with its sexual differentiation of the first principles and parental language seems to attach more importance to the biological framework than the technological scheme of the *Timaeus*, especially because the Monad is not presented as the Demiurge. In addition, its title 'Zeus' is clearly meant to signal that this god is now prior to Ouranos and elevated above the Olympian gods. For some instances in Plato's

astronomical level, it is a family of cosmic gods; on a physical level, it is an organisation of the primary elements.[33] According to Xenocrates' reading of the *Timaeus*, the sequence of the three parts no longer express the temporal development of the universe, but dependence relations between various levels of reality. Each of the more complex entities is reducible to and thus dependent on a more primary entity.

On the most fundamental level of reality, the cosmic whole is the totality of interactions between the Monad and the Dyad, which are constitutive of what comes afterwards, namely the astral beings and the elements. What provides conceptual unity to this whole is the *ouranos*. As an ontological term, it unites the causal roles of the first principles, the mathematical-geometrical structures that emerge from the interaction between the Monad and the Dyad, and the dual nature (psychic and physical) that underpins the world-order. As a theological name, it refers to the primary cosmic god, whose function is to contain and organise the cosmic gods. Other testimonies provide further confirmation of the organisational role of *ouranos-kosmos* in Xenocrates' philosophy. For instance, Theophrastus informs us that in the sequence of derivation the *ouranos* and its soul arouse from the Monad and the Form-numbers and that Xenocrates 'somehow distributed everything around the *kosmos*, the sensibles, the intelligibles, the mathematicals alike, and even the divinities' (ἅπαντά πως περιτίθησιν περὶ τὸν κόσμον, ὁμοίως αἰσθητὰ καὶ νοητὰ καὶ μαθηματικὰ καὶ ἔτι δὴ τὰ θεῖα, *Metaph*., 6b7–9 = fr. 20 IP). Sextus follows this line by using *ouranos* to differentiate two ontological levels, the intelligible and the sensible, and emphasising that *ouranos* itself is a being composed of these two (*Adv. Log*. 1.147–149 = fr. 2 IP).[34] Another evidence in Themistius similarly uses *kosmos* as the main

later dialogues, which appear to remotely connect Zeus with either Intellect or the world-soul, see Section 1.7.

[33] The two missing elements in Aëtius' list are fire and aether. The five primary elements are directly derived from the geometrical figures, the most complex of which is the aetherial dodecahedron that gives shape to the world-body (Simplicius, *In Cael*. 12.26 = fr. 183 IP).

[34] Traditionally, scholars argue that in Sextus' testimony *ouranos* means 'the heaven' and that the specific markers present a tripartite classification of the cosmic regions: τὴν ἐκτὸς οὐρανοῦ – the supercelestial region, τὴν αὐτοῦ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ – the celestial region, τὴν ἐντὸς οὐρανοῦ – the sublunary region. See for example Krämer (1964) 35; Schibli (1993)

cosmological term, which is then broken down into the intelligible universe and the sensible universe (*In de An*. 11.19–20 = fr. 178 IP). The resulting view of the *ouranos* is constructed out of familiar Platonic *topoi*, but defined in such a way as to respond to Aristotle. Xenocrates aims to salvage a certain version of the *Timaeus* system by sacrificing Plato's temporal creationism, rebutting Aristotle's relocation of the divine Ouranos to the fixed stars and boosting the cosmological theory with a pair of principles that are immanent to the eternal Ouranos.[35]

Philip's contribution to the debate with Aristotle is rarely acknowledged, partly because he was not among the influential figures in the Academy and partly because his position is not easily mapped onto the creationist-eternalist division. On the one hand, Philip presents himself as an unambiguous creationist: he speaks of the divine and the mortal things in generation (τὸ θεῖον τῆς γενέσεως καὶ τὸ θνητόν, 977e5–6) and later fleshes it out as a proposal to provide a new discourse on the origins of god and animals (θεογονίαν ... καὶ ζῳογονίαν, 980c7). He places the starting point of the universe at the moment when soul and body combine into a single structure (981a). These two entities are not equal, since soul is temporally (and causally) prior to body: Philip describes soul as something that is older than body (παλαιότερον, 980d8; πρεσβύτερόν, 980e3). Is it older in virtue of having originated earlier than body? A positive answer would mean that there is a being or power superior to the world-soul, such as the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*, which could generate the world-soul. But this option is

144–5; Thiel (2006) 254–61; Sedley (2021a) 23–4. This interpretation could only work if we translated the phrase τὴν ἐντὸς οὐρανοῦ as 'under the heaven'. Otherwise, there is nothing in the text to indicate the sublunary region. However, LSJ only recognises the meaning 'within' for ἐντός, which is especially appropriate given its contrast with ἐκτός. Once we reclaim the correct meaning, we arrive at a more difficult conceptual problem. Now it appears that Xenocrates locates the sensibles 'within the heaven', which is an awkward example in light of the more plausible candidate, the terrestrial region, while the intelligibles are outside it, which can point to any two directions: the fixed stars or the earth. In order to avoid this unnecessary confusion, we must translate τὴν ἐντὸς οὐρανοῦ as 'within the universe' (cf. *Ti*. 40c3). For astronomical purposes, Xenocrates seems to be more inclined to use the moon rather than the *ouranos* to differentiate the cosmic regions. See Plutarch, *De fac*. 943e5–944a5 = fr. 81 IP; *Quaest. Plat*. 1007f2–6 = fr. 136 IP; and the analysis in Isnardi Parente (1982) 378–9, 407–8; Dillon (2003a) 125–7.

[35] On Xenocrates' immanent cosmology, see Sedley (2002) 63. For a contrary view, see Thiel (2006) 283–5. According to Mansfeld and Runia (2020) 392–394, Aëtius classifies Xenocrates as a philosophical pluralist, who wavers between immanence and transcendence.

not available to Philip. We have already mentioned that Ouranos *qua* the world-soul is considered to be the ultimate cause. We can now add that this god expresses his causation not only through the cosmic motions, but also through the demiurgic functions. In particular, soul has an active power to fashion and create (πλάττειν καὶ δημιουργεῖν, 981b8), whereas body is affected by its power (πλάττεσθαι, 981c1).[36] Thus, Philip conceptualises the world-soul as the creator of bodies. This is why we can find Philip assigning to Ouranos the power 'to make any body and any mass of material into a living being and then make it move however he thinks best' (ζῷον γεγονέναι πᾶν σῶμα καὶ ὄγκον σύμπαντα, ἔπειτα, ᾗπερ ἂν διανοηθῇ βέλτιστα, ταύτῃ φέρειν, 983b5–6), an example of which is the construction of the moon (978d).[37] It is not Ouranos that is generated, but the things inside him (982d7–983e1), hence his title the 'father' (πατήρ, 978c4).

Plato's conception of Ouranos undergoes a remarkable transformation in the *Epinomis*: the senior created god becomes the creator god. We can now appreciate why Philip saw fit to elevate the theological rank of Ouranos. Ouranos replaced the Demiurge and became the primary god, because Philip inherited the identification of Ouranos with the cosmos itself and then gave a novel

[36] Philip's theory of the demiurgic soul is based on the demiurgic functions of the younger gods in the *Timaeus* (see Section 2.2) and the *Laws* (10.892a–b, 10.896e–897b). The demiurgic soul in the latter dialogue can be understood either as an artificer that 'changes and rearranges' the bodies (μεταβολῆς . . . καὶ μετακοσμήσεως, 10.982a6) or as an originator of bodies. The second option seems to be highly unlikely, because the text repeatedly presents the world-soul as an administrator of the heavenly bodies rather than as their creator in time (e.g. 10.896d–e, 10.897b, 10.898c). Cf. Tarán (1975) 82–3.

[37] Most of the characteristics that Philip attributes to the cosmic gods are not distinctive from those of their counterparts in the *Timaeus* (see Section 1.3): the cosmic gods are planets and stars made of fire, discerned from one another by their orbits, and moving in a perfectly uniform and orderly manner, which marks their animality, intelligence and visible divinity (982a–b, 984c–d). A more curious proposal is to view the planets and stars as either the gods themselves or their εἰκόνες and ἀγάλματα (983e–984b), images and cult-statues. This uncertainty seems to be unwarranted, given the repeated emphasis on the divinity of astral entities (e.g. 984b–d, 985d, 986b, 986e). But it recalls a similar alternative in the *Timaeus* at 37c6–d1 (T7), where Ouranos is regarded as an *agalma* of the eternal gods. In Section 1.4, we saw that this passage has both a philosophical and a religious meaning. Philip, I believe, assumes a similar position. The planets and stars are images of the gods as well as cult-statues in so far as they are objects of worship that point to the invisible divinity inhabiting these cult-statues. For the astral bodies and their motions merely indicate the presence of the divine, while the true gods are the invisible souls controlling these bodies. Cf. Aronadio (2013) 82–6, who argues that the textual evidence does not allow us to determine whether the psychic aspect constitutes the divinity of astral beings.

proposal to integrate the functions of the Demiurge to the world-soul. Although scholars have noticed this philosophical innovation, the conceptual implications of Philip's response to the eternalist critique have not been taken into account sufficiently. Philip follows the *Timaeus* in regarding the physical entities as generated and destructible, the kinds of items that are part and parcel of the realm of becoming. He is even ready to entertain the idea that the cosmic bodies may perish after 'a vast length of life' (μακραίωνα βίον, 982a2). In this respect, he seems to acknowledge Aristotle's argument that the generated universe has to perish eventually.[38] But is there anything eternal in the universe? Philip's departure from the *Timaeus* gives him a new and exciting way to respond to this question. By fusing the Demiurge and the world-soul, he makes the world-soul an eternal being. The psychic aspect of the universe, therefore, is exempted from perishing and destruction. Hence, the curious position of Philip within this debate: he is a creationist in so far as the physical aspect of the universe is concerned, but he is an eternalist in so far as the psychic aspect of the universe is concerned. In addition, we have to recall that the world-soul is an eternal *and* creative power, so the demiurgic principle, which fashions bodies, is also immanent to this world-order. And here is the startling outcome of this theory: even if the world-body can perish at some point of time, the world-soul has the capacity to recreate it and so to restart the realm of becoming once again.

4.3 The Traditional Gods and the Planetary Names

Philip is particularly concerned with finding the right names for the cosmic gods, because the ordinary Greeks border on impiety

[38] Tarán (1975) 83–4 thinks that Philip is 'embarrassed by the question of generation' and proposes to approach his theogony from a non-literal perspective. The textual evidence deployed in favour of this thesis is the passage at 981e6–982a3, where the gods are regarded as either indestructible and immortal beings (ἀνώλεθρόν τε καὶ ἀθάνατον) or the kind of entities that will live a long life, and a later passage at 984a2–3, where the second alternative is dismissed and replaced with a claim that the cosmic gods are actually immortal (ἀθάνατον). However, the indestructibility and immortality of gods is not incompatible with the creationist interpretation: a thing can be created in the past *and* immortal for the rest of the time simultaneously. In fact, these qualities are precisely what the created gods receive from the Demiurge (*Ti.* 41b). So Tarán's preferred passages do not make a compelling case against a literal reading of Philip's theogony.

thanks to their ignorance of the religious identities of astral beings. The proposed starting point for naming the gods is the resources lying in Syrian astronomy, which has already discovered the name of the morning/evening star by identifying it as Aphrodite (986e–987b). Accordingly, the solution is to transfer the known names to Greek culture and to formulate some new ones. The specific Syrian strategy for identifying the gods is curiously convenient for Philip, because it gives the cosmic gods the names of the traditional gods just as Philip did in the case of his primary god Ouranos. The truth of the matter, however, is that this project in its rudimentary form can be traced back to Plato's later dialogues. As we saw in Chapter 1, there is a planet that belongs to Hermes (*Ti.* 38d), while Ouranos and Gaia are not only cosmic entities (34b, 40b) but also traditional gods (40e). In the *Laws*, the Athenian proposes a joint cult to Apollo and Helios, who are regarded as a single god (*Lg.* 12.945e, 12.946d, 12.947a). But Philip draws up a far more comprehensive list than Plato:

T35 The morning star, which is also the evening star, is accounted as Aphrodite's [star], a name highly appropriate for a Syrian law-giver to choose. The star that more or less accompanies both the sun and Aphrodite's is Hermes'. We have yet to speak of three more orbits that move to the right like the moon and the sun. But we should mention one, the eighth, which above all should be called *kosmos*. It moves in the opposite direction to all the others and carries them, as should be obvious even to humans who know a little about these things. But all that we know well we must tell, and we are telling it. For to anyone with even a small amount of understanding that is correct and divine, what is genuinely wisdom appears to be somewhat along these lines. Of the remaining three stars, one is particularly slow, and some call it by the name Kronos'. The next slowest we should call Zeus', and the next one Ares'; this one has the reddest colour of them all. (*Epin.* 987b2–c7)

ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἑωσφόρος ἕσπερός τε ὢν αὐτὸς Ἀφροδίτης εἶναι σχεδὸν ἔχει λόγον καὶ μάλα Συρίῳ νομοθέτῃ πρέπον, ὁ δ' ὁμόδρομος ἡλίῳ τε ἅμα καὶ τούτῳ σχεδὸν Ἑρμοῦ. τρεῖς δ' ἔτι φορὰς λέγωμεν ἐπὶ δεξιὰ πορευομένων μετὰ σελήνης τε καὶ ἡλίου. ἕνα δὲ τὸν ὄγδοον χρὴ λέγειν, ὃν μάλιστά τις ἂν κόσμον προσαγορεύοι, ὃς ἐναντίος ἐκείνοις σύμπασιν πορεύεται, ἄγων τοὺς ἄλλους, ὥς γε ἀνθρώποις φαίνοιτ' ἂν ὀλίγα τούτων εἰδόσιν. ὅσα δὲ ἱκανῶς ἴσμεν, ἀνάγκη λέγειν καὶ λέγομεν· ἡ γὰρ ὄντως οὖσα σοφία ταύτῃ πῃ φαίνεται τῷ καὶ σμικρὰ συννοίας ὀρθῆς θείας τε μετειληφότι. λοιποὶ δὴ τρεῖς ἀστέρες, ὧν εἷς μὲν βραδυτῆτι διαφέρων αὐτῶν ἐστι, Κρόνου δ' αὐτόν τινες

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ἐπωνυμίαν φθέγγονται· τὸν δὲ μετὰ τοῦτον βραδυτῆτι λέγειν χρὴ Διός, Ἄρεως δὲ ὁ μετὰ τοῦτον, πάντων δὲ οὗτος ἐρυθρώτατον ἔχει χρῶμα.

This is one of the first instances of a group of traditional gods reinterpreted as planets *qua* cosmic gods in Greek literature. However, the six astral names present in this passage – Aphrodite, Hermes, Kosmos, Kronos, Zeus, Ares – were not invented by Philip. Another contemporary example of a similar list is found in Aristotle, who reports that Eudoxus used four religious names for the planets: Hermes, Aphrodite, Zeus and Kronos (*Metaph.* 1073b17–38). Aristotle was also familiar with the star of Ares (*Cael.* 292a5). The repeated use of this particular list among Plato's students, which also represents its earliest appearances, suggests that the project of naming all the five planets goes back to at least the Early Academy and was fully implemented by Eudoxus, who was the leading astronomer in Plato's school.[39]

But there is an influential alternative interpretation. Franz Cumont has submitted that this project may have had an even earlier origin and argued that these names were transmitted from Babylon to the Academy via the Pythagoreans.[40] It is true that the later commentators credit the Pythagoreans with the first correct description of the planetary positions (Simplicius, *In Cael.* 471.2–6). Alexander of Aphrodisias adds a crucial piece of information, which is the number of planets: he quotes Aristotle saying that the Pythagoreans identified the positions of *five* planets (*In Metaph.* 39.1–2), which is the number found in Philip and Eudoxus as well. Unfortunately, both commentators mention neither the names of the planets, nor the fact that the Pythagoreans were the translators of the

[39] Neugebauer (1975) 675–83 argues that the planetary model of Eudoxus is not as successful as usually thought – the empirical data can explain the retrograde movement of only two planets, Zeus and Kronos. Cf. Repellini (2012) 79–87, who argues that Philip was aware of Eudoxus' astronomical model, but had 'reservations about its validity'. However, the shared list of names implies a stronger and more positive relationship between the two Academics. Zhmud (1998) 227–34 expresses some doubts as to whether Plato's mathematical thinking could have influenced Eudoxus, but this interpretation is strongly rejected by Karasmanis (2020).

[40] Cumont (1935) 7–8. Cf. Gundel and Gundel (1950) 2029–30, 2112–14, who follow Cumont's paper with two important exceptions. First, they see it as a multidirectional process of influence, that is, the Greeks borrowed the astronomical models from Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor. Second, these authors hold that Eudoxus (and potentially Callippus) was the one to introduce the full list of planetary names, a position to which I subscribe here as well.

Babylonian names into Greek. We must not presume that the correct identification of the position and the number of astral bodies necessarily led to the distribution of names, because there are examples where a certain philosopher identifies the planets by their positions or even colours without giving them a religious name, and this is exactly what Plato's Socrates does in the *Republic* (10.617a).

Cumont's thesis becomes even more problematic, if we look at the evidence on the Pythagorean astronomer presumably responsible for the identification of correct positions. Philolaus, the chief Pythagorean astronomer, is reported to have distributed planets around the central cosmic fire (DK44 A16), which was titled 'the house of Zeus' (Διὸς οἶκον).[41] This is yet another testimony which speaks of the position of planets without giving them names. In addition, it shows that Philolaus has a relatively different strategy for using the names of the traditional gods. Instead of associating Zeus with some planet, Philolaus gives the name 'Zeus' to the main cosmological entity. So, it eliminates at least one direct planetary link with the Babylonian gods. In other testimonies, which may be spurious, Philolaus is credited with giving other names of traditional gods to various mathematical items, but never to planets or stars (DK44 A14). We can be quite certain that Philolaus did not assign the same planetary names that we have in the *Epinomis*. In light of this evidence, the Pythagorean transmission thesis seems to be somewhat dubious, and we should stick to Eudoxus as the first unambiguous namer of planets.

Although the surviving evidence does not reveal Eudoxus' theoretical interest in naming the planets, we can at least uncover the reasoning behind Philip's list.[42] He is motivated to spell out the particular names of each planet, because it restores the equality among the cosmic gods, since some of them were not known, and thus allows assigning them a proper share of religious honours (986c). But is there any method that guided the procedure of naming

[41] Other testimonies call it the hearth, the guard-post, the tower of Zeus, see Huffman (1993) 396–7.

[42] One piece of evidence, however, shows that Eudoxus worked on the theological translations as such. See Plutarch, *De Is. et Osir.* 64, who notes that Eudoxus was interested in the correlation between the Egyptian and Greek gods, namely Isis and Demeter, Dionysus and Osiris.

the gods systematically? Philip abstains from explicitly stating it, and so does Aristotle – unsurprisingly at least in the case of Aristotle, given the fact that his true gods are the 47 or 55 unmoved movers of the heavenly spheres, who are not individuated by religious names or anthropomorphic character patterns.[43] After all, Aristotle has a relatively different tactic with respect to Greek mythology than our two Academics: we can see that the latter followed the path marked by Plato in trying to adapt religious names to their own gods, whereas Aristotle did not take an active interest in refashioning the religious discourse. He was happy to dismiss most of the mythical beliefs, demythologise some of them by revealing that beneath a thick layer of misguided information some myths have a measure of correspondence to his own doctrines and move forward without trying to integrate them further.[44]

But to return to our original question, I think that some of the Academics have made attempts at formulating a principle of correspondence between philosophy and religion, which is well illustrated by Xenocrates in the previously discussed theological passage (T30). For almost every divinity in his system, Xenocrates gives a corresponding name that comes from the religious tradition. Thus, the Monad becomes Zeus, the universe becomes Ouranos and three out of five primary elements (air, water, earth) become Hades, Poseidon and Demeter. We must suppose that the progression of these names reflects the functions of the gods rather than their position in Greek theogonies. The senior gods of Xenocrates' universe are not matched with the senior gods of

[43] For the number of unmoved movers, see Judson (2019) 269–72. White (2022) argues that the gods are individuated by their ordinal positions in the sequence of unmoved movers, while Judson (2019) 330 argues that they are individuated by their thinking about a different 'subset of the objects of the Prime Mover's thinking'. For the rejection of anthropomorphism, see *Metaph*. 1074a38–1074b14 and *Pol*. 1252b24–27. See also Segev (2017) 16–21.

[44] See for example *Cael*. 283b26–284a23, where Aristotle corrects the tradition (πατρίους λόγους) asserting that the divine is in motion with an observation that it is actually the limit of motion; where his critique of creationist doctrines allegedly supports the ancients (ἀρχαῖοι), according to whom the *ouranos* is a place of gods because of its immortality; and finally where he dismisses the myth of Atlas, because the *ouranos* requires no external force to sustain it. Similarly, *Metaph*. 1074a38–1074b14 makes an ingenious move by claiming that beneath the later additions to mythological stories there is a core belief that 'the primary substances are gods' (θεοὺς . . . τὰς πρώτας οὐσίας εἶναι) and that 'the divine encompasses the whole of nature' (περιέχει τὸ θεῖον τὴν ὅλην φύσιν). For a more positive defence of Aristotle's use of myths, see Segev (2017) 125–9.

Greek theogony, for that would amount to making Ouranos or Kronos and not Zeus the most prominent deity. Instead, Xenocrates seems to allocate traditional identities on a functional basis. For instance, the governing principle of the universe receives the name of the king of gods, Zeus, while the aquatic aspect of the universe is identified with the god of seas, Poseidon. In this way, the universe, which contains within itself everything, including the divinities, receives the name of the old heavenly god, Ouranos, who contained within himself the traditional gods.[45]

On the surface, Philip does not appear to use a single method for naming the planetary gods. However, Cumont has argued the Greek names nicely correspond to the Babylonian names and this remarkable translation was carried out on the functional basis as well, namely the specific qualities of the Greek gods were harmonised with their Babylonian counterparts. In particular, the five identifications were the following: Nabou – Hermes, Ishtar – Aphrodite, Nergal – Ares, Mardouk – Zeus, Ninurta – Kronos.[46] Now Ishtar, who is associated with love and beauty, is the best example for his case, but others are not so straightforward. For Nabou (Hermes) has more to do with wisdom and scribes than thieves and tricks, while Ninurta (Kronos) is neither the father of Mardouk (Zeus), nor the first king of gods. At the very least, this is not a solid piece of theological adaptation. If the five names really came into the Greek world through a certain transmission, one must not assume that there was a rigorous method of functional correspondence or identificatory correlation in place. It is worthwhile to add, moreover, that the Academic list of planetary names

[45] Aëtius' report in T30 is backed up by Tertullian, who argues that Xenocrates had a twofold division between the Olympians and the Titans (*Ad nat*. 2.2.15–16 = fr. 138 IP). This division reflects the difference between the cosmic gods, who are emphatically called the Olympian gods in T30, and the sublunary daemons. It is noteworthy that Tertullian describes the Olympians as those 'from Heaven' (*de Caelo*), which reaffirms the organisational function of Ouranos within the society of the cosmic gods, whereas the Titans are those 'from Earth' (*de Terra*). It may also explain why Aëtius identifies Demeter with the element of earth, thus leaving for Gaia a more comprehensive role of organising the sublunary daemons.

[46] Cumont (1935) 7–8. I use the divine names as spelled in his paper. For a broader discussion of the translatability of divine names, see Parker (2017) 46–64.

in the *Epinomis* later found a contender, which preferred 'Apollo', 'Hera' and 'Heracles' to 'Hermes', 'Aphrodite' and 'Ares' respectively.[47] If this shows anything, it is a certain level of arbitrariness about the whole process of translating and adapting the names. In the end, there is no way to prove or in fact disprove Cumont's thesis – the list itself does not confirm his proposal, because it hangs on a series of further assumptions, such as that there was an influential translation from the Babylonian, that the Academics knew it and that they accepted it without any modification. We are left with just too many questions: why do we trust in Philip's declaration that he relies on the Syrian astronomy, when we become suspicious whenever Plato invokes Egyptian knowledge? If the Academics knew the original list, why did Plato mention only one translated name, that of Hermes? What are the other arguments against thinking that the Academy invented this particular planetary name apart from the initial assumption that it was received through a transmission? And if there were competing names for the planet of, say, Ares/Heracles, why assume that the one in the Academic list (Ares) is the original rather than their own reformulation (from Heracles to Ares)?[48]

There can be, moreover, a number of local explanations of the specific theological identities in T35. One of Philip's sources of inspiration could be the passage in the *Republic*, where each planet is characterised by a distinguishing colour and luminosity

[47] Pseudo-Aristotle, *De Mundo* 392a25–28. Among other things, Plato and his disciples could not accept such an alternative because Apollo is associated with Helios in the *Laws* (see Section 1.7).

[48] An additional, though not a decisive reason to doubt the extent of influence is that Persian cosmology had little influence on Plato's Academy. Phillip Horky has showed that the Academics had some knowledge of Persian religion and perhaps they aimed to differentiate their own religious ideas from those of the Persians. However, Horky (2009) 91 concludes that only one Academic went further than that: 'a certain strand of the early Academy not only established analogues between the ontological systems of Zoroastrianism and Platonism, but it also used Zoroastrianism as a means to justify that unique metaphysical scheme at a specific moment when various associates of Plato competed over how to define "Platonism" itself. This unique metaphysical scheme, which deviates from systems ascribed to Speusippus and Xenocrates, may be associated with Hermodorus of Syracuse, a minor Platonist whose proposition of a categorical structure for beings within the universe was later considered to be "Pythagorean" by Sextus Empiricus … Unlike Eudoxus, Aristotle, and Philip of Opus, Hermodorus resisted the impulse to posit the death of Plato as the end-point that establishes a millenarian scheme for the universe.'

(10.617a).[49] Philip may have reinterpreted this passage as suggesting that the given astral colour has a symbolical meaning. On this reading, one may conjecture that Ares received the reddest planet because the colour red is quite appropriate for the blood-soaked god of war.[50] However, the religious identity of the planet can be determined not only by the colour, but also by its intensity and aesthetic appeal. Thus, Aphrodite received the brightest and most beautiful star. This link between the comparable qualities of the goddess and the planet is applicable to Hermes as well. His name is a takeover from *Ti*. 38d, where Hermes' planet is singled out for its speed. In addition, T35 identifies this planet as a travel companion to Aphrodite and Helios. Both qualities of the planet are in harmony with the conventional areas of Hermes' activity, namely travelling and quickness.[51]

The last three names on the list (Kosmos, Kronos, Zeus) raise some challenge. T35 distinguishes the planets of Kronos and Zeus by their extreme slowness, which could mean that the two gods received their planets because of their astronomical qualities, namely the speed, rather than theological areas of activity. Tarán proposed to view the three names as representing the theogonic sequence.[52] The passage uses the terms *kosmos* and *ouranos* synonymously and once we replace Kosmos with Ouranos, we have a nice progression of the three generations of the reigning gods: Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus. However, the formulation, where the sphere of the fixed stars is titled 'Kosmos', is extremely nuanced and carefully crafted. The *Epinomis* treats the fixed

[49] Cf. Aëtius, *Plac*. 2.15.4 MR, where Plato is reported to have distinguished the planets by their luminosity: Πλάτων μετὰ τὴν τῶν ἀπλανῶν θέσιν πρῶτον φαίνωνα λεγόμενον τὸν τοῦ Κρόνου, δεύτερον φαέθοντα τὸν τοῦ Διός, τρίτον πυρόεντα τὸν τοῦ Ἄρεος, τέταρτον ἑωσφόρον τὸν τῆς Ἀφροδίτης, πέμπτον στίλβοντα τὸν τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ, ἕκτον ἥλιον, ἕβδομον σελήνην. Apart from this principle and the name of Dawnbearer (*Ti*. 38d2), the remaining information is unreliable. Timaeus never calls the planet of Hermes the 'Gleaming one'. Moreover, the association of Kronos with the fixed stars is impossible because Timaeus does not regard the sphere of stars as a single being (40a–b). Gundel and Gundel (1950) 2030 argue that the alternative way of naming gained some grounds during the Hellenistic period and may be related to the fact that some astronomers were reluctant to use the religiously charged names. This list is repeated verbatim in the above-mentioned passage of Pseudo-Aristotle, *De Mundo* 392a23–31 with one exception, which is Kronos.

[50] For the colour red and Ares, see for example Hesiod, *Sc*. 191–194.

[51] Allan (2018) 7–11. [52] Tarán (1975) 309.

stars as a single god 'which above all should be called the *kosmos*' (ὃν μάλιστά τις ἂν κόσμον προσαγορεύοι), which 'moves in the opposite direction to all the others and carries them, as should be obvious even to humans who know a little about these things' (*Epin*. 987b6–9). The way in which Philip introduces the divinity of the fixed stars is strikingly similar to Aristotle and Xenocrates. However, he does not go as far to define the fixed stars as the *kosmos*: he merely emphasises that the fixed stars especially (μάλιστα) capture what we understand as the *kosmos*. A similar idea can be found in the *Timaeus*. It describes how the Demiurge weaves together the body of the world with the world-soul, extending the latter from the centre to the circumference and then wrapping it around the universe (34b, 36e). The implication is that instead of being located at a particular point in space, the world-soul permeates the whole universe. But there seems to be something special about the emphasis on the boundary of the universe, since this is precisely the location of the fixed stars and the motion of sameness. Both ancient Platonists and modern scholars interpreted these passages as suggesting 'that the presence of a rational soul is most clearly revealed at the circumference'.[53] If that is so, the *Epinomis* appears to be conveying a similar idea. Just like the *Timaeus*, it makes an analogous point concerning the distinctive status of the fixed stars with their exceptional movements that display the workings of the world-soul and the motions of the sameness.[54] It also means that the fixed stars are not identical with the primary god, Ouranos-Kosmos, who physically encompasses the whole universe rather than some specific cosmic area. The three cosmic gods, therefore, do not represent the theogonic generations. Lefka suggests that Kronos receives a slow planet because he is an old god that belongs to the ancient generation of divinities, but this seems to be unlikely because the same explanation would be *eo ipso* applicable to Zeus, who also receives a slow planet, and Zeus is anyone but a senior citizen.[55] The question as to why the two of them received the names 'Zeus' and 'Kronos' unfortunately remains unresolved.

[53] Cornford (1937) 58. [54] *Pace* Tarán (1975) 81. [55] Lefka (2013) 117.

So the riddle about the original procedure of naming the planets and the specific role of the Academy in this process will probably continue to haunt scholarship.[56] Be that as it may, we can see that Philip marries all of his cosmic gods with the traditional gods and thus develops a more coherent theory of double identification than Plato. Plato's dialogues relate only some of the cosmic gods to the traditional gods, a practice which Philip expands to all cosmic gods, and Xenocrates to the ontological principles and the material elements as well.[57] However, some of these Academic identifications do contradict each other. A good example is Zeus, who is the Monad in Xenocrates and a planet in Philip. Another common feature in both Academics is a stratified and complex society of gods. In Aëtius' report (T30), we saw that Xenocrates has a hierarchical order of gods with the Monad and the Dyad dominating at the top of it. The cosmic gods assume the middle theological rank, which is still a higher position than the one held by the elements. On the whole, Xenocrates has three ranks of gods. Although Philip seems to establish only a single family of gods, we have to recall that the cosmic gods are subordinated to the heavenly father Ouranos and, in turn, they have the daemons, who are the messengers of gods, being subordinated to them (984e). So, there is a theological hierarchy in the *Epinomis* as well.

The marriage of the two families brings us to what we may call the ontology of naming. How does this procedure affect the nature of the traditional gods? Are they fully integrated with the family of cosmic gods, whereby only the names of the traditional gods are preserved? Or is there some theological distance between the two

[56] My scepticism is consistent with the recent illuminating study on the interaction between Greek and Babylonian astronomy. Stevens (2019) 33–93 argues that 'there is no evidence for detailed Greek knowledge of Babylonian astronomical or astrological scholarship before the third century BC. Unsurprisingly, then, the crucial period of cross-cultural exchange seems to have been that which brought the inhabitants of Greece and Mesopotamia into closer contact than ever before [viz. the Hellenistic period] . . . The surviving evidence offers a great deal of scope for fruitful speculation – that Hipparchus was the main conduit for Babylonian observations while arithmetical astronomy was fully explicated by later scholars; that Kidenas and Sudines were members of the priestly elite at Esagila who one day packed up their styluses and travelled west; that Rhodes was a key site for the transmission of Babylonian celestial scales of measurement to the Greek world.'

[57] The latter move seems to be parallel to Empedocles, DK 31 B6 and A33, for which see Introduction.

families, whereby the traditional gods can express a distinct facet of the divine? In other words, do the Academics keep the distinction between the two families of gods or not? It is evident that Xenocrates completely merges the two families together, thus creating a theological system, where the names of the traditional gods indicate various ontological and cosmological entities. On the first reading of the *Epinomis*, Philip seems to follow a similar path and cosmologises the traditional gods by assigning their names to the cosmic gods. But on closer inspection, T35 never calls this or that planet 'Zeus' or 'Hermes', as if a specific traditional god is nothing else than a specific planet. It uses the genitives to indicate that there is the planet of Zeus (Διός, 987c6) or the planet of Hermes (Ἑρμοῦ, 987b5), which seems to imply a relation of belonging or possession.[58] To make matters even more complicated, Zeus is also mentioned as a member of the traditional gods, a group, which is clearly distinguished from the cosmic gods:

T36 As to the gods – Zeus, Hera and all the rest – we may legislate as we like, the same law holding for each, and we must treat this principle as firmly established. But as to the first gods, those that are visible, greatest, most honoured, and most sharply seeing everywhere, we must declare that these are the stars together with all the celestial phenomena we perceive. (*Epin.* 984d3–8)

Θεοὺς μὲν δή, Δία τε καὶ Ἥραν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους πάντας, ὅπῃ τις ἐθέλει, ταύτῃ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τιθέσθω νόμον καὶ πάγιον ἐχέτω τοῦτον τὸν λόγον· θεοὺς δὲ δὴ τοὺς ὁρατούς, μεγίστους καὶ τιμιωτάτους καὶ ὀξύτατον ὁρῶντας πάντῃ, τοὺς πρώτους τὴν τῶν ἄστρων φύσιν λεκτέον καὶ ὅσα μετὰ τούτων αἰσθανόμεθα γεγονότα

The two families of gods are regarded as unequal groups from the epistemic and theological point of view, so it is puzzling as to why the bodies of the cosmic gods can 'belong' to these lower traditional gods.[59] It is clear though that the inequality of the two families does not compel Philip to deny the existence of the traditional gods. T36 suspends judgement with respect to the

[58] See *Ti.* 38d2–6 and Section 1.7, where the same meaning is implied. See further Gundel and Gundel (1950) 2114–15, who observe that the Greeks generally approached the planets as bodies owned by and consecrated to the gods, and Lefka (2013) 115–20.

[59] Perhaps this issue becomes less problematic, if we turn to *Ti.* 41d–e, where human souls are placed in the stars, despite the fact that the stars are divine beings with their own souls.

nature of these gods and promptly places them in the ritual environment without raising further questions.[60] So there remains an unthematised difference between Zeus the traditional god and the cosmic god bearing the same name, which is accompanied by a further riddle concerning such gods as Hera, who have no corresponding planets in the *Epinomis*. Even if this does not clarify Philip's conception of the traditional gods, we can at least say that they are not fully assimilated with the cosmic gods.

In conclusion, it is misleading to think that the members of the Early Academy unanimously collapsed the distinction between the traditional and cosmic gods. It is Xenocrates, the great systemiser of Plato's legacy, who offered a wholesale reinterpretation of the traditional gods. He was the one to establish the clearer functional correspondence between the traditional gods and various powers and to allocate the religious names accordingly. In this way, he dissolved the distinction between the traditional and other kinds of gods. Such an extensive cosmologisation of the traditional gods finds its predecessor in Plato's *Phaedrus*, but not in the later dialogues (see Introduction). Philip's arrangement, on the other hand, is not so tidy and thus more in line with the *Timaeus*. Philip makes a provocative and unambiguous proposal to call the cosmic gods by the names of the traditional gods, but then he neither adopts a single method in distributing their names, nor assumes a clear position on the ontological implications of naming, which would define the place of the traditional gods in the overall architecture of the *Epinomis*. Thus, Philip seems to propose a loose union of the two families, where the cosmic gods and the traditional gods retain their independent identities. According to him, the broader purpose of discussing the names of planets and stars is to rectify incorrect religious beliefs about the cosmic gods,

[60] The content of the law in T36 caused some confusion due to the brevity of Philip's remark. The only other instance in which Philip speaks of the religious laws and the ritual honouring of traditional gods, is 985c–d, where he advises the future legislator neither to forbid the conventional cult practices, nor to encourage innovations in them. Tarán (1975) 281–2 suggests that this passage makes two points: 'the same law must apply to all the gods, i.e. if they are gods they all have the same attributes, and we should not blaspheme by saying that some are gods and some not . . . The second point is made with πάγιον . . . λόγον, which refers to Plato's repeated recommendation that legislation should be unchangeable.'

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to prepare the way for their proper worship and to ensure virtuous behaviour among Magnesian citizens. Let us move then to the final topic of this chapter, the moral and political implications of Philip's theological reform.

4.4 Piety and Godlikeness in the Cosmic City

The narrative arc of the *Epinomis* implicitly signals that Philip's moral philosophy is based on a version of *homoiōsis theōi*. The dialogue is framed as an ethical guidance, which starts with an invitation to follow the Ouranian god (συνακολουθεῖν, 977b1) by means of contemplation (θεωρία, 977b1) and ends as a recommendation to become divine (θεῖος, 992c6) by learning mathematics. The initial point of this assimilative journey is an epiphanic experience of the Ouranian god, which arouses a sense of wonder and a desire to learn more about the universe (986c). It incites the moral agents to explore the motions and nature of planets and stars (982e, 990a), and, in particular, the role of Ouranos in the astral phenomena (977b). As soon as this philosophical passion assumes a more rigorous form of research programme, the agents are advised to begin their astronomical studies with the investigation into the circuits of the moon, after which comes the revolutions of the sun and then the motions of Hermes' and Aphrodite's planets (990a). They are also warned about the difficulties in comprehending the remaining astral entities because of their poor visibility and obscure motions. A further progress in astronomy depends on one's competences in other mathematical subjects (990b). Given that numbers can explain the order, harmony and rhythm of the universe (978a), these subjects help the astronomer to understand the operations of cosmic souls in the remaining planets and to discover the true theological status of stars (991b–d). Philip is sure that this is the way for the astronomer to develop intellectual virtues such as wisdom (990a).

Philip is fully on board with the intellectualist and elitist approach to the ideal of godlikeness. In this respect, his conception of the assimilative object (the cosmic gods), the ethical means (intellectual virtues) and the target audience (the elite few) corresponds to what we found in the *Timaeus* (see Section 3.1). This is unsurprising perhaps in light of the high standing that the ideal of

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homoiōsis theōi had among the Academics. According to John Dillon's tentative reconstruction, the ethical end in Xenocrates is human flourishing understood as a good state of the soul, which means perfecting the monadic aspect of one's soul, the intellect, and thus becoming like the Monad (also called 'Intellect' or 'Zeus', see T30), the highest god in his system.[61] Our further information on the assimilative journey is quite speculative. Given Xenocrates' inclination to explain nature by means of mathematical concepts, it is reasonable to start by assuming that the particular means to achieve this moral objective are mathematics. Xenocrates has a particular understanding of the object and role of mathematics, which makes a sharp contrast with what we find in the *Epinomis*. Philip's mathematical sciences are arithmetic, geometry, stereometry, harmony and astronomy (990c–991b) – a set of studies which is completely in agreement with the *Republic* (7.522c–531d) except that the architectonic role in Socrates' (and Plato's) version is assigned to dialectics rather than astronomy. For Philip, astronomy is the crowning point of mathematics, because it reveals the cosmological nature of Ouranos. The arithmetical side of mathematics is useful here only in as much as the study of the properties of numbers 'contributes to the nature of existing things' (παρέχεται πρὸς τὴν τῶν ὄντων φύσιν, 990c8). 'Contribution to the nature' is undoubtedly a vague characterisation of what the numbers do, but there is no hint at the more substantial forms of contribution, namely that the numbers may be constitutive factors or primary causes of the whole universe.[62] Philip assigns this function to Ouranos and his demiurgic activity exercised through the world-soul, which is why the proper object of assimilation remains nothing else than the cosmic god.

[61] Dillon (2003a) 136–49. Cf. Aristotle, *Top*. 112a32–37 = fr. 154 IP; Cicero, *Tusc*. 5.38–39; Aëtius, *Plac*. 1.7.21 MR = fr. 133 IP (T30).

[62] Cf. ὁ δὲ τρόπος ὅδε – ἀνάγκη γὰρ τό γε τοσοῦτον φράζειν – πᾶν διάγραμμα ἀριθμοῦ τε σύστημα καὶ ἁρμονίας σύστασιν ἅπασαν τῆς τε τῶν ἄστρων περιφορᾶς τὴν ὁμολογίαν οὖσαν μίαν ἁπάντων ἀναφανῆναι δεῖ τῷ κατὰ τρόπον μανθάνοντι, φανήσεται δέ, ἄν, ὃ λέγομεν, ὀρθῶς τις εἰς ἓν βλέπων μανθάνῃ – δεσμὸς γὰρ πεφυκὼς πάντων τούτων εἷς ἀναφανήσεται διανοουμένοις, *Epin*. 991d8–992a1. Tarán (1975) 345–6 rightly observes that 'unity' (τὸ ἕν) and 'bond' (δεσμός) are not separate ideas postulated over and above the Ouranian god, but in fact refer to the mathematical sciences, which 'constitute a single unit' and have 'a single bond [that] unites them all' – that is, number.

By contrast, Xenocrates has numbers as the highest object of knowledge. He identifies them with the Forms, thereby fusing the two into the Form-numbers, because they have the same kind of essence and causation.[63] In particular, the Form-numbers are the 'defining factors' of things (περιοριστικοί, Asclepius, *In Arist. Metaph*. 379.18–19 = fr. 24 IP) in the following sense:

T37 According to Xenocrates, the Ideas are the paradigmatic cause of whatever is composed continually in accordance with nature. For one should not situate it among the contributory causes, by which I mean the instrumental, material, or specifying, because it is a cause in the fullest sense; nor, among types of cause proper, among the final or the creative, (a) for even if we say that it creates by reason of its very essence, (b) and that becoming like to it is an end for all generated things, nevertheless the final cause of all things in the strict sense and that for the sake of which all things are is superior to the Ideas, and the creative cause in the strict sense is inferior to them, looking to the Paradigm as a criterion and rule of procedure. . . . Now Xenocrates propounded this definition of an Idea as being in accord with the views of his master, laying it down as a transcendent and divine causal principle. (Proclus, *In Prm*. 888.11–38 = fr. 14 IP, trans. G. Morrow and J. Dillon, mod.)

καθά φησιν ὁ Ξενοκράτης, εἶναι τὴν ἰδέαν θέμενος αἰτίαν παραδειγματικὴν τῶν κατὰ φύσιν ἀεὶ συνεστώτων· οὔτε γὰρ ἐν τοῖς συναιτίοις ἄν τις αὐτὴν θείη, λέγω δὲ, οἷον ὀργανικοῖς, ἢ ὑλικοῖς, ἢ εἰδικοῖς, διόπερ αἰτίαν εἶναι πάντως· οὔτε τῶν αἰτίων ἐν τοῖς τελικοῖς ἁπλῶς ἢ ποιητικοῖς· (a) κἂν γὰρ αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι λέγωμεν αὐτὴν δρᾷν, (b) καὶ τέλος εἶναι τῶν γιγνομένων τὴν πρὸς αὐτὴν ὁμοίωσιν, ἀλλὰ τό τε κυρίως τελικὸν πάντων αἴτιον καὶ οὗ ἕνεκα πάντα πρὸ τῶν ἰδεῶν ἐστι, καὶ τὸ κυρίως ποιητικὸν μετὰ τὰς ἰδέας, ὡς πρὸς

[63] For the Form-numbers as the highest object of knowledge, see Asclepius, *In Metaph*. 379.17–22 = fr. 24 IP. The category of mathematicals mentioned in Section 4.2 includes the Form-numbers and the geometrical Forms, for which see Annas (1976) 75–6; Dillon (2003a) 123–5; Horky (2013) 701, 705. An alternative way is to take the mathematicals as a reference to the Form-numbers only, for which see Merlan (1968) 44; Happ (1971) 242–3; Van Raalte (1993) 268; Thiel (2006) 261. However, we should avoid restricting the meaning. Xenocrates uses the mathematicals to explain the transition from the intelligible first principles to the formation of soul and body, a transition that does not posit a different set of explanatory principles to every new level and thus avoids Speusippus' mistake of building an 'episodic universe'. It means that the mathematicals are an intermediate category that belongs to the broader group of the intelligibles and serves to explain the connection between the sensible and the intelligible kinds of being. All mathematicals (both the Form-numbers and the geometricals) are interconnected when deriving the formation of body from the first principles, for which see Themistius, *In de An*. 11.19–20 = fr. 178 IP. Similar usage is attested in other sources as well, see for example Aristotle, *Metaph*. 1036b12–17 = fr. 25 IP; Aristotle, *Metaph*. 1076a10 = fr. 27 IP; Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Phys*. 2.260 = fr. 43 IP.

> κριτήριον βλέπων καὶ κανόνα τὸ παράδειγμα ... Ὁ μὲν οὖν Ξενοκράτης τοῦτον ὡς ἀρέσκοντα τῷ καθηγεμόνι τὸν ὅρον τῆς ἰδέας ἀνέγραψε, χωριστὴν αὐτὴν καὶ θείαν αἰτίαν τιθέμενος.

On any minimalist reading of the beginning of T37, the Form-number must at least provide a type of causation that gives structure and definition to the generated entities. Proclus then gives his own explanation by distancing Xenocrates' 'paradigmatic' cause from the material and final causes, but the underlined parenthesis seems to return to Xenocrates by a way of specifying why someone can mistake Xenocrates' Form-number for these other types of causation. For our present topic, aspect (b) is of paramount importance: it seems to imply that Proclus draws from Xenocrates the assumption that the Form-number can produce cosmic order by stimulating the generated things to assimilate (ὁμοίωσιν) to it as the final cause. The proposal slightly reminds one of Aristotle's Prime Mover, who moves the cosmic gods as an object of love, thus as the final cause too (*Metaph*. 1072b3–4).[64] The Aristotelian flavour of this process should not worry us too much, because we saw that the Ouranian god has a teleological role for its imitators in Plato's *Timaeus* too. In other words, (a) it is not only the Form-numbers that actively fashion the generated things, but (b) these things actively seek to emulate the Form-numbers as well. Such a teleological orientation makes sense even in the case of human beings, because Xenocrates claims that human soul is a self-moving number (Plutarch, *De Procr. An. In Ti*. 1012d–1013b = fr. 108 IP). Soul is derived from the Form-numbers that become mobile through the interaction with the intelligibles of the Monad, the principles of rest and motion (sameness and difference).[65] So does it mean that human beings

[64] See Judson (2019) 183–6.

[65] I follow here Isnardi Parente (2012) 25, who argues that the mathematical nature of soul indicates its congeniality with the Form-numbers, while the kinetic aspect indicates its ability to comprehend the Form-numbers and grasp something other than themselves, for instance the sensibles. The kinetic function of the two intelligibles is clearly at odds with Plato's *Sophist* (254d–255e), where sameness and difference are considered as separate kinds from motion and rest. A more difficult question, however, concerns the status of sameness and difference and their relation to the Monad. Dillon (2003a) 121 claims that these intelligibles can be interpreted as the thoughts of the god, since the Monad functions as the divine Intellect (cf. Krämer (1964) 121). However, Dillon's attractive solution finds little supporting evidence in the surviving testimonies. Dillon quotes a single passage in defence of this thesis, which is a testimony of Alcimus: 'Each one of the Forms is eternal, a thought, and moreover impervious to change' (ἔστι δὲ τῶν

have to imitate the divine Form-numbers rather than the Monad in order to become godlike?

Perhaps most of the generated things partake in this kind of imitation, but certainly not the elite few endowed with intellection. Their mathematical studies do not end at this object of knowledge, for they still have to learn about the relation between the Form-numbers and Xenocrates' highest god. The final step is to open the deepest ontological level, the very foundation of the Form-numbers. The numbers emerge, when the Monad *qua* the principle of indivisibility and unity limits the Dyad *qua* the principle of divisibility and multiplicity, whereby it confines the Dyad and creates units, the basis of numbers (Plutarch, *De Procr. An. In Ti.* 1012d9–e5 = fr. 108 IP). In this way, the mathematician recognises that the Form-numbers are dependent on the continuous eternal interaction between the Monad and the Dyad. And this is the reason why human beings have to assimilate not to the Form-numbers, which are units with causal power, but to the Monad, which is the principle of all unity. By this point, Xenocrates' conception of the object of assimilation has moved away from the *Timaeus* to a considerable extent. But the spirit of the whole project remains, because both Xenocrates and Plato see the restoration of the psychic unity as the key result of this transformative experience and, by the way, so does Philip when he remarks that the goal of the moral agent is 'to become one from many' (ἐκ πολλῶν ἕνα γεγονότα, *Epin.* 992b6–7). To be sure, Xenocrates has a high regard for astronomy and its input to human knowledge too, for it allows us to study the intelligible aspects of Ouranos (Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Log.* 1.147–149 = fr. 2 IP). But Ouranos is a derivative being, whose composition involves the Form-numbers, the geometricals and much more (Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1028b24–27 = fr. 23 IP). Accordingly, Xenocrates' system requires

εἰδῶν ἓν ἕκαστον ἀίδιόν τε καὶ νόημα καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ἀπαθές, *D. L.* 3.13, trans. J. Dillon). Unfortunately, the context of the passage is about Plato's philosophy and it does not establish stronger links with Xenocrates. As noted in Isnardi Parente (1982) 401, we can relate it to Xenocrates if we attribute to him a passage in Aristotle, which defines soul as 'the place of forms' (τόπον εἰδῶν, *De An.* 429a27–28). Given that the only other passage with a similar idea is Alcimus' testimony, this solution brings us back to the initial problem. See also Mansfeld and Runia (2020) 400, who question Dillon's proposal. Cf. Sedley (2002) 62–3, who argues that Polemo was the author of the theory which Dillon ascribes to Xenocrates.

us to reverse the hierarchy of sciences found in the *Epinomis*: just as a theological study of the cosmic god Ouranos is preparatory for discovering the highest god Monad, so too an astronomical study of various intelligibles in the universe is an intermediate step towards a mathematical study of the nature of the first principles.

Even Aristotle accepts the *homoiōsis theōi* as the highest ethical objective for human beings. In his early work *Protrepticus*, Aristotle likens human beings to gods in so far as they have intellect and argues that this is the way to claim our share in immortality and divinity (35.14–18, 48.9–21, 55.7–56.2 Pistelli), though it remains unclear whether the object of assimilation is *kosmos* or something else (51.8–10 Pistelli).[66] This comparison between the gods and humans returns in the final chapters of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle aims to establish that the life of contemplation (θεωρία) is the best and the happiest. From a theological point of view, two points indicate the superiority of contemplation to other kinds of activity: (1) contemplation is based on intellect, which is the highest and divine aspect of humans, so this activity is the highest and most divine as well (*EN* 1177b26–1178a2); (2) the gods are happy and blessed, and they partake in a contemplative activity rather than practical, so if we are to be as happy and blessed as the gods, we have to partake in contemplation too (*EN* 1178b7–32). More broadly, Aristotle is in agreement with Xenocrates that the divine is imitated not only by human beings, but by all generated things, living beings and elements alike.[67] The Aristotelian version, however, is targeted at the imitation of the Prime Mover. Different living beings will have their own distinctive ways of assimilating to the condition of this peculiar god.[68] For human beings in particular, these are various contemplative activities. Although Aristotle does not provide a precise definition of contemplation in the *Ethics*, it is plausible that it would be wide enough to include astronomy, mathematics and other subjects from his own school, but ultimately the key subject must be the study of the essences and eventually the Prime Mover,

[66] For a recent discussion on the authenticity of the *Protrepticus*, see Hildebrandt (2020) 14–17.
[67] See *GA* 731b24–732a12; *De An*. 415a26–b7; *Metaph*. 1050b28–30.
[68] For this point, see Judson (2019) 335–40.

hence the first philosophy understood as theology.[69] Its value stems from the fact that it makes human beings akin to the god by 'receiving as much immortality as possible' (ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν, *EN* 1177b33) and also makes them 'the most beloved by the gods' (θεοφιλέστατος, *EN* 1177b24), so in a sense pious.[70]

Philip pursues a similar line by conceptualising astronomy as piety (θεοσέβεια, 990a1), thus associating an intellectual activity with a moral virtue.[71] The argument in favour of crossing the boundaries between the two kinds of virtue brings us back to the impoverished state of Greek astronomy: the flawed observations of the celestial phenomena did not enable the Greeks to acknowledge the divinity of the astral entities and to institute the ritual honouring of them (985d–986a, 900a). In other words, defective astronomy leads to the violation of the proper relation towards the gods, which is a grave act of injustice and religious incorrectness. It means that the theological recognition of the cosmic gods and the ensuing just relation towards them is the specifically moral aspect of being an astronomer.[72] So, astronomy cultivates moral virtues, whilst simultaneously developing intellectual virtues. This bold characterisation of the dual ethical nature of astronomy, however, is not entirely unprecedented, for the Athenian of the *Laws* contends that a pious person (θεοσεβής, 12.967d4) has to master the cosmological studies in order to prove the ontological priority of soul and the intelligence of the heavenly bodies. As we are about to see, the difference here is that Philip assigns a more comprehensive role to piety in the moral and political landscape of Magnesia.

[69] See further Sedley (1999) 324–8; Reeve (2012) 211–18. Cf. Lear (2004) 175–207, who argues that practical life must have a part in philosophical life; Segev (2017) 109–24, who relies on the *Eudemian Ethics* and the *Magna Moralia* to show that self-knowledge must be part of the ideal of godlikeness.

[70] For this point, see Broadie (2003). However, Aristotle does not mention this virtue in the passage.

[71] Its variant is εὐσέβεια (989b2) and the person is θεοσεβής (977e6).

[72] This link between astronomical piety and the just disposition towards the cosmic gods is missing in the otherwise elaborate discussion of Philip's moral philosophy by Lautner (2013), whose main conclusion is that piety is conceptualised as the highest virtue, which is identical to wisdom and an astronomical-mathematical knowledge of gods. Both Lautner and Tarán (1975) 25–6 note that by doing so Philip prevents himself from achieving one of his theoretical goals, namely to prove the unity of virtues, which the *Laws* did not resolve (cf. 12.963c–964d).

In addition to astronomy, Philip introduces a more conventional form of piety (θεοσέβεια, 985c8), which is cult practice. The future legislator is advised to abstain from extreme religious innovations, to respect the ordinary beliefs in many sacred things (ἱερὰ πολλὰ, 985c6) and the ancestral laws on sacrifices (περὶ θυσιῶν, 985d2).[73] Despite the fact that the worship of the traditional gods is accepted, these warnings should not be seen as a concession to conventional religion. Philip places a high value on hymns, prayers, sacrifices and festivals (985e, 986c) because cult practice provides the proper way to correct the above-mentioned injustice by giving the cosmic gods their due share of honours and spreading their recognition more widely among the masses.[74] Philip regards the ritual honouring of the cosmic gods as the ethical prerequisite for every Magnesian (989c–d), because it helps them to familiarise themselves with these gods and nurtures a just and pious disposition towards the astral beings. The need for a performative mode of piety is based on a premise that the majority of people cannot train their philosophical understanding of the astral phenomena as it requires a cognitive capacity naturally limited to the few (974b, 989c). In this respect, cult practice is a lower version of the ethical ideal pursed by the astronomers with intellectual means. But together these two aspects of astral piety constitute a major change in Magnesia. They establish a framework of cosmic religion, which provides the Magnesian people with a twofold path to moral development. Therefore, unlike Magnesia of the *Laws*, Magnesia of the *Epinomis* is not a place where traditional religion and cosmic religion peacefully coexist together by expressing two levels of moral development. Traditional religion is set aside as an enduring cultural phenomenon, which is beyond firm knowledge (985d), the kind of epistemic certainty that could either secure its theological foundation or dismiss its moral value. It is only cosmic religion that embodies the two levels of moral development with certainty.

[73] Cf. 4.717a–b, which regards the life spent in the ritual honouring of the traditional gods as a 'mark of piety' (τοῦ τῆς εὐσεβείας σκοποῦ, 4.717b1). We have observed in Section 3.2 that the ethical value of cult practice is founded on the mimetic activity, which assimilates the worshippers with the traditional gods. However, there are no recommendations to imitate the traditional gods in the *Epinomis*.

[74] The three additional factors that will strengthen cosmic religion is the Greek education, the authority of Delphi and the legal arrangements of cult practice (988a).

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Such a take on the division of society into two sectors and the use of religion for moral purposes clearly grows out of Plato's later dialogues, but it finds parallels in other works of Academics too. In Xenocrates' ethics, for instance, philosophers differ from the masses in terms of whether their actions are guided by political compulsion or their own decision: the ordinary people need the force of law to do what the philosophers do voluntarily (frs. 172–176 IP). Aristotle finds a similar function in traditional religion – the past lawgivers used religion to persuade the masses and the present politicians will continue to employ it for practical purposes even in ideal social conditions (*Metaph*. 1074b3–5; *Pol*. 1335b12–16).[75] What is distinctive about Philip is that cosmic religion is constructed out of philosophical and religious strands and deployed as the vehicle that both connects astronomers with the ordinary citizens and creates a hierarchy between them. It has an integrative function in so far as the two modes of piety, ritual and astronomy, have the same cult object and create a common religious identity of Magnesia. But it also has a differentiating function in so far as the two sectors of society are unequal in terms of their epistemic and moral capacities. Philip contends that the ordinary citizens are 'honouring virtue' (τιμῶντας ἀρετήν, 989c8–d1) in rituals without being able to acquire its complete version.[76] As mentioned above, the reason is that ritual does not train philosophical understanding of the cosmic gods and, therefore, it lacks the required intellectual dimension, which is characteristic of astronomy. In two instructive passages on the relation between the moral and intellectual virtues, Philip claims that the intellectually virtuous agents are special in their capacity to give *logos* based on the science of numbers: the wise minority can grasp intelligent patterns and give rational explanations, thus comprehending the true nature of the cosmic gods, whilst the majority cannot do it (977c–d, 991e–992a). Philip

[75] A more ambitious role of religion is defended in Segev (2017) 57–66, who argues that traditional religion can inspire some people to develop philosophical interests into the nature of gods.

[76] *Pace* Tarán (1975) 323, who doubted whether 'the many' (τοὺς πλείστους, 989c5) can be seen as 'honouring virtue' (τιμῶντας ἀρετήν, 989c8–d1). But given the conceptual link between ritual practice and the virtuous life, there is nothing wrong with saying that the ordinary people 'in truth' establish a relation with virtue, even if this is just an 'honorary' relation rather than 'complete' or 'perfect'. Cf. Aronadio (2013) 57.

uses these epistemic and moral inequalities, then, to justify political inequality and grant the elite an access to the Nocturnal Council (992d–e). In turn, the main task of the councillors is to supervise the participation of the ordinary people in cult practice and to ensure that their commitment to the cosmic gods is sincere (989c–d), which increases the social and religious cohesion of the cosmic city.

Philip's conception of astral piety indicates a clear departure from Plato's *Laws*. Philip does not adopt the neat bipartite divisions between religion and philosophy, the traditional gods and the cosmic beings, the morally virtuous majority and the intellectually virtuous minority that guided the construction of the old Magnesia. A new and more homogenous Magnesia is founded on a single framework of cosmic religion. Its initial function is to provide some theological consistency to the Platonic city and to compensate the past injustices done to the cosmic gods. It reinvents Magnesian society by focusing the citizens' lives on the honouring of the cosmic gods. However, this project eventually reintroduces a bipartite division of society, only now it differentiates the average citizens, who participate in cult practice and cultivate performative piety, from the political elite, who conduct cosmological research and cultivate intellectual piety. Although this social structure seems to be similar to what we discussed in Chapter 3, its moral implications are more uncompromising than those of the *Laws*: ordinary people no longer need to practise courage or self-control by imitating the traditional gods in order to become the exemplary citizens of Magnesia. The ideal of godlikeness is removed from their moral horizon and replaced with a faithful submission to the rule of the astronomers, the only people capable of becoming godlike.

4.5 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to explore the reception of some of the Platonic religious themes in the *Epinomis* and, to a lesser extent, Xenocrates and Aristotle. We found that the Academics continued to speculate on the nature of Ouranos. Aristotle retained its theological meaning but narrowed its cosmological function. The other Academics responded to him by making Ouranos an eternal being by either integrating the Demiurge or, alternatively, the first principles to

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the world-soul. Then we examined the ways in which they gave religious names to gods. I argued that Xenocrates assigned the names of traditional gods to various ontological and cosmological entities on a functional basis, whereas Philip did not adopt a single strategy while distributing the religious names to the planets. Finally, we observed how Xenocrates and Philip used these theological results to support the cosmologisation of ethics and to transform piety to the astral beings into the primary virtue of Magnesia. In all these fields, we saw the Academics giving priority to the cosmic gods over the traditional gods.

Plato's students showed no interest in defending the traditional gods against the new theological strands or at least preserving these gods in the form proposed by Plato. On the contrary, the Academics were the ones to develop these strands even further. The project of cosmic religion grew out of the need to firmly establish the cosmic gods in both intellectual and popular discourses and here the traditional gods helped our two authors to adapt the cosmic gods to the Greek cultural landscape. For this reason, the identities of the traditional gods were used instrumentally as a religious resource to accustom the public with the cosmic gods. But two Academics were split over their final position on the traditional gods. Xenocrates dissolved them fully by adopting the figurative reading of the traditional gods and thus merging them with the philosophical gods. By contrast, Philip associated only some of the old gods with the stars and planets. It is curious, however, that he refused to the explain the status of the traditional gods. His inclination to retain an independent group of these gods could be explained as a pragmatic compromise with ordinary people and their conventions. At any rate, we find here a mixture of continuity and innovation: the Academics took the Platonic religious themes as their point of departure, but they did not acknowledge any substantial need for the traditional gods. The traditional gods lost their explanatory roles and moral characteristics that were developed in the *Timaeus*, the *Critias* and the *Laws*. Unlike Plato's later dialogues, Philip and Xenocrates did not sustain the even balance between religion and philosophy and replaced it with a strict subordination of religious ideas to philosophy.

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