

Parmenides and M. Karagatsis (Reflection of Myth in Fiction)*

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Abstract. The paper aims to show some structural parallels between the concept of motion as developed by Parmenides (5th c. BC) and the expression of the phenomena of motion in the story *A Solitary Voyage to the Island Cythera* by the Greek writer M. Karagatsis (1908–1960). The novelette of M. Karagatsis is interpreted as a parmenidean “motionless motion” reflexion. It is argued that M. Karagatsis’s story is structurally and essentially related to the Parmenidean poem *On Nature*, treating the consideration of motion as one of the impossible properties of being; and more obviously refers to certain poems by Constantine Cavafy (1863–1993), which also contain the idea of the meaninglessness of the difference between κίνησις and ἀκίνησις. Thus, the concepts of κίνησις and ἀκίνησις in the story by M. Karagatsis echo both the Parmenidean ideas and the Cavafy’s images of movement.

Keywords: Parmenides, M. Karagatsis, reception, concept of motion, metaphor, ontology.

Parmenidas ir M. Karagatsis (mito atspindys literatūroje)

Santrauka. Straipsnyje nagrinėjamos struktūrinės paralelės tarp Parmenido (V a. pr. Kr.) sukurtos judėjimo sampratos ir graikų rašytojo M. Karagatsio (1908–1960) judėjimo išraiškos apsakyme *Vieniša kelionė į Kiteros salą*. M. Karagatsio apsakymas interpretuojamas kaip parmenidiška nejudamo judesio recepcija.

M. Karagatsio apsakymas *Vieniša kelionė į Kiteros salą* išleistas 1940 m. Kitera yra viena iš Jonijos salų. Ši sala, remiantis senovės graikų mitais, buvo Afroditės gimtinė ir viena iš pagrindinių jos kulto vietų.

Apsakymo pavadinimas *Vieniša kelionė į Kiteros salą* greičiausiai sietinas ne su antikos mitologijos tradicija, bet su XVIII a. Prancūzijoje susiformavusiu rocaille stiliumi. Pirmoji asociacija, kurią kelia pavadinimas *Vieniša*

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kelionė į Kiteros salą – žinomiausias Antoine Watteau paveikslas Piligriminė kelionė į salą (1717 m.). Šis paveikslas laikytinas rokoko dvasios kulminacija.

Iš pirmo žvilgsnio sunku išvelgti Parmenido eilėraščio ir M. Karagatsio apsakymo paraleles. Vis dėlto, atidžiai skaitant tekstus, atsiskleidžia tiek struktūrinis, tiek ideologinis abiejų kūrinių panašumas, akivaizdi tam tikrų žodžių vartosenos (leksinė) atitiktis.

Galima daryti išvadą, kad M. Karagatsio apsakymas *Vieniša kelionė į Kiteros salą* tiek struktūriškai, tiek prasmine intencija iš esmės yra susijęs su Parmenido poema Apie gamtą ir akivaizdžiai atliepia kai kuriuos Konstantino Kavafio eilėraščius, kuriuose taip pat keliama skirtumo tarp „kinezės“ ir „akinezijos“ beprasmybės idėja. Pažymėtina, kad Kavafio citatas Karagatsis vartoja postmoderniai. Jis sąmoningai nesupranta Kavafio alegorijų ir simbolių, Kavafio citatos naudojamos kaip kontrapunktas muzikoje, pasakojimo drobėje kuriamas priešingas judėjimas.

Taigi judesio ir nejudrumo priešprieša, kinezės ir akinezijos sąvokų opozicija M. Karagatsio pasakojamoje istorijoje atkartoja ir Parmenido idėjas, ir Kavafio judėjimo vaizdus

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Parmenidas, M. Karagatsis, receptija, judesio samprata, metafora, ontologija.

M. Karagatsis (1908–1960, Μ. Καραγάτσης) is a modern Greek novelist, who belongs to the group of Greek writers known as the Generation of the Thirties (Τζιόβας 2012; Vittì 1977; Βιβλιάκης 1995). The writer experimented with various genres of literature, influenced by narratives of ancient, Byzantine, Modern Greek and French literature. The paper deals with some examples from his story *A Solitary Voyage to Cythera* (*Μοναχικό ταξίδι στὰ Κύθηρα*) illustrating the metaphors of the **motionless motion** and the circular movement as visual analogues of the philosophical concepts from the Parmenidean poem *On Nature* (Παρμενίδης, *Περὶ φύσεως*).

We intend to highlight some structural parallels between the philosophical understanding and visual expressions of the phenomena of motion in the texts of Parmenides and Karagatsis, as well as to reveal the continuity of the use of the artistic means and the techniques deployed to express motion (κίνησις) and motionlessness (ἀκίνησία) from antiquity to the Modern Greek literature. We also consider M. Karagatsis's novelette as a parmenidean **motionless motion** interpretation. We argue that the story of M. Karagatsis *A Solitary Voyage to Cythera* is structurally and substantively related to the Parmenidean poem *On Nature*, in which there is a fragment devoted to the consideration of movement as one of the impossible properties of being; and more clearly refers to some poems by Constantine Cavafy (Κ. Π. Καβάφης) – *The City* (*Ἡ Πόλις*), *Ithaca* (*Ἰθάκη*), *On the Ship* (*Τοῦ πλοίου*), *Ionic* (*Ἰωνικόν*) and *The God Abandons Antony* (*Ἀπολείπειν ὁ θεὸς Ἀντώνιον*), which also contain the idea of the meaninglessness of the difference between **kinesis** and **akinesia**. Thus, the concepts of **kinesis** and **akinesia** in the story by M. Karagatsis echo both the Parmenidean ideas, and Cavafy's images of movement.

1. Parmenides

There are at least two classical approaches within the field of the history of philosophy to the interpretation of Parmenides's ideas – the logical one (Bredlow 2011; Hintikka 1980; Lewis 2009; MacKenzie 1982) and the ontological one (Barnes 1979; Bredlow 2011a; Lebedev 2008; Losev 1993). The Russian philosopher Vladimir Bibikhin formulated an interesting new approach to the interpretation of images and metaphors used by

Parmenides not as the figures of speech or the parables, but as meanings *per se*, i.e. the axle should be read as an axle, the socket as a socket and the whirling wheels as whirling wheels. Apparently such readings may become heuristic and give more philosophical insights in their literal meanings than the respective metaphorical analogies with other images (Bibikhin 2009, 311–330). Perhaps this approach will ultimately offer a more effective way of understanding the philosophical content of the preamble which offers a new insight to the strictly philosophical part of a poem. Thus, we will attempt to read the small poetic introduction to the poem literally, having set the task of showing that the philosophical content of its main part is anticipated and predicted in the poetic preamble.

Within the introduction to the poem at least three variants of movement are represented, this despite the fact that in the philosophical part of the poem the existence of any movement is denied as well as the movement of being *per se*:

1. The journey of a young man in a chariot to the gates of the paths of Night and Day.
2. The rotation of the chariot wheels.
3. The movement of the gate's doors opening and the swing of brazen hinges in the sockets.

It should be noted that all these movements are circular.

1.1. The Voyage around the Earth

Let us attempt to explain why Parmenides prefaces his poem about the immobility of being with several circular movement descriptions. The first type of such a movement is the movement of a young man in a chariot through certain airspace where “are the gates of the paths of Night and Day” (Parmenides 1920, 172, line 11). One should imagine this movement to be at least a little bit faster than the Earth rotation speed, because the chariot was hastened to the source of light by the Heliades virgins, the daughters of the Sun, in order to leave the abode of Night (ὄτε σπερχοίατο πέμπειν Ἡλιάδες κοῦραι, προλιποῦσαι δώματα Νυκτός, εἰς φάος) (Parmenides 1920, 172, line 8–10), since one needs to move faster than the Earth rotates just to leave the dark side of the Earth and to go to the bright side of it. One should also remember that in this case such a boundary between the two sides of the Earth is mobile and moves exactly with the speed of Earth's rotation.

Hence, to cross this border, one must either haste at a speed exceeding the speed of the Earth rotation, which is exactly what the young man does with the help of the Heliades, the daughters of the Sun or stay still waiting the boundary of Day and Night to reach them as is done by people on Earth. In this sense, in order to reach the boundary of Day and Night both strategies are acceptable – the imaginary movement (κίνησις) of a young man with a cosmic speed as well as the static position of ordinary people **attached** to the earth, relatively motionless (ἀκινήσια) waiting for a meeting the border, which cyclically comes to them every day by itself. In this sense, as a strategy for reaching the boundary of Day and Night, the concepts of motion and motionlessness begin to become indistinguishable in terms of achieving the goal of such a travel, i.e. the meeting with the boundary. Thus, movement and immobility here are equally acceptable methods.

1.2. The Rotation of Wheels

The second type of circular motion described in the introduction is the rotation of the moving parts of the chariot relative to its fixed parts. Let us consider how the chariot mechanism works, according to the description of Parmenides: “The axle, glowing in the socket – for it was urged round by the whirling wheels at each end—gave forth a sound as of a pipe” (Ἄξων δ’ ἐν χνοιήσιν ἴει σύριγγος αὐτὴν αἰθόμενος – δαιοῖς γὰρ ἐπείγεται δινωτοῖσιν κύκλοις ἀμφοτέρωθεν) (Parmenides 1920, 172, line 6–8).

The miracle of the skillfully created chariot mechanism – and Parmenides could not fail to notice and reflect this in the poem about the immobility of being – is that the movement is carried out simultaneously by the movable and immovable parts of the device: the wheels and sockets are spinning, the chariot frame is attached to the immovable axle in a way that the two-wheeled chariot maintains its stable position only by being moved (in some chariots and cars wheels and axles rotate while the sockets are stationary). Thus, to provide movement the movable and the stationary parts of the device are equally important, for if all the parts of the mechanism were movable, the chariot would not be able to move forward, but would rotate its frame around the axle together with the wheels. The movement of the chariot is based on both the principle of mobility and the principle of immobility. The opposite is also true: both the immobility of the axle (or the immobility of sockets) and the mobility of the wheels are responsible for the immobility of the chariot frame. Thus, the immobility and stability of the chariot frame is also based on two principles: the principle of motion and the principle of motionlessness. Hence, the movement of the chariot can be considered as the effect of the combined action of moving and stationary parts.

1.3. The Swing of Hinges in the Sockets

The third type of circular movement described in Parmenides’s introduction is the movement of swinging the gate doors towards the fixed gate axles: “There are the gates of the ways of Night and Day, fitted above with a lintel and below with a threshold of stone. They themselves, high in the air, are closed by mighty doors, and Avenging Justice keeps the keys that fit them. Her did the maidens entreat with gentle words and cunningly persuade to unfasten without demur the bolted bars from the gates. Then, when the doors were thrown back, they disclosed a wide opening”, when their brazen hinges swung backwards in the sockets (ἄξονας ἐν σύριγγιν) fastened with rivets and nails (Parmenides 1920, 172, line 11–21). Let us take a closer look at the gate arrangement. Here again one can find axles, sockets (ἄξονας ἐν σύριγγιν) and hinges.

The device of the gate is strikingly similar to that of a chariot. Let us consider why Parmenides in the introduction after the description of the chariot mechanism describes the structure of the gate. The gate has been reconstructed in sufficient detail, almost in more detail than the chariot, also assuming the circular movement of the doors regarding the axles in the sockets. Doors move in a circle with respect to fixed and immobile threshold and lintel and movable axles while the range of movement of the doors is limited by a

circle. Thus, in the introduction to the poem, one can find one more example of a device, the mobility of some parts of which is achieved by conjugation of moving and stationary parts.

So, let us pose the question, why Parmenides describes so many examples of the circular movement in the introduction to the poem, in which the immobility of a being is further substantiated and both being and truth are characterized as “circles” (εὐκύκλοι) and void of motion. Understanding being as the mass of a rounded sphere (εὐκύκλου σφαιρῆς ἐναλίγκιον ὄγκῳ, μεσσόθεν ἰσοπαλὲς πάντῃ) (Parmenides 1920, p. line 43–49), and true thinking as a “perfect circle” of the “Truth’s motionless heart” (Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμὲς ἦτορ) (Parmenides 1920, 172, line 29), Parmenides provided us with a hint as to the possible interpretation of his fragment about the identity of being and thinking (τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι) (Parmenides 1920, 173) as the idea of the circular rotation of a stationary sphere the volume of which is determined by its rotation satisfying both the immobility condition of being (volume) and the motion condition of thinking (formation by rotation).

Why being and thinking are both circle-like? Why does Parmenides in his introduction invite us to contemplate the given circular motion patterns? What puzzle did Parmenides put forth? All the philosophical attempts to develop the original intuition of Parmenides’s motionless being and thinking were carried out in a rationalistic way. The mythical riddle referring to the circle hidden in the introduction remained on the periphery of the attention of philosophers, and in a certain historical period of demythologization it has completely disappeared from sight.

In this regard, it could be helpful to turn to the analysis of the texts of the modern Greek writer M. Karagatsis in order to pursue the following objectives: to compare his ways of expressing the indistinguishability of motion and motionlessness, to find illustrations to the Parmenidian circle tautology between thinking and being and also to show how the philosophical ideas of Parmenides are reproduced in the artistic space of the Modern Greek literature. If the rational approach traces the contradictions within the attempt to combine the movement and immobility, then the imagination of the poet, who has preserved the mythos-oriented potential, tracks this contradiction in a consistent way, though maybe not rationally consistent. The consistency of such a paradoxical thought could perfectly match some cases of our inconsistent movement-without-motion experience. Let us try to compare and evaluate to what extent the artistic means used by M. Karagatsis could be apt to solve the Parmenidian puzzle.

2. Karagatsis

M. Karagatsis (1908–1960) is a famous Greek prose writer. His real name is Dimitris Rodopoulos. The *nom de plume* (M. Karagatsis) demonstrates the writer’s devotion to the Russian literature and proves his desire to live in the dimension of fiction. Karagatsis goes back to the Greek designation of the tree “elm” (gr. *καργάτσι*) – a southern variety of elm. In the shade of such a tree in the monastery garden, he passionately read Dostoevsky in the town of Rapsani (Thessaly), where his parents used to spend their summers. Initial

“M.” presumably goes back to Mitya, the hero of *The Brothers Karamazov*. The writer always insisted on this abbreviation, but refused to disclose it.

It is usually argued that Karagatsis, whose remarkable talent as a storyteller and narrative ingenuity is noted by all critics, remains in frame of realism with a certain inclination towards naturalism.

Anyhow, as we will try to show in this article, in reality the phenomenon of Karagatsis’s creative manner is much more complicated. In fact, all of Karagatsis’s texts are marked by a very personal ironic intonation and unexpected modernist (and we dare to state – postmodernist) moves. His work is distinguished by an amazing plastic talent, a penchant for self-irony and play.

He characteristically begins his short autobiography with the following remark:

I was born in Athens in one of the four corner houses of Akademia and Themistokleous streets. I won't tell you in which one. I will hide this detail of my biography deliberately in order to hopelessly and forever confuse the officials – at the moment when the question of installing my memorial plaque arises (Karagatsis 2020, 1).

The autobiography ends in the same vein:

I have never offended my colleagues, in literary circles I was absolutely adored. This will become obvious when people come to my funeral to make sure that I really died, was buried and went to hell. And they will go home from the cemetery, sighing with relief. Meanwhile, I am sure that God will place me among the saints in paradise. Amen. (Karagatsis 2020, 1).

The story by M. Karagatsis *A Solitary Voyage to Cythera* which we intend to compare with Parmenides’ text was published in 1940. In 1952 he edited another story with a slightly different title – *Embarkation for Cythera (Μπαρκάρισμα για τα Κύθηρα)*.

Cythera is one of the Ionian islands that in ancient tradition was believed to be the birthplace of Afrodite and one of her main cult places.

Anyhow, the title *A Solitary Voyage to Cythera* seems to be linked first of all not with the antique mythological tradition, but with rocaille style of France of the 18th c. The very first association that evokes the title *A Solitary Voyage to Cythera* is presumably the most known canvas by Antoine Watteau – *Pilgrimage to the Isle of Cythera* (1717) – the utmost culmination of the rococo spirit. A year later Watteau created a slightly different variant of this masterpiece which he entitled *Embarkation for Cythera*¹. Watteau introduces in the European culture of the 18th c. motive of pilgrimage of couples in search of love to the isle of Afrodite and her sanctuary. It should be mentioned that the historians of art are still not sure whether the lovers are about to set sail for Cythera, or are they returning from the island of love. This detail is important for our further speculation because it has to deal with the relativity of motion. We believe that an obvious parallelism can be seen between the two pictures by Watteau with slightly different titles and the two almost homonymous

¹ In this story, Karagatsis tells the story of a young charming lawyer who dreams to become rich and commits a fraud – by persuading a dying, old and very rich woman to marry him. Her last request to him is a honeymoon trip to the island of Syros. But immediately after the wedding, which is on her deathbed, she dies, while the young swindler is exposed by the police and is forced to make a sea voyage but this time on a police boat.

stories of M. Karagatsis. It is possible that by writing two different homonymous stories he deliberately imitates Watteau.

Last but not least, the same title *Voyage to Cythera* in this case with clear reference to Karagatsis) has been used by one of Greece's most influential film directors Theo Angelopoulos (1935–2012). Placed within the framework of an ancient Greek tragedy the film tells a dramatic story of an old man returning to Greece after 32 years of exile in Russia.

At first, it is difficult to talk about any parallels between Parmenides's poem and M. Karagatsis's *A Solitary Voyage to Cythera*. However, careful reading of the texts reveals both structural and conceptual similarities between the two works, not to mention the correspondences in some of the word usages. Let's try to draw parallels in all three areas.

We believe that in addition to presenting the main storyline (the journey to the island itself and its episodes), the main goal of M. Karagatsis is to answer an essential philosophical question – whether movement is movement?² And he accomplishes this task, intentionally or unintentionally, in literary and philosophical ways similar to Parmenides.

Structurally, both works represent two journeys towards the goddesses: the journey of the young man Parmenides in a chariot to the goddess of justice Dike and the journey of the narrator M. Karagatsis to the island of Cythera as a pilgrim to the goddess of love Aphrodite. Both heroes are the authors themselves: the young man is the philosopher Parmenides, the storyteller is the writer M. Karagatsis.

Interestingly, Karagatsis emphasizes his own participation in the story, without trying to switch the reader's attention to the lyrical hero. Both travels represent a closed curve (Parmenides's chariot moves in a circle – the orbit of the Earth – crossing the border of Day and Night; M. Karagatsis's travel is also limited: from Athens to the island and back to Athens). In both works, the path of the thinker-writer is opposed to the path of “mortals in two minds” (δίκρανοι, two-faced) (Parmenides 1920, 174, line 5), and both paths are described in the most thorough way in their opposition. Placed in the frame of the description of both journeys, the reader is led to the idea that it is impossible to distinguish clearly between stillness (ἀκίνησις) and motion (κίνησις). Let us consider in more detail the artistic means and literary techniques by means of which M. Karagatsis expresses ideas and images similar to Parmenides.

The story of the trip to the island of Cythera begins with a description of M. Karagatsis's departure from the Athenian port of Piraeus. Two of his closest friends come to see him off. The author does not tell us their names, but conventionally designates them by the epithets ὀστατικός and ὀκινητικός (“static” and “mobile”). What enables M. Karagatsis to make such a distinction between the friends who lead exactly the same way of life: “clinging like oysters to the hills of the Acropolis and Lycabettus” (Karagatsis 2003, 71)?

At first it seems incomprehensible why the “mobile” friend (ὀκινητικός) lives, sticking to the Athenian hills like an oyster, just like the “static” (ὀστατικός) one. At first glance, this may be perceived as irony, but soon it becomes evident that we have to deal with a kind of aporia here: “Both friends have never traveled, but this does not prevent them from having their own opinions about travel and adventures” (Karagatsis 2003, 71).

² At this point we have to remind the readers the aporia of the critiques of Watteau – whether the lovers leave the isle of Aphrodite or arrive there?

Up to this point, only the irony of the author has been expressed. However, further on M. Karagatsis describes the theories of travel, and the irony transforms into a sort of logical contradiction. The “mobile” friend (ὁ κινητικός) expresses his own concept of travel (τὴν περὶ ταξιδίων θεωρία του), the formula of which is:

As you will see, there is no need to travel far away, if you want to find adventure, it is enough to move a few miles away from your stalls and feeders; unusual, strange, fantastic can be found next to your door; my friend, you are happy when you travel ... (Karagatsis 2003, 71–72)

The “static” friend (ὁ στατικός) also expounds his own concept of travel:

Happiness in immobility is not the main trump card of our theory <...> no escape can stifle the disease of our era: namely, the restless boredom of the human soul; perhaps only death will give us oblivion and relief of non-existence. (Karagatsis 2003, 72)

Both theories involve the following questions: why should one travel if that does not change anything? Why should one travel if something can happen while you stay at your place? The arguments are different, but the conclusion is the same: why should we go anywhere? Paradoxically, in terms of logical conclusion, the theories of both friends coincide though the arguments are different. Thus, it is only the very posing of their questions that makes it possible to differentiate friends into **static** and **mobile**: the order of the combination of modalities and negations in statements with an emphasis on “whenever you *do not* move, something *may* happen” by the **mobile** friend and with an emphasis on “*may not* happen, whenever you move” by the **static** one.

Here M. Karagatsis achieves the effect of the mirror theories: the **mobile** friend says that adventures are obtained even without much movement (that is, something can come true without sufficient reasons for that), and the **static** one shows that even in movement nothing could happen (*i.e.* even a movement is not a sufficient reason for something to take place). It is important that both exponents express logically equal thoughts about movement and immobility. It has been already mentioned that the two friends’ lifestyle was the same, therefore there is no reason to draw the distinction between **static** and **mobile**, as M. Karagatsis does at the beginning of the story. He eliminates this differentiation later by describing their way of life and setting out their theories of movement. Thus, at the beginning of the story M. Karagatsis gives the first hint that there is no fundamental basis for distinguishing between motion and motionlessness theories and expresses the main point of the story as the idea of indistinguishability of movement and stillness in the course of the hero’s strange journey.

The passage describing the ship’s departure from the port of Piraeus seems quite symbolic in this respect:

When we sailed away, the two dark lines of the moored boats moved back in a motionless procession, so that I got an illusion that the harbor was receding against the background of our motionlessness, and Cavafy’s verses came to my mind:

*As if long prepared for this, as if courageous,
bid her farewell, the Alexandria that is leaving. (Karagatsis 2003, 72).*

From the many existing translations of Cavafy we chose that of Rae Dalven, because it is perfectly close to the original text (Dalven 1961).

The comparative particle σαν “as if”, “as if ready for a long time”, in the Greek context sounds somehow strange (just as it does in English), and somewhat hinders the understanding – or, at least requires a certain effort from the reader, creating the effect that the Russian formalist V. Shklovsky called *ostraneniye* – alienation (Shklovsky 1925, 7–25). It is not that important in reality if you are not really brave, you must create such an impression, and the rest does not matter. M. Karagatsis ironically plays on K. Cavafy’s lines from the poem *God forsakes Antony* (Κ.Π. Καβάφης, *Ἀπολείπειν ὁ θεός Ἀντώνιον*). But if Cavafy poetically expressed the drama of the loss of Alexandria (according to Cavafy Alexandria means life), M. Karagatsis sneers at Piraeus, stressing that actually he has no means to escape from this old friend of his. So, in some way the writer switches here to another poem by Cavafy *The City* (Κ.Π. Καβάφης, *Ἡ Πόλις*). To feel the tragedy, it is necessary to feel the mutability (mobility) of the world – hence Heraclitus, in contrast to Parmenides, is a lamenting philosopher. It seems that Karagatsis deliberately ignores the meaning of Cavafy’s poems, taking them literally and exactly in opposite way to the sublime stoic diction, which in its time bewitched Joseph Brodsky. The poem *God forsakes Antony* narrates of stoic gratitude to life and fate (*fatum*) no matter how tragic it is.

This poem, one of the most striking texts of Cavafy, is based on a passage from the life of Antony in Plutarch, where the latter tells how on the eve of the Battle of Actium (September 2, 31) the people of Alexandria heard singing and Bacchic exclamations and realized that Dionysus and his invisible troupes were abandoning Anthony and leaving Alexandria. Cavafy retells Plutarch almost literally, but puts the accents in a completely different way. The author’s voice appeals to Antony (or to the reader?), urging him not only to remain courageous, but also to be immensely grateful for the fact that he was “honored with such a city”. According to Cavafy this feeling of gratitude should reach its culmination at the moment when the deity and all the charm of life leaves the hero.

Karagatsis’s entire story is literally permeated with quotes from Cavafy, who died in 1933. Real fame came to the poet posthumously. Karagatsis’s story was written in 1935 (the author was 27 years old when he published the story). One can sense that Karagatsis remembers Cavafy’s poems by heart. It is difficult to say whether he deliberately or unintentionally confuses *The City* and *God forsakes Antony*, although it cannot be said that these two texts contradict each other. *The City* expresses the idea that it is impossible to escape the fate. *God forsakes Antony* asserts that no matter how tragic our life is, we must understand that a mere chance to live already means happiness.

It can be assumed that Karagatsis chooses the poem *God forsakes Antony* to create a comic effect which he so much seems to enjoy. Mark Antony is an exemplary hero, a victim of his ambition and Cleopatra’s fatal passion. He is juxtaposed to the lawyer Antoniadis, frightened by the fatal passion for the women he was in love and cowardly preferring a marriage of convenience. The deity leaves him, but in a completely different way than it left Mark Antony in Cavafy’s narrative. The life that he chooses for himself cannot be regarded as a reason for gratitude. This is not life, but non-being, according to Parmenides, or a “crack”, according to M.K. Mamardashvili.

The mood conveyed by M. Karagatsis is, at first sight, non-tragic: nothing will change, no matter what we undertake. This can explain the bravery and ease with which the traveler's actions are performed. However, this non-tragedy also has its own tragic aspect. Its modus is boredom. Boredom is perceived as a tragedy of non-tragic existence. In the context of a tragedy, the hero is definitely not bored. Tragedy is the subject of the reflection of a writer and the object of literary presentation: it is always a set of events or impressions, meanings or ideas. In this regard, any tragedy is a good reason to write a story. In the case of the text *A Solitary Voyage to Cythera*, M. Karagatsis shows that there was no reason to write this story. Thus paradoxically, the main reason for writing the story is the boredom of not having a reason to write it. What happens is that nothing happens. Thus, M. Karagatsis, out of boredom as a writer and at the same time as a storyteller on whose behalf the story is being told, has nothing to write about, so boredom itself becomes the subject of description and an existential mode of immobility. During the whole journey, M. Karagatsis's thoughts are focused on the fact that nothing is happening, actually no journey has taken place – it is Piraeus that is running away from the writer, and not the writer from Piraeus. In the life of M. Karagatsis's fellow travelers only visible events occur, while in reality nothing changes:

Leaning at the railing, I salute the fugitive Piraeus. Will he manage to escape from me? We are old friends, sooner or later he will be forced to come back to me. Besides, I don't feel any intention of the God to leave me ... (Karagatsis 2003, 72)

Is it Karagatsis who leaves Piraeus or does Piraeus leave Karagatsis? Who is moving and who is static when a steamer leaves the port of Piraeus? From the point of view of the theory of relativity, it doesn't matter: the starting point can be chosen arbitrarily. But if Cavafy's statement that he is leaving Alexandria turns into a statement that Alexandria is leaving him, then M. Karagatsis's judgment that Piraeus is leaving Karagatsis turns into a judgment that no one is leaving anyone. Hence the meeting will inevitably happen again on the next turn of movement. And so on ad infinitum. Nothing is more static (and boring) than everlasting return. Where does the tragic mood come from, if neither the fugitive Piraeus actually runs anywhere, but eternally **comes back** to Karagatsis after his return from the trip, nor does M. Karagatsis feel that he is sailing somewhere?

The hero of M. Karagatsis remains in the mode of the myth of **eternal return** throughout the story. Sailing through unfamiliar places, he looks at them as “seen for thousand times” (χιλιοειδωμένα):

The more I looked at the image of the bay, the less I found the elements that made up its beauty. In spite of the fact that I saw these places for the first time I had an impression that I had seen them thousands of times before. (Karagatsis 2003, 79)

At this point once again a comparison arises with the famous Cavafy lines from his poem *Ithaca* (Κ.Π. Καβάφης, Ἰθάκη) about the bays seen for the first time and about the pleasure associated with sailing to the unfamiliar, first seen places (ποῦ μὲ τί εὐχαρίστησι, μὲ τί χαρά θα μπαίνεις σὲ λιμένας πρωτοειδωμένους): “*and with what joy, with what delight you will sail into the harbors you see for the first time.*” And again Karagatsis

comes into conflict with Cavafy, as if taking his starting point from his poetry. Unfamiliar places are similar to those seen thousand times, and instead of delight (μὲ τί εὐχαρίστησι, μὲ τί χαρά) one feels boredom. There is no difference between seeing something for the first time (πρωτοειδωμένο) and seeing it a thousand times (χιλιοειδωμένο). An object seen for the first time creates the effect (illusion) of movement. The one seen a thousand times – the effect of immobility, lack of motion. To see as if for the first time something that has been seen a thousand times presupposes no less philosophical talent (the existential mode is surprise) than to see for the thousandth time what has been seen for the first time (the existential mode is boredom). The places already seen by M. Karagatsis are identical to those never seen before, whereas those never seen before appear to have been seen a thousand times already. The same with Parmenides: being is indistinguishable from any other being (οὐδὲ διαμετόν ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ πᾶν ἐστιν ὁμοῖον). In this indistinguishability there is also a mood of boredom, but already acquiring shades of a philosophical mood: to perceive everything as one. This is the paradox of the existential optics of being.

It is interesting to analyze how M. Karagatsis describes the movement of the steamer, especially when the fog thickens and the coastline running past the travelers can no longer indicate that the steamer is moving: a static (rippling) sea, a static sky and the humid fog around them (ὀμίχλη ὑδάτινη) give the impression that the ship does not move. The only mode of her movement is pitching. Or, perhaps, pitching is a mode of rest? The hero sways, like the sea, but there is no way to fix even this swaying as a movement, because one cannot find the reference point that would be taken as motionless, since the sea and the ship sway together. Only seasickness and its consequences (it should be noted that dizziness and nausea were viewed as existential modes in the philosophy of the twentieth century) somehow attest to the movement:

Dizziness gives rise to a mental illness. Everything swindles. Steamer, armchairs, chandelier, seagulls, passengers, stomachs, woman, hearts. Even desires are unstable and wavy in the midst of rain and storm. I feel like being poisoned. (Karagatsis 2003, 80)

The sea is spreading further, adorned with a ribbon of white foam that proves the fact that we are moving. (Karagatsis 2003, 78)

Dizziness and nausea acquire a cosmic dimension in the description of M. Karagatsis. Gastronomic problems take on the character of ontological ones as the only argument in favor of the existence of movement in a situation when it is impossible to record it phenomenologically. Physiology (in the modern sense of the word) takes on the character of “physiology” (derived from φύσις “nature” in the pre-Socratic sense). The cosmic dimensions of nausea create an unprecedented comic effect. It is necessary to specifically search for signs of movement, because they are hidden in the fog. One can only guess the existence of movement by indirect signs: if it were not for the image of the foam, how else to record the movement? The movement is more likely to be perceived by ear, and only subsequently it is confirmed visually. At the same time, M. Karagatsis describes the movement as if it were not the steamer itself that was moving, but the objects moving past it:

The sound of the bell scares our sleep. Frightened fantasy creates images of contradictory “Shakespearianism”. Our mesmerized eyes already see all the strangeness that sounds portend. And suddenly a dark mass appears in the middle of the steam. Something like a castle from a Walpurgis night vision. It’s like a ghost ship from a Dutch legend. Bells ringing hesitantly, broken, unable to find their way through the misty air. The vision advances, while the big white letters in the stern destroy our fantasies. (Karagatsis 2003, 82)

Movement is almost never observed visually, but always by some indirect pointer, for example, by sound or even smell: “*The smell of wet earth indicates the end of our journey in the dusk of the day...*” (Karagatsis 2003, 82). M. Karagatsis observes with interest the mood of passengers and analyzes his own state of mind. At this moment, the reader can’t help but start asking himself questions: I wonder why everyone has suddenly perked up? Do they really hope that getting off the boat can make a difference? Why should the transition from static stay on a moving ship to motion on static ground change anything? Indeed, with the same enthusiasm, the passengers at the beginning of the story boarded the ship in the hope of changing something while sailing away. Similar hope can be felt at the end of the stay on the island of Cythera before sailing back. M. Karagatsis constantly captures these nuances of mood.

However, the structural and substantive comparison of Parmenides’ poem and the story of M. Karagatsis would be incomplete if one does not outline the similarities between “mortals in two minds” (δίκρανοι) who wander in amazement along the “Devious Track”, blind and deaf, vague crowds (κωφοὶ ὁμῶς τυφλοὶ τε, τεθηπότες, ἄκριτα φῦλα) (Parmenides 1920, 174, line 7) and images of passengers met by M. Karagatsis (friends, newlyweds, bystanders) – all alien to the narrator’s philosophical mood (φιλοσοφική διάθεση). It is noteworthy that the author describes the “mortals in two minds” wanderings along the path of their judgments and beliefs, which are changeable and mobile (kinetic), like the decisions made under their influence. Karagatsis, on the other hand, regards them in terms of motionless (akinetic) position: his way of thinking is absolute, presents a kind of outside view, and does not change over time. On the contrary, his memories of past experiences paradoxically agree with his new impressions, even if these synchronic impressions seemingly contradict his memories: see, for example, the story of Gina Crumi (Karagatsis 2003, 100–102), or the story of Spyros’s youth (Karagatsis 2003, 93–96). Let us consider some of these stories.

2.1. Karagatsis’s friend Spyros

M. Karagatsis’s friend Spyros argues “with such a hopeless rationalism” that Karagatsis’s “readiness to argue with him” transforms into “a feeling of incredible boredom”, and he leaves Spyros defenseless “to sail in the sea of his provincial tearful complaint” (Karagatsis 2003, 95). We deal here with the “Parmenides of the XX century” as long as Karagatsis realizes the absence of difference between the boredom of a provincial and metropolitan life, but he is too lazy to explain this absence in the mode of philosophical indifference. Moreover, indifference in the Parmenidean sense: there are no differences between the

types of boredom experience by an inhabitant of provinces and that of a resident of the capital, between boredom and non-boredom in general, and between the presence and absence of objections from M. Karagatsis. However, there is one fundamental difference between the boredom of a philosopher (M. Karagatsis) and the boredom of a non-philosopher (Spyros): in philosophical boredom, there is no “mental panic” of the latter (τὸν ψυχικὸ τοῦ πανικό):

And when silence fell as a boring epilogue of the most boring revelation, I in my turn expressed some paradoxical things that were supposed to destroy the last remnants of my intellectual reputation: “Spyros! Marry your Nina and bring her to your island, to your provincial club with idiotic “librodorists” and their immoral wives. There is no salvation! Submit to fate and if you find the strength to think it over, you will stop looking for a reason.” (Karagatsis 2003, 96)

We should consider here another personification of Parmenides’s idea in its purest form: M. Karagatsis showed that there are no differences “in the environment” (περιβάλλον), everything is one and the same. This is the main reason which forces the people “in two minds” to hate a philosopher. That is why they chase him away: “*Spyros threw an icy gaze at me, looked at his watch and said goodbye to me; who knows to what devils he sent me in his mind.*” (Karagatsis 2003, 96).

2.2. Antoniadis

Another of Karagatsis’s friends, Antoniadis, is also depicted in a situation of internal contradiction typical of people “in two minds”: on the very first day of his marriage he already regrets it, while on his honeymoon, he spends his wedding night not with his wife, but with Karagatsis in the bar. He did not marry the woman he was in love with (the author recalls his story), but married a woman he did not love. All his actions are in conflict and contradiction with his will. The position is fundamentally “kinetic” (so many actions and decisions with no result). Apparently this is exactly the opposite to the position occupied by Karagatsis (“akinetic” one), which presupposes the absence of any actions and decision, paradoxically with the same result (including in the form of the absence of any result). The only difference is that from the standpoint of “akinesia” (ἀκίνησις) – no decision can be made due to the essential absence of differences between the decisions taken and not taken, which in fact does not change anything in life (to marry / not to marry, to go / to stay, etc.). It is no coincidence that M. Karagatsis sets the story about Antoniadis exactly at the moment of leaving the port of Piraeus: the illusion of the motionless steamer and the movement of moored boats and “fugitive” Piraeus forms a parallel with Cavafy’s Alexandria, which “escapes” from Antony together with the god.

“I don’t feel that the God is leaving me <...> the lawyer Antoniadis looks at me with excitement, sadness, anxiety because Athens is “running away”. The God is leaving Antoniadis” (Karagatsis 2003, 73).

2.3. The newlywed couples

Above we have discussed the symbolism and connotations of the title *A Solitary Voyage to Cythera* which refers to the theme of love. The writer describes numerous newlywed couples, who took their honeymoon trip to the island of Aphrodite. They wander the deck like ghosts, obviously suffering. Moreover, the emphasis is on the torment of men, the women of Karagatsis are sensual, indifferent and predatory or just lacking individuality (like the young wife of Antoniades).

It seems that we deal here with some kind of bad infinity: “*The passengers wandered the deck like ghosts*” (Karagatsis 2003, 82). Their behavior stays the same on the island. M. Karagatsis again emphasizes the fake idea of reaching happiness through changes inherent in people “in two minds”, and his own “lack of will” (ἀβουλία), aloofness and disregard to this change (Karagatsis 2003, 100). An extremely ironic M. Karagatsis describes people at an existential moment in their life. This description is eerie and at the same time very colorful: you can even talk about the existential of the newlywedness, depicted by M. Karagatsis in this story (see the description of the newlyweds’ dinner at the hotel, their behavior on the deck during pitching and their behavior during lunch on the ship, etc.).

It is important that the philosopher-narrator perceives himself ironically which fully befits the tradition of philosophical reflection: he casts doubt on his own intellectual reputation (διανοητική μου υπόληψη) and his mental balance (διανοητική μου ισορροπία) (Karagatsis 2003, 96–97). The story turns into almost a self-ironic confession: having ridiculed others, M. Karagatsis begins to talk about certain unsavory moments of his personal life. Just as it is done by Parmenides’ philosopher who knows about the Path of Truth, but cannot escape walking the Devious Track, about which he should reflect as well. The only difference in regard to people “in two minds” is that they believe their opinion to be true, that is, they tend to identify the different, *i.e.* the truth and the belief. Being wise he considers his own opinion to be no more than opinion, that is, he identifies the identical, *i.e.* the belief with itself.

Karagatsis’s story ends with a return to Athens (closing the circle). At this point we come across another quotation from K. Cavafy’s poem *On the Ship* (Τοῦ πλοίου): *All around us the Ionian Sea* (Τὸ Ἴόνιον / πέλαγος / ὀλόγυρά μας), dedicated to the “exquisite up to passion” young man (μέχρι παθήσεως αισθητικός).

M. Karagatsis is sitting in a deck chair, enjoying the sun and observes how the “fuzzy image of the island of petty philosophy of legalized love” (ἡ ἀσαφής εἰκόνα τοῦ νησιοῦ τῆς ρηχῆς φιλοσοφίας τοῦ νόμιμου ἔρωτα) “is lost in the distance” (Karagatsis 2003, 107). Here again, Cavafy appears as a kind of an undercurrent, a counterpoint in a piece of music. The reference to the poem *On the Ship* is very characteristic. In this poem, as well as in another, called *Ionic* (Κ. Κ. Καβάφης, Ἴωνικόν), one deals with the enduring ideal of amazing charm and beauty, expressed in a perfect youthful image at the background of the Ionian Sea sparkling in the sun. In the first poem, the author, using Proust’s technique, looking at a sketch of a handsome young man made on a ship deck many years ago enlivens with his imagination a young man he had been in love ... In the second

poem, *Ionian*, he imagines the youthful appearance of an ancient deity flying over the mountains. It seems that it is this divine beauty framed by sea sparkling in the rays of the sun that is the embodiment of the being according to Parmenides. M.K. Mamardashvili writes respectively:

The words of Parmenides, describing the being, are solemn and sublime <...>. So, the being is something which is complete, closed from all sides, something which never existed and never will accomplish, because it has always existed, and never was and never will there be such a moment, neither in the past nor in the future, when we could say about the being that it does not exist. (Mamardashvili 2009, 42)

But this is not the case with Parmenides and Cavafy, the reference to the Cavafy poem *On the Ship* in the context of Karagatsis's story once again sounds like a mockery: on this ship there is no place for the charm of perfect existence, the sun does not shine here, there are no beautiful people, there is only pitching and swaying, nausea, watery dust and the predatory grip of ugly women.

M. Karagatsis is a singer of a good mood; he, like Parmenides, while traveling, contemplates the division into the Paths of Truth and Belief. The suffering victims "in two minds" wander before him, but there are no doubts that M. Karagatsis's lifestyle does not strictly correspond to Truth. Anyhow, the young man in Parmenides's poem does not pretend to be perfect either. Truth does not belong to philosophers, only gods possess it (in Karagatsis's case gods are substituted by raki, ouzo and the *joie de vivre*). Anyhow the privilege of a philosopher is at least the freedom from opinion. It is not a matter of lifestyle (any way of life, both moral and immoral, could easily be combined with Karagatsis's mood). It is a matter of mood, of self-irony: one should decide to consider his or her opinion only an opinion (to consider his or her belief only a belief). Apparently the only path of Truth available to a mortal man is the self-irony of the second generation of Parmenides's disciples – Socrates. To believe their own opinion to be the Truth and to be guided by it while making life decisions, is the lot of the poor creatures wandering along the Path of Belief (the Devious Track).

The laughter of passengers on the ship on the way back acquires a cosmic, gigantic, Homeric character (τὸ γέλιο ... τεράστιο, ὀμηρικὸ) – like the dizziness and nausea that accompany passengers on the way to the island of Cythera. Everyone laughs, nobody gets sick. Laughter is analogous to the swaying of a ship. It fits into the sea element and goes further – into the outer space. It is the opposite of nausea, as the body's desire to oppose the pitching and dizziness striving to balance the situation. Laughter is a self-contradictory attempt to preserve immobility in the totality of movement – hence the nausea. Laughter, on the contrary, fits into this totality. Laughter is fundamentally kinetic (shaking), there is no resistance to swaying and dizziness, on the contrary, dizziness is intensified by numerous portions of ouzo drunk. Nor does anyone feel sick. Everybody is given to motion in movement, so it is impossible to fix neither the motion itself, or its absence. There is a feeling that at the very end of the story, using the metaphor of the laughter, M. Karagatsis, having balanced the pitching with laughter, brings the kinetic principle to its limits, turning

it into akinesia. In this way he ends the story with another example of the coincidence of rest and movement both of which have reached their ultimate expression.

Everybody gives himself to the movement in motion. These movements cannot be fixed, neither can one prove their absence. There is a feeling that at the very end of the story, using the metaphor of the laughter, Karagatsis balances spitching with laughter, bringing the kinetic principle to its limits, turning it into akinesia, ending the story with another example of the merger of movement and immobility in their ultimate expression.

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