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LUIGI BATTEZZATO

PYTHAGOREAN COMEDIES FROM EPICHARMUS TO ALEXIS

1. *Introduction: comedy and philosophy**

Pythagoras and his followers make wonderful comic characters, whose potential was fully exploited in the fourth century BCE. Athenaeus provides a list of comic writers who mocked members of the Pythagorean sect; these playwrights include Antiphanes, Alexis, Aristophanes, Cratinus (probably Cratinus the younger), and Mnesimachus.¹ Some 'Pythagorean' plays listed by Athenaeus can be dated with certainty to the period 350–320 BCE, but that does not mean that all of them are from the same period, or that the ridicule of Pythagorean cults and habits was central to their plots.²

Although Pythagoreans do not seem to have been mentioned in fifth-century plays, Gelzer, Dover and Arnott have noticed that the portrayal of Socrates in the *Clouds* resembles that of the Pythagoreans.³ Socrates and his followers live on little food—or on no food at all. They dress in rags, do not wash (*Nu.* 837, *Av.* 1554–5), and are able to endure cold. Finally, the Pythagoreans shared with at least the Platonic Socrates, who is said to have meditated alone for an entire day (*Pl. Smp.* 220c–d), the habit of silence (Alexis fr. 201, 6).⁴

It may be possible to find an antecedent for Aristophanes' treatment of Socrates in an earlier comic playwright who treated 'philosophical themes' and was certainly acquainted with Pythagorean theory and cultic practice: Epicharmus. Some scholars have seen in at least one of his fragments a 'quack-philosopher,' «a character very like Socrates in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes». ⁵ While Reinhardt and Rostagni further suggest that he discussed philosophical opinions in his plays, other scholars have linked Epicharmus with Heraclitus and Gorgias.⁶ Ancient authorities explicitly make him a follower of Pythagoras,⁷ whose influence in Southern

* This article derives from a paper delivered at the conference *Greek Poetry in Italy*, organised by A. Sens and J. Osgood on June 11–12, 2007, at Villa Le Balze, Fiesole (University of Georgetown). I must thank the organizers and the participants at the conference for their suggestions in the discussion, as well as B. Acosta-Hughes, G. B. D'Alessio, F. Ferrari and D. Sedley for commenting on a written version of this paper. A. Sens's thorough revision greatly improved both the argument and the English of this article. The help of these scholars does not imply they agree on all the points I make, and the responsibility for all errors of fact or judgement is mine.

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3 Gelzer 1956; Dover 1968, pp. xxxix–xl, xliii n. 1, 177–178; Bowie 1993, pp. 112–21; Arnott 1996, pp. 580 and 583. See already Taylor 1911, p. 30.

4 Arnott 1996, p. 583 notes that toleration of cold is an «ordeal of the Socratic syllabus (*Ar. Nub.* 416, 442)». Plato reports similar information in his *Symposium* (219e–220c): Socrates is extraordinarily good at tolerating hunger, cold, and fatigue. These are traits that Xenophon (among other ancient writers) attributes to his idealized Spartans: Lipka 2002, pp. 18–19, 116–17, 120–1.

5 Pickard–Cambridge 1927, p. 376. See also Wüst 1950, p. 362, Kerkhof 2001, pp. 171–3.

6 According to Reinhardt 1916, pp. 118–25, Epicharmus was alluding to Eleatic philosophy (esp. Parmenides) in fr. 275 and 276. Rostagni suggested that Epicharmus was following Pythagorean doctrine. Fr. 276, 1–2, mentions 'even' and 'odd' numbers, a very thin basis for the argument (Rostagni 1924, pp. 25–39). Rostagni 1924, pp. 66–68 tried to explain Epicharmus fr. 275 within the framework of Pythagorean philosophy, but was unable to advance parallels. For Epicharmus and Heraclitus see e.g. Bernays 1853, p. 282 = 1885 [1971], p. 111; Gigante 1953, pp. 163. For Epicharmus and Gorgias see Demand 1971 and (*contra*) Willi 2008, pp. 124 n. 22, 166 n. 14. Willi 2008, pp. 170–5 sees a parody of Pythagorean thought in Epich. fr. 136 (see the last section of this paper) and 187 (metempsychosis), and argues against parody of Heraclitus.

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Italy was enormous.⁸ Epicharmus is also said to be the author of works on nature (T 9), on diet and health (fr. 289–95) and of ‘semi-philosophical’ scenes (fr. 240, 275–80).

The problem facing any attempt to assess the influence of Epicharmus on the treatment of Pythagoreans in later comedy is that at least some of the bountiful material attributed to him is unlikely to go back to Epicharmus himself.⁹ The recent edition by Kassel and Austin at last provides us firmer ground for the study of the playwright, even if there is room for disagreement on points of detail.

My purpose in this paper is twofold. First, I will briefly discuss fourth-century Athenian Pythagorean comedies. These authors portray Pythagoreans not simply as funny characters, as the butt of satire, but as the very opposite of the comic enterprise. Comedy is about role reversal and the carnivalesque, and often ends with a celebration (e. g. a wedding, a sacrifice, a feast). Pythagoreans renounce meat and luxury for a life of ostentatious frugality. However, a Pythagorean is not simply a killjoy, reviled for his ‘Puritanism.’ A Pythagorean is the converse of the comic hero: he (or she: Alexis’ *The Pythagorean Woman*, fr. 201–3; Cratinus Junior fr. 6) aims at creating a different kind of festive discourse. An important tenet of ancient philosophy (and of Pythagorean philosophy in particular) is that only philosophers are capable of obtaining true happiness. The happiness of Pythagorean philosophers is a competitor to the comic discourse. The figure of Epicharmus ‘the wise man’ figures importantly in fourth-century culture, especially comedy. In the second part of the paper, I discuss a ‘philosophical’ fragment attributed to Epicharmus (fr. 276) and I suggest a new reconstruction of a text (fr. 136) probably related to fr. 276.

2. Pythagorean happiness and comic fun

In his book *Plato's Utopia Recast*, Christopher Bobonich has cogently argued that one of the main tenets of ancient philosophy, and of Platonic philosophy in particular, is «disturbing and profoundly alien to us» (Bobonich 2002, p. 1). According to Plato, Aristotle (in the *Protrepticus*), and other philosophers, «only a philosopher can genuinely live well and only a philosopher can lead a truly happy and flourishing life». Bobonich demonstrates this claim through a detailed reading of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. In the *Phaedo* it is said that «after death, the soul of a non-philosopher will be re-embodied, since it is weighed down by the body» (Bobonich 2001, p. 19):

it is likely that they will go back into a political and tame race, either, I imagine, that of bees or wasps or ants, or back into the very same one, the human race, and that respectable men are born from them (*Phaedo* 82a–c, tr. Bobonich).

Bobonich shows that the *Laws* mark a sharp change of direction in Plato’s ideas about happiness. In Bobonich’s view, Plato in the *Laws* accepts the claim that «at least some non-philosophers are capable of living happy lives» (Bobonich 2001, p. 9). Plato radically shifts his emphasis away from a well-established ancient philosophical tradition that argues that true happiness was accessible only to philosophers. This is especially true of the Pythagorean tradition, whose members followed a number of strict rules in order to be blessed in the afterlife with a far better lot than that obtained by fellow human beings who committed such horrible sins

8 On Pythagoras and Pythagorean philosophy in Southern Italy Burkert 1972 is fundamental. See also Von Fritz 1940; Timpanaro Cardini 1958–1964; Zhmud 1997; Tortorelli Ghidini, Storch Marino, and Visconti 2000; Muccioli 2002 (on ancient sources); Musti 2005, pp. 148–203; Riedweg 2005; Mele 2007 (with references).

9 See already Dobree 1820, p. 126: «*versus ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ τοὶ θεοὶ παρήσαν, χηπέλιπον οὐ πόποκα* [fr. 275, 1] *qui cum ceteris in Laertii Platone dudum est fraudis suspectus*». Zieliński 1885, p. 243 even claimed that Epicharmus’ genuine works did not reach Athens until the fourth century, an extreme position refuted by Cassio 1985, pp. 39–41, Kerkhof 2001, pp. 52–55 and 133–73, and Rusten 2001.

as eating beans or wearing the wrong sort of fabric. Plato alludes to the theory of metempsychosis in the passage from the *Phaedo* just quoted, and Pythagorean influences on that dialogue are strong.¹⁰

In fact, the descriptions of Pythagorean characters in Athenian Middle Comedy include mention of the special fate that awaits the members of the sect in the afterlife. In Aristophon fr. 12, from a comedy called *The Pythagorean Man* (Πυθαγοριστής), the speaker remarks that the Pythagoreans live apart from all other souls. They have the privilege of eating at the High Table of the Underworld in company of the god Pluto. One of the speakers notes that they in fact are a miserable lot: poor and dirty, they can afford a single worn mantle and do not wash. These are the Pythagoreans of old times, apparently, since nowadays «none of the recent people would abide» (Aristophon fr. 12, 10 οὐδεὶς ἂν ὑπομείνειε τῶν νεωτέρων) the strict rules of the sect.¹¹

Among other passages of Middle Comedy that deal with Pythagoreans, Alexis' *The Men of Tarentum* is noteworthy for its mockery of the principal philosophical group of that city. A character stresses the fact that «the Pythagoreans» (οἱ πυθαγορίζοντες) do not eat anything that has a 'soul', in response to which another makes the joke that they only eat dead animals, which have lost their 'soul' (fr. 223, 1–6). In fact, several ancient writers report that vegetarianism was not strictly followed in the sect—Pythagoras himself apparently ate meat, and even sacrificed a bull when he discovered his famous theorem¹²—and those hostile to Pythagoreanism claim that vegetarianism was hypocritical.¹³ Be this as it may, the fragment of Alexis goes on to poke fun of the ridiculous frugality of the Pythagoreans: they live on a diet fit for prison inmates, surviving on «pure bread» (ἄρτος καθαρός)¹⁴ and on water (Alex. fr. 223, 10–11). Similar remarks appear in Alexis fr. 201, from the comedy *The Pythagorean Woman*: the life of Pythagoreans was characterized by frugal diet, dirtiness, cold temperatures, silence, sullen behaviour, and lack of personal hygiene.¹⁵

These are all typical traits of philosophers in comedy, and, as we have seen, many appear as early as the portrayal of Socrates in the *Clouds*. The frugal diet of philosophers is mocked in the *Clouds* and the *Birds* (e.g. Aristoph. *Nu.* 415–416; *Av.* 1281–1282); Socrates and his followers dress in rags and do not wash (*Nu.* 837; *Av.* 1554–5). We have already mentioned that Plato, in a passage of the *Symposium*, attributes toleration of cold, hunger and fatigue to Socrates (219c–20e). Although these traits are generic, applying to philosophers of all descriptions (as for instance to Cynics and followers of Socrates),¹⁶ and to other intellectuals,¹⁷ Alexis fr. 201 is nonetheless interesting in that the speaker compares the meagre Pythagorean «feasts» to a «sacrifice»:

ἢ δ' ἐστίασις ἰσχάδες καὶ στέμφυλα
καὶ τυρὸς ἔσται· ταῦτα γὰρ θύειν νόμος
τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις. (B.) νῆ Δι', ἱερεῖον μὲν οὖν

10 See Taylor 1911, pp. 18–24; Kingsley 1995, pp. 77–171. On Pythagoras in Plato, esp. in the *Philebus*, see Burkert 1972, pp. especially 16–19, 27–28, 43–4, 85–6; Gosling 1975, pp. 83, 99, 121, 165–81, 196–205, 226–28; Sedley 2003, p. 25; Delcomminette 2006, pp. 93–94.

11 See Papachrysostomou 2008, pp. 138–43.

12 Burkert 1972, p. 180 with n. 110.

13 In Euripides, Theseus remarks that Hippolytus' *Orphic* vegetarianism is hypocritical: see Eur. *Hipp.* 952–3 with Barrett 1964, pp. 342–44 and e.g. Taylor 1911, p. 25.

14 «Pure bread» is a technical term for white, as opposed to whole-grain, bread (Arnott 1996, p. 638 *ad loc.*), but purity is of course essential to Pythagoreans, and the religious implication of the adjective must have played a role in their choice of this more expensive type of bread.

15 See Arnott 1996, pp. 580–4.

16 Hunter 1983, p. 229.

17 For a survey see Imperio 1998; Olson 2007, pp. 227–55. For the similarity with the characterisation of Spartans, see above, n. 4.

ὁποῖον ἂν κάλλιστον, ὦ βέλτιστ', ἔχη.

...

ἔδει θ' ὑπομεῖναι μικροσιτίαν, ρύπον,
ῥίγος, σιωπὴν, στυγνότητ', ἄλυσίαν.

(A.) You'll be dining on dried figs, olive pomace,
and cheese; this is what the Pythagoreans
customarily sacrifice. (B.) By Zeus, the meal features
the fines sacrificial offering there is, my very good sir!

...

We had to endure limited food, dirt,
cold, silence, sullenness, and no baths. (tr. Olson 2006-2009)

As it is clear from Aristophanes' fr. 12, such a life of deprivation was not without its rewards in the afterlife. Moreover, the practice of vegetarianism was seen as some sort of religious ritual: the vegetarian meal is a paradoxical version of sacrifice, in which Pythagoreans offered figs and cheese, not meat.¹⁸ Even in the comic version, Pythagoreans are said to practice their absurd customs in order to be in special contact with the gods—that is, to obtain complete happiness in the life to be. Burkert (1972, p. 182) remarked that:

Originally, and for a long time, abstinence was only a preparation for the sacred meal [...]. In the mysteries of Demeter and Dionysus the most important sacrificial animals are sucking pigs, cocks, and kids, the very animals of whose meat, according to Aristoxenus,¹⁹ Pythagoras was especially fond.

The Pythagoreans applied the *akousmata*, the instructions of Pythagoras,

no longer to festivals but to normal life, which, as a consequence, seemed to others abnormal. Prohibitions like those of beans, heart, certain fishes, and baths are now absolute and must be observed at all times: and the Pythagorean always wears white clothing. He lives every day of his life as though he were preparing for initiation at Eleusis, for incubation at Asclepius' temple, or for the journey to Trophonius (Burkert 1972, pp. 190–91).

Burkert develops a parallel with Puritanism originally suggested by Dodds:

Their aim was to make the whole of life a service of God; every day was to be lived like Good Friday. The dangerous area of arbitrary human choice and of carefree joy in living was narrowed as much as possible (Burkert 1972, pp. 191–92)

This religiously motivated frugality transforms everyday life into festive time: and this transposition poses a severe threat to the festivity that is the essential goal of comedy. Another fragment from the *Tarantinoi* by Alexis (fr. 222) takes up the famous saying attributed to Pythagoras that life is like a festival: some come to compete in the athletic games, other to sell or to buy, and some simply to watch. Philosophers constitute the last group: as 'lovers of wisdom,'

18 On sacrifice, food and cooking, esp. in relationship with Pythagorean practice, see Detienne 1970 and 1979, pp. 13–17.

19 Burkert 1972, 180 n. 109 refers to Aristox. fr. 25, 28, 29a in Wehrli 1945, pp. 15–6 (see also the comments at pp. 55–56) and to Por. VP 35, Iam. VP 150. See also Detienne 1970, pp. 143–44.

they are the audience to the festival of life.²⁰ In the face of such imagery, Burkert's conclusions about the religious character of the Pythagorean way of life seem inescapable: since life is a festival, and since festivals were regulated by ritual laws, one must live one's entire life according to those laws.

In Alexis' comedy, a character not only plays on the Pythagorean equation of life with a festival, but also adds other Pythagorean material that hints at the life before and after that which we live now. But he transforms the image of life as festival by giving it a completely unexpected twist at the end: the best thing to do is to enjoy the festival of life as much as one can, enjoying laughter, sex, and, if possible, a free meal. This turns Pythagorean happiness on its head: the best festive life is not attained through frugality and ritual purity, but by behaving like characters in a comedy:

εἶναι μανιώδη πάντα τάνθρώπων ὅλως,
ἀποδημίας δὲ τυγχάνειν ἡμᾶς ἀεὶ
τοὺς ζῶντας, ὥσπερ εἰς πανήγυριν τινα
ἀφειμένους ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ σκότους
εἰς τὴν διατριβὴν εἰς τὸ φῶς τε τοῦθ', ὃ δὴ
ὁρῶμεν. ὃς δ' ἂν πλεῖστα γελάσῃ καὶ πίῃ
καὶ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἀντιλάβηται τὸν χρόνον
τοῦτον ὃν ἀφείται, κἂν τύχῃ γ', ἐράνου τινός,
πανηγυρίσας ἥδιστ' ἀπῆλθεν οἴκαδε.

human existence is entirely, completely insane,
and as long as we're alive, we're enjoying
a reprieve, like going to a festival;
we've been released from death and darkness,
and allowed to have a party in this light
we see. And whoever laughs the most, and drinks the most,
and grabs Aphrodite during the time
he's released, or a dinner party if he gets the chance—
he's the happiest when he goes home after the festival
(Alexis fr. 222, 9–17; tr. Olson 2006–2009)²¹

This is of course a very simplified view of comedy, and the present paper is not the place to discuss it in detail. Bakhtin famously stressed the importance of the carnival for understanding several literary and social phenomena, and scholars have been eager to apply his theory to ancient comedy, with mixed results.²² It is not necessarily the case that ancient comedy is always a 'time of reversal,' even if reversal is crucial to many comedies. Angus Bowie (1993) has argued that the plays of Aristophanes are based on (a travesty) of ritual action. Details of his argument may be disputed but it is impossible to deny that most Aristophanic plays are set at a

20 See Heraclides Ponticus fr. 87–88 Wehrli = Cic. *Tusc.* V 3, 8–9; Burkert 1960, p. 165 n. 3 and 1972, p. 201 n. 51; Arnott 1996, p. 633 provides full references to the numerous ancient sources.

21 See Arnott 1996, pp. 627–35. A character in a lost play by Menander (fr. 416b Sandbach = fr. 871 PCG) takes up Pythagoras' comparison between life and a festival. He gives the *topos* an even more philosophical and melancholic turn, but stressing the inconveniences of the 'festival,' concluding that it is better not to linger too long. See Gomme and Sandbach 1973, pp. 707–11; Arnott 1996, p. 633.

22 Carrière 1979, esp. pp. 133–43; Rösler and Zimmermann 1991; Goldhill 1991, pp. 176–85; Edwards 1993, Silk 2000, pp. 76, 83–84; Platter 2007.

festive time and end with a festive occasion (e.g. *Acharnians*, *Peace*, *Wasps*, *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae*).²³

Not only that: an important theme in ancient comedy is that of the Land of Plenty, or the Golden Age. Athenaeus is again one of our main sources, listing a large number of fifth-century plays that celebrated or mentioned a mythical world of the past or future in which people are free from the need to work, where food is available without effort, and so on.²⁴ Athenaeus claims that the poets imitated each other and that the plays are in chronological order: he mentions the *Plutoi* by Cratinus, the *Beasts* by Crates, and other plays by Teleclides, Pherecrates, Aristophanes, Nicophon, and Metagenes.²⁵ An important theme in these plays is that of the *automatos bios*, a life in which goods come of their own accord: no need to work, no need to get slaves. Crates' play, *The Beasts*, offers the funny twist that animals offer humans a life without toil (see fr. 16–18) but ask them to become vegetarian (fr. 19).²⁶

Metagenes' play is the most interesting for our purposes. It imagines a land of plenty, set in Southern Italy, and in Thurioi, of all places. Its title, *Thurioipersai* «The Persians from Thurii», reflects a comparison of the wealth of Thurii to Persian riches²⁷. According to fr. 6, the rivers Crathis and Sybaris flow with focaccia, cheese cakes, roasted squid and other seafood, as well as sausages and other delicacies:

ὁ μὲν ποταμὸς ὁ Κράθις ἡμῖν καταφέρει
μάζας μεγίστας αὐτόματος μεμαγμένας,
ὁ δ' ἕτερος ὠθεῖ κῶμα ναστῶν καὶ κρεῶν
ἐφθῶν τε βατίδων εἰλυομένων αὐτόσε.
τὰ δὲ μικρὰ ταυτὶ ποτάμι' ἐνμεντευθενὶ
ῥεῖ τευθίσιν ὀπαῖς καὶ φάγροις καὶ καράβοις,
ἐντευθενὶ δ' ἀλλάσι καὶ περικόμμασι,
τηιδὶ δ' ἀφύαισι, τῆιδε δ' αὖ ταγηνίαις.
τεμάχη δ' ἄνωθεν αὐτόματα πεπνιγμένα
εἰς τὸ στόμ' αἵττει, τὰ δὲ παρ' αὐτῶ τὸ πόδε,
ἄμυλοι δὲ περινέουσιν ἡμῖν ἐν κύκλῳ.

The river Crathis carries gigantic barley-cakes
that knead themselves downstream to us,
while the other river pushes forward a wave of cakes, meat,
and stewed skates that wriggle along in the same direction.
These little streamlets here flow on one side with
roasted squid, sea-bream, and crayfish:

23 On wedding and comedy see A. Bowie 1993, pp. 163–5.

24 See Ath. VI 267e–270a; Baldry 1952 and 1953; Carrière 1979, pp. 89–91, 255–70; Ceccarelli 2000, pp. 453–55, 462–63; Farioli 2001; Pellegrino 2000 and 2008; Wilkins 2000, pp. 115–23. All these studies give extensive bibliography and discussion of the relevant Greek sources.

25 Athenaeus notes that the plays by Nicophon and Metagenes were not put on stage (PCG VII p. 6, T ii). This probably means that the source of Athenaeus could not find any mention of these plays in the *didaskaliai* that listed plays put on stage at major Athenian festivals: see e.g. Taplin 1977, p. 13 and n. 11; Pellegrino 1998, p. 304 n. 4 and 2000; Revermann 2006, p. 71–2; for Euripides' *Andromache*, a similar case, see Allan 2000, pp. 150–51, with bibliography. Nicophon was a rival of Aristophanes in 388. See PCG VII pp. 6–8 and 70–71 (with extensive bibliography), Pellegrino 2000 and Farioli 2001, pp. 127–32. The name of Nicophon's play (*The Sirens*) is suggestive, as it is attested also for Epicharmus. Epicharmus' play listed different types of fish (fr. 121–122), and might have had something to do with the theme of gastronomic fantasy (cf. Nicophon fr. 21), but the similarity is too generic to be of great significance.

26 See Bonanno 1972, pp. 85–101.

27 On the title see Pellegrino 1998, pp. 303–5. In general see the commentary of Pellegrino 1998, pp. 307–21 and Farioli 2001, pp. 133–37, who discusses the wealth and luxury of Southern Italy. See also the next note.

on the other side with sausages and hash;
 and with small-fry here, and pancakes there.
 Fish-steaks stew themselves and dash
 from overhead into our mouths; other appear right beside our feet;
 and wheat-cakes float in a circle around us. (tr. Olson 2006-2009)

Here, Metagenes' adapts for his own comic purposes and sensibility the legendary richness of the Crathis River, which the chorus of Trojan women claims flows with gold and dyes blonde the hair of the people who bathe in it.²⁸

τάν τ' ἀγχιστεύουσαν γᾶν
 †'Ιονίω ναύται πόντωι†,
 ἄν ὕγραίνει καλλιστεύων
 ὁ ξανθὰν χαίταν πυρσαίνων
 Κρᾶθις ζαθέαις παγαῖσι τρέφων
 εὖανδρόν τ' ὀλβίζων γᾶν.

... the land that neighbours
 The Ionian sea,
 watered by Crathis the lovely,
 who turns your hair the color of gold,
 who cherishes the land with his holy streams
 and makes it blessed in its brave men. (Eur. *Tr.* 224–9, tr. Kovacs 1999)

The almost mythical *truphē* of the land of Sybaris (near the place where Thurii was subsequently built) is a major component in the picture drawn by Metagenes.²⁹ It is notable that this land of abundance is located exactly in city connected with Pythagoras, who is said to have helped Croton defeat Sybaris around 510 BCE;³⁰ the defeat of the decadent Sybarites is thus an appropriate vindication of Pythagorean frugality.

The themes of abundance and *truphē* are widespread, however, and we do not find instances where a 'Pythagorean' element is explicitly linked to the theme of *Il paese di Cuccagna*. It is nice to imagine a Pythagorean connection between the *Thuriopersai* and the *Thuriomanteis*, that is the «diviners from Thurii» mentioned by Aristophanes in the *Clouds*, along with sophists, «medical experts», and «long-haired idlers with onyx signet rings» (tr. Henderson 1998).³¹

I want to conclude this section by noting that the ritual and anthropological connections of frugality and ritual, abundance and festivity, Pythagorean doctrine and comic genre are

²⁸ See Dunbabin 1948 77–78.

²⁹ Gorman and Gorman 2007 argue that that we should be careful not to attribute to the historians Athenaeus paraphrases (such as Timaeus) the notion that the fall of Sybaris was caused by excessive luxury. Even if we accept their argument, luxury was certainly associated with Sybaris in classical texts. On luxury (*truphē*) and on the history of Sybaris see the bibliography quoted by them, and especially the papers in Stazio and Ceccoli 1993. On luxury see also Kurke 1992 and Musti 2005, pp. 80, 139, 284–85, 289–90, 295, 318. On Thurii and Sybaris see also Von Fritz 1940, pp. 68–73; Musti 2005, pp. 12–31.

³⁰ Burkert 1972, pp. 115–16, with references.

³¹ See Taylor 1911, p. 135 n. 1, discussing Aristoph. *Nub.* 331–2 πλείστους αὐταὶ βόσκουσι σοφιστάς, || Θουριομάντεις, ἰατροτέχνας, σφραγιδονυχαργοκομήτας. Burkert 1975, pp. 101–4 suggested that the man buried in the Timpone at Thurii was none other than Lampon, the Athenian prophet mentioned by Aristophanes at *Birds* 521 and 988; Guarducci 1978, p. 259 n. 3 argues forcefully against this suggestion. On the 'Orphic' tablets, some of which have been found in Thurii, see esp. Zuntz 1971, pp. 277–393; Janko 1984; Pugliese Carratelli 2001; Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2001; Bernabé 2004 and 2005; Di Benedetto 2004; Edmonds 2004; Ferrari 2008. I have discussed Pythagorean influences on the 'Orphic' tablets in Battezzato 2005.

suggestive but elusive. We do not find a play that mocks Pythagorean doctrine *and* at the same time contrasts it with an ideal presentation of the land of plenty. Fr. 222 of Alexis comes closest to doing this, in that it turns the Pythagorean metaphor of life as festival into an anti-Pythagorean invitation to hedonist practices.

3. *Epicharmus the wise man*

Ancient tradition presented the comic playwright Epicharmus as a ‘wise man’ of philosophical bent, with Pythagorean traits. We have anthologies with extracts from Epicharmus’ comic dramas. We also have four early papyri, from the third century BCE, containing maxims supposedly derived from his works (*gnōmai*).³² In a remarkable collection of sayings, Epicharmus is presented as a ‘wise man,’ who has conveniently arranged his wisdom into one-liners (Epich. fr. 244, stressing the ‘concision’ of the sayings).³³ A character in Menander has followed the advice from this or from a similar dictionary of quotations from Epicharmus (fr. 814, 1–4):

ὁ μὲν Ἐπίχαρμος τοὺς θεοὺς εἶναι λέγει
ἀνέμους, ὕδωρ, γῆν, ἥλιον, πῦρ, ἀστέρας·
ἐγὼ δ’ ὑπέλαβον χρησίμους εἶναι θεοὺς
τὰργύριον ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ χρυσίον <μόνους>.

Epicharmus says that the gods are:
«the winds, the water, the earth, the sun, the fire, the stars».
But I think that the only gods useful to us
are gold and silver

This character has read an anthology of sayings containing lines from Epicharmus.³⁴ He competes with him, but fails to beat him in style or content. His critical stance towards a recognised authority invites suspicion, and his belief that he can do better than a specialist in *gnōmai* such as Epicharmus comes across as arrogant; his focus on material wealth is probably also to be understood negatively. He must be either a miser or a character so frustrated by the circumstances that he doubts the gods will even intervene positively in human life. One should note the elegance of the single line (Men. 614, 2) listing six nouns. This is matched in Epicharmus (or pseudo-Epicharmus) fr. 248, 2–3, also from a collection of sayings: «political power, money, physical strength and physical beauty» count for nothing if one is stupid (οἰκία τυραννὶς πλοῦτος ἰσχυρὸς καλλὼν || ἄφρονος ἀνθρώπου τυχόντα καταγέλαστα γίνεται). We should remember that the anthology mentioned above (fr. 244) is from the third century BCE, just slightly after Menander’s lifetime (342/341–291/290).

Middle and New Comedy allude to compilations of sayings from Epicharmus’ works in a way that suggests a cultural debt and a competitive stance. Alexis in his *Linus* puts the title character on stage as a teacher of a reluctant Heracles (fr. 140).³⁵ In the fragment, Linus is presenting his (not particularly bright or conscientious) pupil with a choice from a number of books: Heracles must select one, and his preference will reveal his true character. Linus lists

32 See P. Hibeh 1 (III BCE) = fr. 244; P. Hibeh 2 (III BCE) = fr. 245; Gnomol. P. Hibeh 7 (III BCE) = fr. 246; Floril. P. Berol. (III BCE) = fr. 247; Ostrakon Berol. 12319 (III BCE) = fr. 248.

33 On this fragment see Kerkhof 2001, pp. 94–95; Olson 2007, pp. 37, 61–63 and 422.

34 On collections of sayings see Funghi 2003 and 2004; Carrara 2003, pp. 183–86 discusses Epicharmus. On the spurious works of Epicharmus see also Álvarez Salas 2007b.

35 See Arnott 1996, pp. 404–15; Olson 2007, pp. 266–68. On the similarities between Alexis fr. 160 and Epich. fr. 146 see Arnott 1996, pp. 471–72, who seems to me too sceptical («no other passage in Alexis [except fr. 160] can be linked inextricably with Epicharmus»; Epicharmus fr. 146 is quoted by Aristotle, and Alexis knows a ‘version’ of Epicharmus, as it is clear from his fr. 140).

several authors and genres, offering a choice from Orpheus, Hesiod, Tragedy, Choerilus (probably the epic poet), Homer, and Epicharmus. It does not come as a surprise that Heracles chooses a cookbook by Simus;³⁶ it is definitely not a cookbook by Epicharmus (even if treatment of cooking and medicine were attributed to him: see fr. 289–94). The presence of Epicharmus among esteemed and ancient writers (besides showing that he was well known in Athens) presents him as one of the foundational figures of his genre, and in that sense locates the origins of comedy in Italy, the fatherland of Alexis. It is also possible that his appearance in the list alludes to the fact that, like Orpheus, he was considered the author of wisdom literature and philosophical texts: several sources connect Epicharmus with the Pythagoreans, and Diogenes Laertius lists him as one of the main Pythagorean philosophers, just after Pythagoras himself and Empedocles, and before some major figures such as Architas and Philolaus.³⁷ Epicharmus is the main representative of comedy, and, as Plato implies in the *Theaetetus*, on an equal footing to Homer.³⁸ In short, Alexis presents Epicharmus as a serious and important author, and sets him in contrast with the authors of more mundane genres.

In fact, it is very likely that Athenians would have connected Epicharmus with gnostic poetry: a collection of sayings (*gnōmai*) attributed to him was certainly in circulation in the fourth century, and it is not by chance that Xenophon (*Mem.* II 1, 20–21) and Plato (see below, Section 5) list him as an writer just as authoritative as Hesiod and Homer. In fact, one of the two lines quoted by Xenophon is authentic, whereas the other one must be an Attic adaptation or creation.³⁹ This sort of gnostic literature could well have been read as belonging to a philosophical (Pythagorean) tradition, just like as other works attributed to Epicharmus, such as the *Chiron* (fr. 289–94), which discusses medicine and food.

4. Epicharmus and Alcimus: fragments 136 and 276

The examples discussed in the previous section show how difficult it is for us to extricate Epicharmus from later adaptations of his texts. A notorious crux concerns the fragments of Epicharmus reported by Diogenes Laertius in his third book (III 9–17). Diogenes quotes from a work called *pros Amyntan*, written by Alcimus. Alcimus is known as a historian, author of a work on the history of Sicily (*Sikelika*).⁴⁰ In the *pros Amyntan*, he quoted extensively from Epicharmus, arguing that Plato took some important philosophical ideas from them.⁴¹ Alcimus lived in the fourth century BCE, and, according to Cassio 1985, p. 45,

it is highly probable that the *pros Amyntan* was written by a friend of Dionysius to disparage Plato in the eyes of a (potential) adherent and admirer, whether the Amyntas in question was Perdiccas III's son, as Jacoby suggested, or the philosopher and pupil of Plato Amyntas of Heraclea, as Gaisser would prefer.

36 For another cookbook in comedy see Pl. Com. fr. 189 with Olson and Sens 2000, xl–xliii (I owe this reference to A. Sens).

37 See D. L. VIII 78 = Epich. T 9; Iamb. VP 166 and 241 = Epich. T 12–13. See also Colum. I 1, 7 = Epich. T 22. On Epicharmus' wisdom see also Ennius' *Epicharmus* = Epich. fr. 281–88; Álvarez Salas 2006.

38 See Pl. *Tht.* 152 = Epich. T 3 (see below, section 5).

39 See PCG I, pp. 155 and Kerkhof 2001, pp. 86–88.

40 See Alcimus, *FGHist* 560: Jacoby 1950, pp. 570–74; 1955a, pp. 517–21; 1955b, pp. 306–307.

41 See Cassio 1985, pp. 43–51; Cassio 2004, p. 194; Kerkhof 2001, pp. 65–67, 68; Álvarez Salas 2007a, pp. 27–28; Willi 2008, p. 122. In general on Alcimus see Vanotti 2006, esp. pp. 227–8 on Alcimus and Epicharmus. Gigante 1953, p. 171 unconvincingly tried to minimise the tendentiousness of Alcimus. Álvarez Salas claims that Alcimus' comments are «objective and sober», but this is unacceptable and contradicted by Álvarez Salas himself. On the same page (2007a, p. 28; see also pp. 58–59), he admits that the quotations do not support Alcimus' argument that Plato derived his ideas from Epicharmus («nessuno dei passi epicarimei è citati da lui è tale da supportare la volute dipendenza da Epicarmo di una dottrina platonica»); Alcimus' claim is completely unsupported by the evidence and must be considered highly tendentious and extreme.

Dionysius too wrote a work on the poems of Epicharmus. The claim that Plato stole his philosophy from Epicharmus is ridiculous and parochial; the argument is politically biased and the book was written to flatter a tyrant. Nor do the fragments seem to support the conclusions suggested by Alcimus. Everything is suspect. Are the fragments by Epicharmus at all? Scholars have expressed doubts since the eighteenth century. Several editors thought them authentic,⁴² but Kassel and Austin consider all of them spurious, a view supported by Kerkhof with detailed arguments. The language does not seem to be so different from that of the other fragments of Epicharmus, even if it displays some suspiciously Platonic philosophical terms.⁴³ Cassio has recently expressed himself in favour of the authenticity of at least some of the fragments.⁴⁴ Kerkhof admits that there are no linguistic arguments against the authenticity of fr. 276:

(A) αἱ πὸτ ἀριθμόν τις περισσόν, αἱ δὲ λῆς, πὸτ ἄρτιον
ποτθέμειν λῆ ψᾶφον ἢ καὶ τᾶν ὑπαρχουσᾶν λαβεῖν,
ἢ δοκεῖ κά τοί γ' ἔθ' οὗτος εἶμεν; (B) οὐκ ἐμίνγα κα.
(A) οὐδὲ μὰν οὐδ' αἱ ποτὶ μέτρον παχυαῖον ποτθέμειν
λῆ τις ἕτερον μάκος ἢ τοῦ πρόσθ' ἐόντος ἀποταμεῖν,
ἔτι γ' ὑπάρχοι κείνο τὸ μέτρον; (B) οὐ γάρ. (A) ὥδε νῦν ὄρη
καὶ τὸς ἀνθρώπους· ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὔξεθ', ὁ δέ γα μὰν φθίνει,
ἐν μεταλλαγᾷ δὲ πάντες ἐντὶ πάντα τὸν χρόνον.
ὁ δὲ μεταλλάσσει κατὰ φύσιν κοῦποκ' ἐν ταῦτῳ μένει,
ἕτερον εἴη κα τὸδ' ἤδη τοῦ παρεξεστακότος.
καὶ τὸ δὴ κῆγὼ χθὲς ἄλλοι καὶ νῦν ἄλλοι τελέθομες,
καὶ οὖθις ἄλλοι κοῦποχ' οὗτοί καττὸν <αὐτὸν αὖ> λόγον.

A: Say you took an odd number of pebbles, or if you like an even number, and chose to add or subtract a pebble: do you think it would still be the same number?

B: No.

A: Or again, say you took a measure of one cubit and chose to add, or cut off, some other length: that measure would no longer exist, would it?

B: No.

A: Well now, think of men in the same way. One man is growing, another is diminishing, and all are constantly in the process of change. But what by its nature changes and never stays put must already be different from what it has changed from. You and I are different today from who we were yesterday, and by the same argument we will be different again and never the same in the future.⁴⁵

42 See Lorenz 1864, pp. 107–19, 184–7, and, for the text of his fr. 40, pp. 266–8; Kaibel 1899, pp. 120–23, fr. 170; Olivieri 1930, pp. 70–73, fr. 152 = 1946, pp. 81–7; Carrière 1979, pp. 202–7; and Rodríguez–Noriega Gullién 1996, pp. 149–51, fr. 248). Lorenz, Kaibel, Olivieri, Carrière and Rodríguez–Noriega Gullién keep together, in accordance with the quotation in Diogenes Laertius, two texts that should be separated into two fragments (fr. 275 and 276 PCG): cf. Kerkhof 2001, p. 67. Carrière 1979, p. 207 argues that the two sections come from the same context. In favour of authenticity see also Berk 1964, pp. 90–92, 158; Casevitz and Babut 2002, p. 345 n. 680.

43 See Kerkhof 2001, pp. 65–78, with extensive references to earlier discussions. Willi 2008, pp. 125–53, 188–91 offers a thorough survey of the language of the undisputed fragments of Epicharmus, and that of the dubious fragments (fr. 275–79; cf. Willi 2008, pp. 123 n. 18; 132). See also the following note.

44 Cassio 2002, p. 57 n. 18 regards «at least 275 and 276 as authentic», adding that «probably 277–9 are also genuine». Willi 2008, pp. 122–4 agrees that the linguistic points are not strong against fr. 275, and points out that, as a forgery created to convict Plato of plagiarism, do not appear convincing. Willi 2008, p. 124, however, approves the criteria adopted by Kassel–Austin, stressing that it is more prudent, in an edition, to distinguish the dubious fragments from those of certain authorship. Álvarez Salas 2007a considers all the ‘philosophic’ fragments to be genuine.

45 Tr. Sedley 1982, p. 255, slightly adapted.

Kerkhof claims that this cannot be a passage from comedy. He compares it with a passage from the *Clouds* of Aristophanes (143–52) where one of the students of Socrates discusses with Strepsiades: in Aristophanes we have a series of «funny absurdities» (Kerkhof 2001, pp. 70–71), whereas in Epicharmus fr. 275 we do not. I do not think that this is a convincing argument. Kerkhof admits that we can isolate serious ‘philosophical’ passages from Menander, without the continuous jokes that we find in Aristophanes. Just like Menander, Epicharmus was a ‘gnomic’ poet. Similarly ‘serious’ passages can be isolated in the slight remains of Epicharmus,⁴⁶ and in his treatment of etymologies.⁴⁷

Several authors have noted that the alleged forgery does not anticipate Plato's philosophy in any significant way.⁴⁸ We should note that the supposed forger would be the first to place a philosopher on the comic stage, though one more awkward and less funny than Aristophanes' version.

5. *Epicharmus and the ‘growing man’*

The big problem with fr. 276 is that we have three or four passages in philosophical texts that appear to refer to it. Sedley 1982 brilliantly reconstructed the philosophical (hi)story of the paradox.⁴⁹

In a passage of his *Theaetetus*, Plato notes that most philosophers think that reality is in constant flux and that we should accordingly not say that things «are», but that they «are constantly becoming» (152d7–e9):

ἐκ δὲ δὴ φορᾶς τε καὶ κινήσεως καὶ κράσεως πρὸς ἄλληλα γίγνεται πάντα ἃ δὴ φαμεν εἶναι, οὐκ ὀρθῶς προσαγορεύοντες· ἔστι μὲν γὰρ οὐδέποτ' οὐδέν, ἀεὶ δὲ γίγνεται. καὶ περὶ τούτου πάντες ἐξῆς οἱ σοφοὶ πλὴν Παρμενίδου συμφερέσθων, Πρωταγόρας τε καὶ Ἡράκλειτος καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς, καὶ τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ ἄκροι τῆς ποιήσεως ἐκατέρως, κωμωδίας μὲν Ἐπίχαρμος, τραγωιδίας δὲ Ὅμηρος, <ὅς> εἰπὼν
Ὠκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσιν καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν
πάντα εἶρηκεν ἔκγονα ῥοῆς τε καὶ κινήσεως· ἢ οὐ δοκεῖ τοῦτο λέγειν;

The things of which we naturally say that they «are», are in process of coming to be, as the result of movement and change and blending with one another. We are wrong when we say they «are», since nothing ever is, but everything is coming to be.

And as regards this point of view, let us take it as a fact that all the wise men of the past, with the exception of Parmenides, stand together. Let us take it that we find on this side Protagoras and Heraclitus and Empedocles; and also the masters of the two kinds of poetry, Epicharmus in comedy and Homer in tragedy. For when Homer talked

46 See fr. 97, 11–16: «from the place where they ordered me... to prefer bad things to good ... and to accomplish my dangerous mission and get divine glory ... after going to the city and getting good, clear information, to bring back a report about the situation there to the bright Achaeans and the beloved son of Atreus, and get away unscathed myself» (tr. Olson 2007, p. 420; see also pp. 34, 47–51 for text and commentary). This might have moved a smile, if Odysseus did nothing of the sort, and proved himself a coward; it is certainly not full of «funny absurdities», and very different from comparable passages in Aristophanes. Willi 2008, pp. 188–91 stresses the mixture of epic and everyday words in the speech.

47 For instance, Servius tells us that Epicharmus called the Sicilian Muses ὁμονοούσας (fr. 229): this etymology is witty but not funny or comical. It is also a clever allusion to a famous passage of Hesiod, where the muses are said to sing φωνῇ ὁμῶνται (Th. 39) «with their voices in agreement» (see also Hes. Th. 60 ὁμόφρονες and 76). This etymology was taken up by Naevius, who called the Muses *Novem Iovis concordae filiae sorores*. See Mariotti 2001, pp. 52 and 114, fr. 51; fr. 1 in Strzelecki 1964 and Buechner 1982, pp. 21–22; fr. 54 in Barchiesi 1962, pp. 510–2. Other such etymologies and word plays occur in several other fragments (fr. 14; 48; 113, 12; 116; 120; 135; 287). I hope to discuss such etymologies in another paper. See Willi 2008, pp. 156–57 on *Sprachwitz* and folk etymology. On the significance and philosophical (esp. Pythagorean) implications of etymology see Sedley 2003, esp. 25–50). On etymologies in early Greek poetry see e.g. Kraus 1987 (who does not mention Epicharmus).

48 See e.g. Álvarez Salas 2007a, p. 28 n. 21 (with further references), 58–59; Willi 2008, pp. 163–66.

49 See also Long and Sedley, 1987, I, pp. 166–76 and II, pp. 169–78, collecting and discussing some of sources quoted below.

about «Ocean, begetter of gods, and Tethys their mother», he made all things the offspring of flux and motion. – Or don't you think he meant that? (tr. Burnyeat 1990)

According to Plato, Parmenides is unique in denying the constant state of flux. Protagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles all insist that things are in motion, and that «motion is the cause of that which passes for existence, that is, of becoming» (see Burnyeat 1990, pp. 11–12). Epicharmus is listed as a literary authority, but he is not quoted. The Homeric passage (*Il.* XIV 201 = XIV 302) is not especially philosophical, and the theory of flux is ascribed to him on the basis of the allegorical interpretation of Ocean and Tethys. We could surmise that something similar happened with Epicharmus, if we did not have corroborating evidence from later authors.

Plutarch tells us that Chrysippus knew of a passage by Epicharmus in which the playwright developed the so-called αὐξανόμενος λόγος.⁵⁰ Plutarch gives as examples of this argument the following cases. If you add or substitute citizens to a city, is it still the same city? If the parts of my body change continuously, am I still the same person? If the Athenians keep the ship of Theseus, but substitute the pieces of wood one by one as they rot, do they still have the ship of Theseus?⁵¹

Another passage of Plutarch provides the dramatic setting for such a dialogue, and explains that it was called the αὐξανόμενος λόγος (Epicharmus fr. 136 = Plut. *De sera numinis vindicta* 559 a–b):

τὸ δὲ πολλὰς πόλεις διαιροῦντα τῷ χρόνῳ ποιεῖν, μᾶλλον δ' ἀπείρους, ὁμοίον ἐστὶ τῷ πολλοὺς τὸν ἓνα ποιεῖν ἄνθρωπον ὅτι νῦν πρεσβύτερός ἐστι, πρότερον δὲ νεώτερος, ἀνωτέρω δὲ μειράκιον ἦν. μᾶλλον δὲ ὅλως ταῦτά γε τοῖς Ἐπιχαρμείοις ἔοικεν ἐξ ὧν ὁ αὐξόμενος ἀνέφην τοῖς σοφισταῖς λόγος· ὁ γὰρ λαβὼν πάλαι τὸ χρέος νῦν οὐκ ὀφείλει, γεγρονῶς ἕτερος, ὃ τε κληθεὶς ἐπὶ δείπνον ἐχθρὸς ἄκλητος ἤκει τήμερον· ἄλλος γὰρ ἐστὶ.

To create a multiplicity, or rather an infinity, of cities by chronological distinctions is like creating many men out of one because the man is now old, but was in his prime before, and yet earlier was a lad. Or rather this procedure altogether resembles the passage of Epicharmus that gave rise to the sophists' fallacy of the 'grower': the man who received the loan in the past is no debtor now, having become a different person, and he who was yesterday invited to dinner comes an unbidden guest today, since he is now another man. (tr. De Lacy and Einarson 1959)

The debtor claims that he does not owe the money, as he is another person; and the host of a banquet turns away the man he invited, claiming that the person he invited is a different one. The first dramatic setting is similar to that employed in the *Clouds* to turn away creditors (738–80, 1214–1302). If this was also found in Epicharmus, it would be a very remarkable precedent indeed. It is strange that Plutarch mentions two apparently unrelated scenes. In 1853, Bernays saw that the Platonic passage and the two passages from Plutarch allude to fragment 276 of Epicharmus (or pseudo-Epicharmus).⁵² Kassel and Austin reject this connection and separate the Plutarch passages (Epicharmus fr. 136) from the fragment transmitted via Alcimus (fr. 276),

⁵⁰ Epicharmus fr. 136 = Plut. *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos* 1083a ὁ τοίνυν περὶ αὐξήσεως λόγος ἐστὶ μὲν ἀρχαῖος· ἡρώτηται γάρ, ὥς φησι Χρύσιππος, ὅπ' Ἐπιχάρμου «Well then, the argument about growth is certainly ancient, for, as Chrysippus says, it was propounded by Epicharmus» (tr. Cherniss 1976). See SVF ii.762, p. 214, ll. 20–24.

⁵¹ Not all these cases are philosophically similar (Sedley 1982, pp. 258–59); cf. the sources listed by Cherniss 1976, p. 847 and Casevitz and Babut 2002, pp. 112–13 and 344–45, including Plu. *Thes.* 23, 1.

⁵² Bernays 1853 = 1885 [1971], pp. 108–17.

which they consider spurious. Note however that Plato's comments in the *Theaetetus* would fit well the last five lines of that fragment.

6. Epicharmus and an ancient commentary on Plato

We have yet another important source on the connection between ἀξόμομος λόγος the and Epicharmus: it is a passage from an anonymous commentary on the *Theaetetus*, preserved in a papyrus from the second century CE.⁵³ The commentary is a very detailed and accurate work. It mentions Epicharmus, credits him with invention of the ἀξόμομος λόγος, discusses what this argument is, and then tells us about its dramatic employment in Epicharmus. All this resembles Plutarch's passage in *Moralia* 559 a–b, but cannot be wholly dependent on it, since the commentator gives us more information.⁵⁴ In column LXXI. 26–40, the commentator tells us that someone had to give money as a contribution for a banquet; this person refuses to pay his contribution, claiming that he is a different person from the one who promised to give money. The person who asked for the money strikes him, and then say that he is not the same man man who beat him up, but a different one.⁵⁵ Just like Pheidippides in the *Clouds* (1401–39), he has learnt the lesson in philosophy very quickly, and turns it to good use on the spot, against the very person that made him learn it.

The example adduced by the commentator is the same as that given in the second passage of Plutarch, but clearer. Plutarch tells us merely that the scene was about a debtor, and does not make clear its relationship to the banquet-scene. In the commentary everything falls into place, and the connection between the scenes is explained. The play is about συμβολαί, «contributions made to provide a common meal».⁵⁶

Guido Bastianini and David Sedley (1995) have published an excellent new edition, an enormous improvement on the *editio princeps* (Diels and Schubart 1905).⁵⁷ I am not, however, convinced by Sedley's supplements for LXXI.12–18.⁵⁸ If Sedley's reconstruction were correct, the text of Epicharmus discussed in the commentary could not come from an authentic work by the comedian. In this passage, Sedley has the commentator say:⁵⁹

Ἐπίχαρμος, ὁ[μὴ]σας τοῖς Πυθα[γορείοις] | ἄλλα τ[έ]τινα εἶ[δ]ε[ν] δ[ιδ]ασ[κ]α[ν]τα[ν]
καὶ τὸ | [περὶ τ]οῦ ἀξομ[ένου, ὅ] | λ[ό]γωι ἐφοδ[ικῶι καὶ π[ι]σ[τ]ῶι ἐ[π]έρα[ινε].

Epicharmus, having been acquainted with the Pythagoreans, put on stage well a number of dramatic scenes, and in particular the one about the growing man, which he treated with a systematic and reliable argument.⁶⁰

53 See Diels and Schubart 1905 and Bastianini and Sedley 1995. The papyrus is reported under fr. 136 by Kassel and Austin.

54 Note that, on other grounds, Bastianini and Sedley 1995, pp. 254–56 argue that the commentary was probably written in the first century BC, well before Plutarch's time.

55 See Bastianini and Sedley 1995, pp. 458–61 (*Commentarius in Platonis Theaetetus* LXXI.26–40): κα[ὶ] ἐκω[μ]ώϊδισεν αὐτὸ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀπαιτουμένου συμβολᾶς καὶ [ἀ]ρνούμενου τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἶναι διὰ τὸ τὰ μὲν προσγεγενῆσθαι, τὰ δὲ ἀπεληλυθέναι, ἐπεὶ δὲ ὁ ἀπαιτῶν ἐτ[ύ]πησεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐνεκαλείτο, πάλιν κ[ἀ]κείνου [φά]σκοντο[ς] ἄλλ[ο] μὲ[ν] εἶ[ν]αι τὸν τ[ε]τυ[π]ηκότα, ἕτερον δὲ τὸν ἐγκαλούμενον. I omit the papyrological signs marking uncertain letters, and the line divisions of the original. The text of Diels and Schubart 1905, p. 47 is very similar (except for the reading ἕτερον <v> μὲ[ν] εἶ[ν]αι at LXXI.37–8, which does not affect the meaning of the passage).

56 A practice attested at e.g. Aristoph. *Ach.* 1211; Eub. 72: LSJ s.v. συμβολή IV a.

57 I must thank Dr. Fabian Reiter (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin: Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung Berlin) for sending me a photo of the papyrus. See also the reproduction in Adorno et al. 2002, plate 48.

58 Kassel and Austin quote the text of the *editio princeps* as well as Sedley's reconstruction, probably in order to express caution. See also Willi 2008, p. 170 n. 24.

59 Here and in the rest of the paper I omit papyrological signs marking uncertain letters.

60 See Bastianini and Sedley 1995, p. 458. The apparatus credits Sedley with the reconstruction of the lines quoted above. The Italian translation in their edition reads: «Epicarmo, avendo frequentato i Pitagorici, rappresentò bene varie scene drammatiche, e in

Several objections may be raised:

(1) δράματα must be «plays», not «dramatic scenes».⁶¹ The normal meaning, however, would not work on Sedley's reconstruction: the commentator would claim that there was a «*drama* about the growing man». Epicharmus may have mentioned the argument in a play, but since it is extremely unlikely that he wrote an entire play on a single philosophical argument, Sedley is compelled to understand *drama* in an unparalleled sense. Δράμα can mean «action», «plot», as in «this scene is not part of the *drama*», «is not connected to the plot». It can also mean «tragic event». But it would be surprising if δράμα meant «section of a δράμα»,⁶² an unparalleled. Willi 2008, p. 171 translates Sedley's text as «Epicharmus has created several good plays»,⁶³ which makes better sense of δράμα, but translates εὖ as if it were καλά.

(2) εὖ ἐδίδασκεν is also strange. It is not a question of putting a drama on stage in a good way, but of putting on stage good plays. Nor is it Epicharmus' success as a director that counts, but his cleverness and ingenuity as a writer.

(3) One would expect the syllabification [ἐδίδα|σ]κεν, not [ἐδίδασ|]κεν, at least in this papyrus: see XLVI.12–3 ἔφα|σκεν, LXVI.35–6 κατα|σκευάζει, LXVIII.42–3 εὐρί|σκετο.⁶⁴

(4) The relationship between being acquainted with the Pythagoreans and writing plays is obscure. One would expect the participle ὀμιλήσας to be causal, explaining why Epicharmus εὖ ἐδίδασκεν, rather than simply temporal. But Pythagorean philosophy is not a reason for writing good dramas.

(5) In line 16, the relative pronoun ὃ refers to drama. However, the sentence λ[όγωι] ἐφοδ[ικῶι καὶ πισ]τ[ῶι ἐ]πέρα[ινε], «he brought to completion in a systematic and reliable way», would be excellent in reference to an «argument», but is very strange in reference to *drama*.

The first objection can be overcome by rephrasing the rest of the sentence,⁶⁵ but doing so does not address the others. The first three difficulties, however, disappear if we read δ[όγ]ματ[α] instead of δ[ρά]ματ[α]. The word δόγμα is frequently used in the commentary itself, as well as in

particolare quella sull'uomo che cresce, che trattava con un'argomentazione metodica e affidabile» (Bastianini and Sedley 1995, p. 459). The English translation printed above is mine.

61 On the Greek and Latin words for «scene» = «part of a drama» see Ferri 2008.

62 See LSJ s.v. δράμα II «action represented on the stage, *drama*, *play*, ... also *tragic event* Plb. 23.10.12».

63 Willi 2008, p. 171: «Epicharm, der in pythagoreische Kreise verkehrte, hat verschiedene gute Dramen verfasst, insbesondere das zum ἀνέξομενος λόγος, das er methodisch und überzeugend gestaltete».

64 Diels and Schubart 1905, p. xviii note that the scribe is occasionally inconsistent: see XLVIII.30–31 πά|σχουσι and LXV.21–22 πάσ[χ]ουσιν. However, no inconsistent divisions of σκ appear in this papyrus, and a supplement that respects the usual practice is likelier. See also Janko 2000, p. 76 n. 3 for a survey of the different practices of scribes.

65 E. g. ἄλλα τ[έ] τινα εὖ [ἐδίδασ]κεν (or, as F. Ferrari suggested to me, [πεποίη]κεν) δ[ρά]ματ[α, καὶ τὸ] | [ἐν ᾧ τ]οῦ ἀνέξομ[ένου] | λ[όγου] ἐφοδ[ικῶς τὴν π[ί]σ[τ]ιν ἐ]πέρα[ι]νε: «[Epicharmus] staged several dramas with success (or: composed well several dramas), and in particular the one in which he brought to completion the proof of the 'discourse that grows' in a systematic way».

several later scholia, in the sense «philosophical opinion»,⁶⁶ which is what we would expect in the context.⁶⁷

Because of the large lacunae, the precise wording of the end of the sentence must remain uncertain. The number of letter in each line also varies,⁶⁸ and on Sedley's reconstruction we have a remarkable difference in length between lines 12 and 13.⁶⁹ Although no single reconstruction is likely to convince all scholars, I suggest the following, listing alternative possibilities in the notes.⁷⁰

Ἐπίχαρμος, οἷα ὁμιλή|σας τοῖς Πυθα|γορείοις | ἄλλα τ[έ] τινα εὖ [ἀπέδω]|κεν δ[όγ]ματ[α καὶ τὸν] [περὶ τ]οῦ αὐξομ[ένου] | λ[όγον] ἐφοδ[ικῶς καὶ πι|σ]τ[ῶς ἐ]πέρα[(ι)νε.]

Epicharmus, since he was a pupil of the Pythagoreans,⁷¹ explained well⁷² a number of philosophical opinions,⁷³ and brought to completion the argument about the growing man in a systematic and reliable way.⁷⁴

On this reconstruction, the lines are roughly as long as line 13, the longest in the section (over 17 letters). We cannot rule out the possibility that the column was, on average, slightly narrower (about 15 letters per line); in that case one could offer the following reconstruction:⁷⁵

66 See the anonymous commentary, XLVII.37 and 47; XLVIII.8; LV.5 and 10; see also e.g. *schol. in Theoc.* XIV 5a Wendel Πυθαγορικὸν ἐπαγγελλόμενος δόγμα, *schol. in Hom. Il.* XVII 238–45a1 Erbse τὸ Περιπατητικὸν δόγμα πρῶτος Ὅμηρος οἶδεν ὅτι οὐκ ἀπαθὴς ὁ ἐνάρετος (see also *schol. in Hom. Il.* XVII 238–45a2 Erbse), *schol. in Pi. O.* II 104a Drachmann τὸ δὲ περὶ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας ἀρχαιότερόν ἐστι: παραδέδοται γὰρ ἔτι ἀνέκαθεν, ὡς Ὅμηρός φησιν (σ 79): νῦν μὲν μήτ' εἴης, βουγάιε, μήτε γένοιο. πρῶτος δὲ δοκεῖ τούτῳ τῷ δόγματι χρῆσθαι Πυθαγόρας. This meaning is of course commonplace in philosophical commentaries.

67 The alternatives (δέρματα, δέματα, δήγματα) do not give reasonable sense in the context.

68 On 7–11, the quotation from Plato is written with the following number of letters per line (counting each iota as half a letter, as is conventional): 12.5, 14.5, 14, 15, 16.5. In Sedley's reconstruction of 12–18, line lengths are as follow: 13.5, 17.5, 17, 14.5, 16.5, 16.5, and 15.5 letters.

69 It is unlikely that the name 'Pythagorean' was abbreviated (see Diels and Schubart 1905, pp. viii–ix). The scribe added one-letter-long fillers at the end of short lines, which accounts for some of the differences in line length; see Diels and Schubart 1905, p. viii; Sedley and Bastianini 1995, p. 237.

70 In my reconstruction, line lengths are as follow: 15.5 (or 18.5?), 17.5, 17, 15.5, 15.5, 16.5, and 15.5 letters.

71 I print the supplement οἷα proposed by F. Ferrari, who in alternative suggests οἷάπερ (probably too long). One can also think of οἷον. For these adverbs in connections with participles cf. Kühner and Gerth 1904, II, p. 97. In alternative one could supplement ὁμολογήσας, «being in agreement with the Pythagoreans».

72 This suggestion occurred independently also to F. Ferrari. The commentator uses the word often, in the sense «giving a precise definition» (XVIII.21, 28, XX.44, XXI.36–7, XXII.19, XXV.1). See also LSJ s.v. ἀποδίδωμι I.11. In alternative, consider [παρέδω]|κεν «handed over» (see LSJ s.v. παραδίδωμι I.4, b «teach doctrine», [D.] XXVI 13 δόγματα (legal decisions) καὶ νόμιμα ἐκ παλαιῦ παραδοθένθ' ὑπὸ τῶν προγόνων, D.H. Rh. 8, 8 δόγμα παραδιδόμενον, Philp. in de An. 117, 11–12 Hayduck ἀπερικαλύπτως τὰ δόγματα παραδιδόναι, Iamb. VP 28, 148 θεῖα δὲ τὰ δόγματα λέγειν (οἷς χρὴ πιστεύειν) ἃ Πυθαγόρας παρέδωκεν). Other possibilities include εὑ[ρη]|κεν «invented/discovered» (see below, in the main text), εὖ [εὔρη]|κεν «invented well» ([Pl.] Just. 373 b 5 εὖ γ' ἠδρες), εὖ [διώρι]|κεν «defined», and εὖ [εἴρη]|κεν «expressed well» (cf. *schol. in A.R.* I 1112–13 Wendel τὸ δὲ «χερσὶν εἰς» οὐκ εὖ εἴρηκεν· ὀφείλει γὰρ σφετέραις, *schol. in Hes. Op.* 311–2 Pertusi εὖ δ' ὁ Πλάτων ἐξηγήσατο τὸ ἔπος). Note that εὖ λέγειν is normally intransitive (e.g. Str. I 3, 1), but that it can take neuter pronouns as objects (e.g. Pl. Cra. 408 b 6–7, Grg. 510 b 2). Sedley's ἐδίδασκεν («taught well») is conceivable, though it runs into the third objection noted above and would make Epicharmus almost a professional philosopher.

73 The phrase ἄλλα τέ τινα does not have to be followed by a syntactically parallel neuter noun or pronoun: see e.g. D.C. XLII 26, 1 ἄλλα τέ τινα συνέβη, καὶ μέλισσαι ... ἰδρύθησαν, XLV 13, 5 and LII 42, 1 ἄλλα τέ τινα διώρθωσε καὶ τὴν βουλὴν ἐξήτασε.

74 Alternatively, one can think of [καὶ πρῶ]| [το]ς τοῦ αὐξομ[ένου] | λ[όγου] ἐφοδ[ικῶς τὴν πῖ]| [σ]τ[ῖν ἐ]πέρα[(ι)νε] «and was the first to complete the proof of the argument about the growing man in a systematic way». In theory, it would be possible to retain Sedley's original supplement, [καὶ τὸ] | [περὶ τ]οῦ αὐξομ[ένου, δ] | λ[όγῳ] ἐφοδ[ικῶι καὶ πι]| [σ]τ[ῶι ἐ]πέρα[ι]νε] «and in particular the *dogma* about the growing man, which he treated with a systematic and reliable argument». However, as D. Sedley has pointed out to me, in the new context this would imply that the argument about the growing man is a *dogma* (a «doctrine»), which it is not: it is an argument, sophism, or puzzle.

75 This gives respectively 13.5, 17.5, 14, 15.5, 14.5, and 15 letters per line.

Ἐπίχαρμος, ὁ[μιλή]σας τοῖς Πυθα[γορείοις] | ἄλλα τ[έ] τινα εὔ[ρη]|κεν δ[όγ]ματ[α τόν
τε] | [περὶ τ]οῦ αὐξομ[ένου] | λ[όγον] ἐφοδ[εύων πι]|τ[ῶς ἐ]πέρα[ι]νε

Epicharmus, since he was a pupil of the Pythagoreans, discovered a number of philosophical opinions, and, researching systematically the argument about the growing man, he brought it to completion reliably.

In any case, the whole play about a philosophical argument is now gone, and the problem of syllabification is solved. Moreover, the participle phrase, which stresses Epicharmus' Pythagorean allegiance, now explains the main verb. The relative pronoun ὃ is no longer present. The vocabulary, indeed, is appropriate: scholia also use δόγμα to mean «proverb, maxim»,⁷⁶ or «opinion» in general,⁷⁷ and the verb περαίνω, «to bring to completion an argument», is found in connection with λόγος «reasoning».⁷⁸ Moreover, these reconstructions are better connected with the Platonic context, which links Epicharmus with other philosophers. Lines 15–17 (in both reconstructions printed in the main text above) have a precise correspondence in LXX.5–9 τὸν δὲ | [περὶ τ]οῦ αὐξομένου | [λ]όγον ἐκίνησεν | [μ]ὲν πρῶτος Πυθα[γό]ρας. «Pythagoras was the first to put forward the argument about the growing man».

In conclusion: Chrysippus, Plutarch and the anonymous commentator on the *Theaetetus* knew of a passage from a play by Epicharmus that developed the αὐξόμενος λόγος. All these ancient authors thought that Plato also had the same passage in mind. Fr. 276, even if reported from a highly unreliable source, seems to correspond the scene described by these sources. Separating the Platonic commentator and Plutarch (fr. 135) from fr. 276 would work only if we are prepared to imagine that something very much like fr. 276 was known to Chrysippus, and probably also to Plato.

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76 «Saying»: *schol. in Hom. Il. III* 53b Erbse οὐκ ἄρα Χίλωνος, ὡς ὑποφαίνεται, δόγμα τὸ 'γνώθι σαυτόν', ἀλλ' Ὁμήρου. «Gnōmē»: *schol. in Hom. Il. III* 212 Erbse, discussing the three types of rhetoric: τὸν δὲ πιθανὸν καὶ τεχνικόν, πολλῶν πλήρη δογμάτων, ὃν Ἰσοκράτης ἐξήλωσε, τὸ γνωμικὸν καὶ σαφὲς ἐπιλεγόμενος.

77 «Opinion»: *schol. in Hom. Il. XVI* 687 Erbse δόγμα Ὀμηρικὸν τὸ δύο τὰς μοίρας εἶναι.

78 See Hld. II 25, 7 ὁ δὲ ἐπέραινε τὸν λόγον ὧδε, Pl. *Grg.* 522 e 5–8 εἰ δὲ βούλει, σοὶ ἐγώ, ὡς τοῦτο οὕτως ἔχει, ἐθέλω λόγον λέξαι. (KAL.) Ἀλλ' ἐπεῖτερ γε καὶ τὰλλα ἐπέρανας, καὶ τοῦτο πέρανον.

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