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Hermippus, Fragment 22 Wehrli

DAVID SANSONE

Josephus (*Contra Apionem* 1. 164) quotes Hermippus as saying that Pythagoras claimed that the soul of one of his deceased followers, Calliphon of Croton, used to remain at his side night and day, and that he—the text is not explicit as to whether the subject is Pythagoras or the soul of Calliphon—used to utter the following precepts: “Do not pass through a place where an ass has collapsed; keep away from the thirsty waters; avoid all blasphemy” (μὴ διέρχεσθαι τόπον ἐφ’ ὃν <ἄν> ὄνος ὀκλάσῃ καὶ τῶν διψίων ὑδάτων ἀπέχεσθαι καὶ πάσης ἀπέχειν βλασφημίας). Hermippus goes on to say that these precepts have been taken over from the Jews and the Thracians. My colleague Howard Jacobson¹ has argued that there are indeed Jewish elements in all three precepts, and that the injunction to avoid the thirsty waters is a reflection of the verse Exodus 23. 7: “Avoid all falsehood.” The attractiveness of this suggestion lies in the fact that, as Jacobson has shown, there are parallels to the two other precepts in the immediate biblical vicinity, namely at Exodus 22. 27 and 23. 5. But there is a difficulty with this view: Water does not appear in Exodus 23. 7, nor is falsehood mentioned by Hermippus. Jacobson addresses this issue by pointing out a number of passages from ancient Jewish commentators that illustrate the association between, on the one hand, good waters and truth and, on the other, bad waters and falsehood. But there is no evidence that this association was made in connection with this particular passage from Exodus, and Jacobson is forced to hypothesize a source (otherwise unattested) for Hermippus that took as its point of departure Exodus 23. 7 and then “proceeded in routine exegetical fashion to make an analogy . . . between falsehood and water that does not satisfy one’s thirst.” This explanation of the passage from Hermippus seems to have satisfied Louis

¹ H. Jacobson, “Hermippus, Pythagoras and the Jews,” *Revue des études juives* 135 (1976) 145–49. I should like to thank Professor Jacobson for his characteristically incisive comments on a draft of the present piece, comments that have caused me to reconsider or rephrase in a number of instances. I am also indebted to my colleague Miroslav Marcovich, who kindly read and commented on a draft and who provided several useful comments and suggestions.

Feldman, who, however, registers some uneasiness over the absence of any verbal connection between Hermippus and the supposed biblical source.²

There are, I think, further difficulties with this explanation. In the first place, Jacobson and other commentators have ignored the definite article: τῶν διψίων ὕδατων means “the thirsty waters”; i.e. the well-known, or the previously specified, thirsty waters, rather than thirsty waters in general.³ In the second place, the evidence that δίψιος can mean “causing thirst” (so LSJ) is not unambiguous.⁴ For this meaning LSJ cite only this passage and Nicander, *Theriaca* 147. But “thirst-provoking”⁵ is not the only meaning possible in the latter passage. Nicander uses the word to describe the σήψ, a kind of reptile. The scholiast comments: δίψιος δὲ ὁ ξηρὸς διὰ τὸ μὴ παρ’ ὕδατῶδεσι τόποις φαίνεσθαι, ἀλλ’ ἐν ὀρεινοῖς· ἢ ὁ ποιῶν δίψαν τοῖς δακνομένοις. The latter explanation is clearly a guess. The former is surely correct: Nicander provides a gloss on the epithet when he writes (155–56) πολέες δ’ ἀμάθοισι μίγντες / σπεῖρη λεπρύνονται ἀλινδόμενοι ψαμάθοισι. It is not, I think, until the time of Nonnus that we find fairly good evidence for δίψιος = “causing thirst.”⁶ Finally, even if τὰ δίψια ὕδατα could mean “waters that cause thirst” in Hellenistic Greek, there is surely no need for an injunction instructing anyone to avoid them.

For these reasons I am convinced that διψίων is corrupt. Jacobson’s introduction of the notion of falsehood is attractive and, while I recognize that the absence of a reference to water in Exodus 23. 7 remains a problem, I should like to suggest that Hermippus wrote τῶν μασιδίων ὕδατων ἀπέχεσθαι. Whether this is what Josephus wrote is, however, another matter. We are dependent for the text of *Contra Apionem* on a single, mediocre eleventh-century manuscript (and its apographa) as well as on a Latin version, written in the sixth century at the instigation of Cassiodorus.⁷

² L. H. Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937–1980)* (Berlin 1984) 395–96: “Admittedly, the interpretation of the last passage is rather remote from the literal meaning, but we may comment that the fact that all three passages are in such close proximity to one another makes it more likely that this particular portion of Exodus is Pythagoras’ source.”

³ This seems to have made Walter Burkert uncomfortable; when he refers to this passage and translates the precept (“one . . . should avoid ‘thirst-causing water’”), he conveniently omits the definite article from his Greek quotation: W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, Engl. transl. (Cambridge, MA 1972) 173 with n. 59.

⁴ I take it that the entries in Hesychius δίψιον· βλαπτικόν and δίψαι· βλάψαι are no more reliable, and no more based in reality, than the entry ἵψαι· φθεῖραι, βλάψαι; cf. H. Erbse, *Beiträge zur Überlieferung der Iliasscholien*, *Zetemata* 24 (Munich 1960) 242.

⁵ This is the rendering in A. S. F. Gow and A. F. Scholfield, *Nicander. The Poems and Poetical Fragments* (Cambridge 1953) 37.

⁶ See the *Paraphr. Ioann.* 4. 24 (John 4. 6) δίψιος ὥρη, cited in Stephanus’ *Thesaurus*. In the *Dionysiaca*, Nonnus twice uses the expression δίψιον ὕδωρ (15. 13 and 27. 186). W. Peek, *Lexikon zu den Dionysiaka des Nonnos I* (Berlin 1968) 411 translates “spärlich” in both instances. F. Vian disagrees, and notes (on *Dion.* 27. 186), “l’eau est ‘assoiffée’ puisqu’elle a fait place à la poussière; en 15.13, au contraire, elle est ‘assoiffante’, parce qu’elle a été changée en vin.” Thus, even the evidence of Nonnus is not entirely clear, and it is in any case dangerous to use it to support the usage of Hermippus, who lived in the third century B.C.

⁷ For the text of the Latin version, see the edition by C. Boysen, in volume 37 (Vienna 1898) of the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*.

It is difficult to say whether the author of the Latin version read διψίων in his Vorlage, as he translates *ab aqua fetulenta* (i.e. *faeculenta*). It is just possible, however, that he was translating μαψιδίων: Two of the passages cited in the *TLL* to illustrate *faeculentus*—both of them, as it happens, from the sixth century—feature a contrast between *faeculentia* and “truth.”⁸ In any case, it is, if anything, even less likely that he was translating διψίων. The suggested corruption, from μαψιδίων to διψίων, is readily accounted for. The word μαψιδιος is a poeticism which might well be unfamiliar to, and was certainly not expected by, a scribe copying the text of Josephus. It was easily replaced, through a process that combined psychological factors with lipography and anagrammatism,⁹ by the common word δίψιος, which is often encountered in contexts containing the word ὕδωρ.

Now, the question remains: What are τὰ μαψιδία ὕδατα? They are, I suggest, the waters of falsehood that the souls of the dead are encouraged to avoid. The words τῶν μαψιδίων ὕδάτων ἀπέχεσθαι form the end of a hexameter line, and there are several hexameter texts, some of which have only recently been published, that give a series of directions for the souls of the deceased to follow.¹⁰ Specifically, the souls are instructed to avoid the water of a spring next to which stands a white cypress.¹¹ They are instructed to go instead to the pool of Mnemosyne, and it is from this pool that they are to drink the cold waters. But the waters have guards stationed over them, and the souls are required to tell the guards the whole truth (πάσαν ἀληθείην on the gold plaque from Petelia) before they are allowed to drink.

We have, therefore, two sources of water. One is the pool of Mnemosyne, associated with truth, from which the souls are to drink. The other is to be avoided. It is, clearly, Lethe.¹² Whether rightly or not, the

⁸ Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum* 3. 22 (= CCL 97.271.436–37) *purissimam veritatem nemo faeculenta voluntate conturbat*; Fulgentius, *Ad Trasmundum* 1. 5. 2 (= CCL 91.102.215–18) *faeculentae quippe carnis inquinamenta non sensit, qui ad suscipiendam veram substantiam carnis et eandem mundandam carnis faeculentiam venit*.

⁹ Compare the comments of A. Dain, *Les manuscrits*, 3rd ed. (Paris 1975) 40–52.

¹⁰ The texts are most conveniently collected by R. Janko, “Forgetfulness in the Golden Tablets of Memory,” *CQ* 34 (1984) 89–100. Janko’s article should be consulted for full references to the authoritative publications.

¹¹ See lines 4–7 of the “long archetype” as reconstructed by Janko (previous note) 99. The significance of the cypress (as well as its description as white) is unclear; see G. Zuntz, *Persephone: Three Essays on Religion and Thought in Magna Graecia* (Oxford 1971) 373, 385. But it is interesting in this connection that, according to Diogenes Laertius, Hermippus reported in his book about Pythagoras that the followers of Pythagoras avoided using coffins made of cypress wood: Hermippus, fr. 23 Wehrli = D.L. 8. 10 (this is the same work on Pythagoras as the one from which Josephus quotes).

¹² So H. R. Willoughby, *Pagan Regeneration: A Study of Mystery Initiations in the Graeco-Roman World* (Chicago 1929) 106. Cf. Kaibel, *Epigrammata Graeca* 204. 11 οὐκ ἔπιον Λήθης Ἀιδωνίδος ἔσχατον ὕδωρ, 414. 10 καὶ Λήθης οὐκ ἔπιον λιβάδα AP 7. 346. 4 τοῦ Λήθης ἐπ’ ἐμοὶ μὴ τι πῆξ πόματος.

ancient Greeks regarded ἀλήθεια as derived from α + ληθ-,¹³ so that the two sources represented an opposition, not only between memory and forgetfulness, but between truth and falsehood as well.¹⁴ This latter opposition is reflected, and is expressed in characteristically Platonic terms, in the eschatological myth in Plato's *Phaedrus* (247c–48b). There a distinction is made between the souls of the gods, which are capable of contemplating Truth, and other souls, which are able to follow the souls of the gods with only varying degrees of success. These latter, though they strive mightily to see the Plain of Truth (τὸ ἀληθείας πεδίων), are disappointed of their hope to behold reality (ἀτελεῖς τῆς τοῦ ὄντος θεάς ἀπέρχονται) and must satisfy themselves instead with the deceptive food of conjecture (τροφή δοξαστή). The Plain of Truth is clearly intended as the counterpart to the Plain of Forgetfulness (Λήθης or Ληθαίων πεδίων: *Ar. Ran.* 186, *Pl. Resp.* 621a, *Thgn.* 1216). It is obvious why Plato, with his doctrine of *anamnesis*, would wish to condemn forgetfulness and to view it as the opposite of truth. But the same view would be congenial to all those who, like the Pythagoreans, held to the doctrine of metempsychosis.¹⁵ Pythagorean (as well as "Orphic") elements have been detected in the hexameter texts that supply directions to the souls of the dead, and it would not be out of character for one of these texts to instruct the souls to avoid the waters of Lethe by instructing them τῶν μαψιδίων ὑδάτων ἀπέχεσθαι.

In addition, these hexameter texts contain references to the mysteries, and Plato's myth also is conveyed in terminology drawn from the mysteries (cf. ἀτελεῖς). It is interesting to note that at least one of the other precepts that Hermippus preserves also has a connection with the mysteries, although it must be admitted that the nature of that connection is quite obscure. The instruction not to pass through a place where an ass has collapsed reminds

¹³ M. Detienne, "La notion mythique d'ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ," *REG* 73 (1960) 27–35; E. Heitsch, "Die nicht-philosophische ἀλήθεια," *Hermes* 90 (1962) 24–33 and "Wahrheit als Erinnerung," *Hermes* 91 (1963) 36–52; H. D. Rankin, "A-ΛΗΘΕΙΑ in Plato," *Glotta* 41 (1963) 51–54; T. Cole, "Archaic Truth," *QUCC* 13 (1983) 7–28.

¹⁴ The expression μαψίδια ὑδατα should be regarded as the poetic equivalent of ὕδωρ ψευδές, which we find at *LXX Jer.* 15. 18 (ὡς ὕδωρ ψευδές οὐκ ἔχον πίστιν). That passage apparently refers to water that is "deceptive" or "untrustworthy" in the sense that the source is liable to failure; cf. W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1–25* (Philadelphia 1986) 462. In this connection it is particularly interesting to note that the water from the pool of Mnemosyne is regularly referred to as "ever-flowing": κρίνας αἰετρώω on the gold leaf in Malibu, κρίνας αἰετρώω or κρίνας αἰενάω on the gold leaves from Eleutherna; cf. further E. Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*, Engl. transl. (London 1925) 575 n. 151. (Cf. also, perhaps, Aristaeas Judaeus 279 ἀένναον μνήμην.) I am inclined to agree with T. G. Tucker's note on *Ar. Ran.* 146 (σκάρ ἀείνων): "an obvious burlesque of something more dignified, e.g. ὕδωρ ἀείνων."

¹⁵ For the positive evaluation of memory among the Pythagoreans and the desire to avoid the waters of Lethe, see Burkert (above, note 3) 213. Cf. also J.-P. Vernant, "Aspects mythiques de la mémoire en Grèce," *Journal de Psychologie* 56 (1959) 1–29 and "Le fleuve 'Amélès' et la 'Mélète Thanatou,'" *Revue Philosophique* 150 (1960) 163–79; these two articles appear in English translation in J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks* (London 1983) 75–105 and 106–23.

us that the ass has connections not only with the mysteries, but with the underworld as well.¹⁶ The ass of Ocnus was depicted in Polygnotus' painting of the underworld¹⁷ and one of the infernal place-names mentioned by Charon in the *Frogs* is the mysterious Ass-Fleece.¹⁸ Aristophanes' comedy also provides evidence that asses were somehow connected with the mysteries. When Heracles begins to talk about the initiates, the slave Xanthias says (*Ran.* 159), νῆ τὸν Δί' ἐγὼ γοῦν ὄνος ἄγω μυστήρια. Michael Tierney has convincingly shown that ὄνος is the title of one of the levels of initiation into the mysteries.¹⁹ And this is surely relevant to the fact that the asinine hero of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is initiated into the mysteries of Isis. But Aristophanes also introduces a literal ass into the opening scene of *Frogs*. The slave Xanthias complains about the burden he is carrying, but Dionysus tells him that, so far from bearing a burden, Xanthias is himself being borne by the ass. Xanthias protests, saying that his shoulder is oppressed by the weight of the baggage. Dionysus responds by saying, "Well, since you claim that the ass is of no use to you, lift up the ass and take your turn carrying it."²⁰ This is not merely, as W. B. Stanford puts it in his note ad loc., "a pleasant *reductio ad absurdum* of Xanthias' argument." It is a complete non sequitur. For, if the ass is of no use to Xanthias, he should leave it behind, and not carry it. The absurdity of the reversal—this is one of many such in this play—may have been adequate for Aristophanes' humorous purposes. But the passage gains additional point if Aristophanes and his audience were familiar with an injunction to give assistance (*ut ita dicam*) to a suffering ass. And this is precisely how Jacobson explains Hermippus' Pythagorean precept, saying, "the dictum enjoins not to pass a place where an ass has collapsed, i.e. one should stop and give help." Jacobson refers to Exodus 23. 5 in this connection, the Septuagint text of which reads as follows: ἐὰν δὲ ἴδῃς τὸ ὑποζύγιον τοῦ ἐχθροῦ σου πεπτωκὸς ὑπὸ τὸν γόμον αὐτοῦ, οὐ παρελεύσῃς αὐτό, ἀλλὰ

¹⁶ See the exhaustive treatment of the evidence, both literary and archaeological, by E. Keuls, "The Ass in the Cult of Dionysus as a Symbol of Toil and Suffering," *Anthropological Journal of Canada* 8.1 (1970) 26–46; cf. also F. Olck, "Esel," *RE* VI.1 (1907) 626–76, esp. 651–53, and I. Opelt, "Esel," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* VI (1966) 564–95.

¹⁷ Pausanias 10. 29. 1. See the Appendix, below.

¹⁸ Ar. *Ran.* 186 τίς εἰς τὸ Λήθης πεδίον, ἢ 'ς Ὀνουπόκας; The manuscripts have ὄνου πόκας, of which Ὀνουπόκας is Radermacher's interpretation. Even if we were to follow Bergk, as Sommerstein does in his recent edition (Warminster 1996), and read Ὀκνου πλοκάς, the reference to the ass would still be felt.

¹⁹ M. Tierney, "ΟΝΟΣ ΑΓΩΝ ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΑ," in *Mélanges offerts à M. Octave Navarre* (Toulouse 1935) 395–403; cf. also O. Schütz, "Zwei orphische Liturgien," *RhMus* 87 (1938) 252–54.

²⁰ Ar. *Ran.* 31–32 σὺ δ' οὖν ἐπειδὴ τὸν ὄνον οὐ φῆς σ' ὠφελεῖν, / ἐν τῷ μέρει σὺ τὸν ὄνον ἀράμενος φέρε. It is possible that Aristophanes is here hinting at the supposed etymological connection between ὄνος and ὀνίνημα, which is explicitly attested later in Artemidorus, *Onir.* 5. 12 (= 121.3 Pack) and Aelian, *Nat. Animal.* 11. 35. Compare also, perhaps, Paus. 10. 29. 2 ὄνησιν and Nic. *Ther.* 348 ἀπόνηγο. (For these last two texts, see the Appendix, below.)

συνεγρεῖς (the original reading of the Codex Vaticanus is συναρεῖς) αὐτὸ μετ' αὐτοῦ.

But there is clearer and more unambiguous evidence that confirms our supposition that the injunction concerning the collapsing ass is connected with the underworld and, most likely, with the mysteries. In the Museo Nazionale di Palermo is a black-figure lekythos from the end of the sixth, or the beginning of the fifth, century B.C.²¹ The vase was found at Monte Saraceno, near Ravanusa in Sicily. The ivy-leaf motif on the vase's shoulder indicates a Dionysiac, and possibly initiatory, connection.²² The scene on the body of the vase shows the underworld, with men and women carrying vessels of water, one of which is being emptied into a huge pithos. In front of the pithos is an ass with a bearded old man seated next to it. The ass has collapsed, fallen forward on its front knees, and some lines on the vase are taken to represent the ass' burden, which has fallen to the ground.²³ One of the water-carriers is pulling on the tail of the ass, apparently in an effort to help it to get back on its feet.²⁴ A scene apparently related to the one on the lekythos is mentioned in the Cupid and Psyche story in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. Venus has sent Psyche on an errand to Proserpina, and Psyche, in despair, decides to end her life by throwing herself from a high tower (a motif taken from Ar. *Ran.* 127–33). But the tower remarkably begins to speak, and gives Psyche directions for her journey to the underworld. Among the instructions, she is told: "You will meet a lame ass carrying wood, with a driver lame as well, who will ask you to hand him some twigs that have fallen off his load. But you must not utter a single word and must pass by him in silence."²⁵ Unlike the souls of the dead, Psyche is not to give assistance to the driver and his animal, because she is merely on an errand for Venus and she will in fact return from the underworld.

We see, then, that there is ample evidence connecting asses, and collapsing asses in particular, with the underworld and with initiates (whose initiation into the mysteries is intended as a preparation for and anticipation

²¹ Palermo 996. See E. Keuls, *The Water Carriers in Hades* (Amsterdam 1974) Plate II and pages 35–37, with further references.

²² See S. G. Cole, "Voices from Beyond the Grave: Dionysus and the Dead," in T. H. Carpenter and C. A. Faraone (eds.), *Masks of Dionysus* (Ithaca 1993) 279. For "Efeu als feststehenden Attribut des Dionysos und seines Thiasos," see A. F. H. Bierl, *Dionysos und die griechische Tragödie*, *Classica Monacensia* 1 (Tübingen 1991) 255.

²³ So A. Furtwängler, *ArchAnz* (1890) 5 and many others. (The lines are, however, interpreted as representing water by R. Helm, *NJA* 33 [1914] 204 n. 4, and as a river of the underworld by Keuls [above, note 21].) Furtwängler was also the first to associate the scene on this vase with the passage from Apuleius to be mentioned shortly.

²⁴ Compare the episode narrated in Lucian, *Asin.* 19: An ass sank down under the weight of its load and the drivers "beat the poor creature with a stick and told it to get up, but, when it paid no heed to their blows, some of them seized it by the ears and others by the tail and tried to get it on its feet" (in M. D. Macleod's Loeb translation).

²⁵ Apul. *Met.* 6. 18 (in J. A. Hanson's Loeb translation).

of their blessed afterlife).²⁶ The precepts of Hermippus are explicitly Pythagorean, and the Pythagoreans, no less than the devotees of the various mystery cults, were very much concerned with the proper behavior of the soul at death. The injunction to avoid the waters of falsehood evidently refers to the soul's journey to the underworld, and the precept concerning the ass apparently does so as well. The third precept, regarding blasphemy, is less easy to connect with the mysteries or with the underworld or, indeed, with Greek ideas in general.²⁷ But we may be justified in finding a hint of this connection in Plato, whose writings show traces of Pythagorean influence, and who frequently expresses himself in terms appropriate to the mysteries.²⁸ In the *Phaedo*, just before Socrates is to die, he reproaches his companions for their noisy lamentations and says, ἀκήκοα ὅτι ἐν εὐφημίᾳ χρὴ τελευτᾶν (117e). Franz Cumont has plausibly suggested that this is to be connected with the Pythagorean prescription, preserved by Iamblichus (*VP* 257), regarding blasphemy at the time of death: κατὰ τὸν ὕστατον καιρὸν παρήγγελλε μὴ βλασφημεῖν.²⁹ Further, in the *Republic*, in the myth of Er, which is itself unusually rich in Pythagorean elements,³⁰ we are told that the priest of Lachesis says to the assembled souls that have come to choose their lots and model lives, "The person making the choice is responsible; god takes no responsibility."³¹ It is, as Halliwell says in his note on this passage, "a Platonic conviction, contradictory of traditional beliefs, that gods cannot be responsible for evil." And he, like other commentators, refers to the related passage in Book 2, where Socrates argues that, contrary to what most people say, the gods, being good, can only be responsible for what is good (379b–c). He continues by saying that, therefore, the blame for evils must be sought elsewhere, and not among the gods. Although the actual word is not used, this sounds very much like an injunction against blasphemy. In fact, the word is used a little later in the same context. After castigating the poets for falsely claiming that the gods repeatedly transform themselves into (necessarily inferior) forms, Socrates says that mothers should not terrify their children by telling them stories about some divinities going about by night in the likeness of all manner of

²⁶ See F. Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens*, Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 33 (Berlin 1974) 79.

²⁷ See the (necessarily) limited treatment by H. Merkel, s.v. "Gotteslästerung," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* XI (1981) 1187–88.

²⁸ For Pythagorean influence, see Burkert (above, note 3) 83–96 and passim; for the terminology of the mysteries, see C. Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien*, Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 26 (Berlin 1987) 1–69. In addition to the passages noted below, *Phdr.* 242b–43a gives a good illustration of Plato's sensitivity to blasphemy. There Socrates expresses the need for him to compose a "palinode," so that he will not be guilty of ascribing evil qualities to the divinity Eros.

²⁹ F. Cumont, "A propos des dernières paroles de Socrate," *CRAI* (1943) 115. Professor Marcovich has kindly pointed out to me the more general Pythagorean pronouncements regarding blasphemy at D.L. 8. 21 and 24, Iamb. *VP* 218 and Porph. *VP* 38.

³⁰ S. Halliwell (ed.), *Plato. Republic 10* (Warminster 1988) 169, with further references.

³¹ *Resp.* 617e αἰτία ἐλόμενου· θεὸς ἀναίτιος

strangers, “so that they will not blaspheme against the gods.”³² The stories that Socrates is referring to are, as Adam points out in his commentary, those concerning “the bugbears of the nursery—Lamia, Mormo, and Empusa.” As it happens, Empusa is one of the denizens of the underworld that Dionysus encounters in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (285–96). And, in an interesting recent article, Christopher Brown has shown that this scene in the *Frogs* is part of the pattern of Eleusinian elements that is so prevalent in the early part of the play.³³ According to the evidence collected by Brown, some kind of apparition of Empusa seems to have materialized for those who were undergoing initiation into the mysteries.

And so we see that all three of Hermippus’ Pythagorean precepts are related in one way or another to notions of the soul’s progress in the underworld and of initiation into the mysteries. This is perhaps not surprising, considering the fact that they are associated in Josephus’ account with the notice about the soul of the deceased Calliphon haunting Pythagoras. To be sure, Fritz Wehrli has denied this association, saying in his commentary to this fragment,³⁴ “der Bericht über die Erscheinungen Kalliphons ist von demjenigen über pythagoreische Sakralvorschriften zu trennen.” But this can be maintained only by someone who has ignored (as Wehrli appears to have done) the context from which this fragment is extracted. Here is the text of the passage (*Ap.* 1. 164–65) as it appears in Henry St. John Thackeray’s Loeb edition:

λέγει τοίνυν [sc. “Ερμιππος] ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν περὶ Πυθαγόρου βιβλίων ὅτι Πυθαγόρας, ἐνὸς αὐτοῦ τῶν συνουσιαστῶν τελευτήσαντος, τοῦνομα Καλλιφῶντος τὸ γένος Κροτωνιάτου, τὴν ἐκείνου ψυχὴν ἔλεγε συνδιατρίβειν αὐτῷ καὶ νύκτωρ καὶ μεθ’ ἡμέραν, καὶ ὅτι παρεκελεύετο μὴ διέρχεσθαι τόπον ἐφ’ ὃν ἂν ὄνος ὀκλάσῃ, καὶ τῶν διψίων ὑδάτων ἀπέχεσθαι καὶ πάσης [ἀπέχειν] βλασφημίας. εἶτα προστίθῃσι μετὰ ταῦτα καὶ τάδε· “ταῦτα δὲ ἔπραττε καὶ ἔλεγε τὰς Ἰουδαίων καὶ Θρακῶν δόξας μιμούμενος καὶ μεταφέρων εἰς ἑαυτόν.”

Josephus is here concerned to cite Hermippus as one of several Greek sources documenting the Greeks’ familiarity with the Jews. His evidence, which includes citations from Theophrastus, Herodotus, Choerilus of Samos and others, confines itself—appropriately, for a carefully argued work of apologetics—to what is strictly relevant. The introduction of Calliphon is utterly superfluous to Josephus’ purpose, unless there is some connection, according to Hermippus, between the story about Calliphon and the

³² *Resp.* 381e ἵνα μὴ . . . εἰς θεοὺς βλασφημῶσιν. This is the only occurrence in Plato of a word from the root βλασφημ- outside of the *Laws* and (if that work is genuine) the second *Alcibiades*.

³³ C. G. Brown, “Empousa, Dionysus and the Mysteries: Aristophanes, *Frogs* 285ff.,” *CQ* 41 (1991) 41–50. For a detailed examination of the Eleusinian features of *Frogs*, see now A. M. Bowie, *Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual and Comedy* (Cambridge 1993) 228–53.

³⁴ F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles*, Suppl. I: *Hermippos der Kallimacheer* (Basel 1974) 57–58.

precepts. If Josephus had seen no such connection in Hermippus' account, there is no possible reason for him to have bothered to include what Hermippus had to say about Calliphon. Rather, it is clear that Josephus reports Hermippus' having said that, after Calliphon's death, Pythagoras and Calliphon's ghost had some communications with one another, that these precepts were among those communications and that these precepts are, ultimately, Jewish and Thracian.

What is not entirely clear, however, is whether Pythagoras conveyed these precepts to Calliphon or, rather, Calliphon to Pythagoras. On the whole, translators and commentators have opted for either Pythagoras or Calliphon as subject of *παρεκελεύετο* without giving reasons for their choice. An exception is Maria Timpanaro Cardini,³⁵ who says that the subject of *παρεκελεύετο* is Pythagoras, "come appare chiaro dal seguito." But I can see nothing in what follows that makes Pythagoras a more likely subject than Calliphon. Others who take Pythagoras to be the subject include Fritz Wehrli and Théodore Reinach.³⁶ On the other hand, Calliphon is taken as the subject by Kathleen Freeman and, if I am construing his English correctly, by Thackeray in his Loeb translation.³⁷ For our purposes, it makes little difference in which way the communication went. In any event, the precepts were communicated either by or to the soul of someone recently dead. For a variety of reasons, none of which is perhaps decisive, I am inclined to believe that the former is the case. To begin with, if Calliphon was a *συνουσιαστής* of Pythagoras, one wonders why the philosopher waited until after his disciple had died to impart these vital instructions to him. Indeed, why are we told that Pythagoras conveyed these precepts specifically to Calliphon, and not to his disciples generally? If Calliphon were, rather, the *source* of these precepts, the account would be perfectly intelligible. And, in fact, the account would conform to a very common narrative pattern, namely the pattern whereby a person receives a visit from a supernatural being, and the supernatural being "reveals without symbolism what will or will not happen, or should or should not be done."³⁸

³⁵ M. Timpanaro Cardini, *Pitagorici. Testimonianze e frammenti I* (Florence 1958) 110.

³⁶ Wehrli (above, note 34); T. Reinach, *Textes d'auteurs grecs et romains relatifs au Judaïsme* (Paris 1895) 39. In Reinach's Budé edition (1930) of the work, however, the translation, which is the work of Léon Blum, makes the soul of Calliphon the subject of *παρεκελεύετο* ("qu'il avait commerce nuit et jour avec l'âme de celui-ci, et qu'elle lui donnait le conseil . . .").

³⁷ K. Freeman, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1949) 87. Thackeray's translation runs: "Hermippus . . . states that the philosopher . . . remarked that his pupil's soul was with him night and day, and admonished him . . ." I take the absence of a pronoun before "admonished" as an indication that Thackeray considers "his pupil's soul" to continue as subject. I am unable to determine from Troiani's translation whether he takes Calliphon or Pythagoras as subject: L. Troiani, *Commento storico al "Contro Apione" di Giuseppe* (Pisa 1977) 236.

³⁸ Macrobius (*Somn. Scip.* 1. 3. 8), as quoted by E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951) 107. For further examples of this pattern in dream-narratives, see Dodds 104 ff., esp. 107–08.

Most commonly, the supernatural visitor is spoken of as appearing in a dream but, in fact, the distinction between seeing a dream and seeing the soul (ψυχή or εἶδωλον) of someone deceased or the manifestation of a god is insignificant or even non-existent.³⁹ The pattern is particularly clear in the case of *repeated* visits, which I take to be the case here, given the imperfects (συνδιατρίβειν and παρεκελεύετο) and the expression καὶ νύκτωρ καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν. In the fifth-century tragedy *Prometheus Bound*, Io tells us that she was constantly being visited by dreams that urged her to give in to Zeus' amorous advances.⁴⁰ And Herodotus reports that "the same vision" occurred on three consecutive nights, twice to Xerxes and once to Artabanus, insisting that the Persians embrace that which is fated and attack Greece.⁴¹ In Euripides' *Hecuba*, the ghost of Polydorus has been haunting his mother for three days, and he tells her indistinctly and the audience explicitly what is to happen in the near future.⁴² And, according to Plato, Socrates was often visited by "the same dream," which repeatedly advised him to make music.⁴³ Even the ghost of Darius in Aeschylus' *Persae*, who enters the stage (681 ff.) asking for information concerning the reason for the lamentation that he has heard, ends up by giving predictions and advice at great length. Indeed, that is the reason the chorus of elders had summoned him to appear. And, in general, that is the function of visitors from the other realm, namely to convey to the living what the living are themselves in no position to know. Granted, the living Pythagoras was no ordinary living being. But still, the uniformity of this narrative pattern suggests that the soul of Calliphon is more likely to have been the conveyor than the recipient of these precepts.

And this inference is supported further by a consideration of one remaining question, namely whether we can tell if these precepts, of apparently Jewish origin, reached the Greeks in the time of Pythagoras, or not until the time of Hermippus.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, it appears that we know nothing at all about Calliphon apart from what we read in this fragment of

³⁹ See G. Björck, "ONAP ΙΔΕΙΝ. De la perception de rêve chez les anciens," *Eranos* 44 (1946) 313 for the identity of dreams and εἶδωλα. According to A. H. M. Kessels, *Studies on the Dream in Greek Literature* (Utrecht 1978) 153, all the dreams that are narrated in detail in the Homeric poems "are supposed to come either from the gods . . . or from the dead."

⁴⁰ Αἰεὶ γὰρ ὄψεις ἔννυχαι πωλεῦμεναι . . . παρηγόρουν 645–46. The words of the dream-figure are quoted in 647–54.

⁴¹ Hdt. 7. 12–17. Note τὸν αὐτὸν ὄνειρον 7. 14, 15. 3 and 17. 1. The words of the dream-figure, different in each case, are quoted in 12. 2, 14 and 17. 2.

⁴² Eur. *Hec.* 1 ff. Note τριταῖον ἤδη φέγγος 32. Polydorus foretells the future in lines 42 ff. Hecuba indicates that she has had troubling visions (68–72) and requires a Helenus or a Cassandra (87–89) to interpret them. According to J. Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton 1983) 84–85, the souls of the dead "are unable to speak properly," and he cites as evidence *Il.* 23. 101, where the soul of Patroclus disappears squeaking. But he neglects to mention lines 69–92, where the words that Patroclus speaks to Achilles are given in full.

⁴³ Plato, *Phaedo* 60e πολλάκις μοι φοιτῶν τὸ αὐτὸ ἐνύπνιον ἐν τῷ παρελθόντι βίῳ, ἄλλοτ' ἐν ἄλλῃ ὄψει φαινόμενον, τὰ αὐτὰ δὲ λέγον, "ὦ Σώκратες," ἔφη, "μουσικὴν ποιεῖ καὶ ἐργάζου."

⁴⁴ So E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, 5th ed. (Leipzig 1892) I.1 302 n. 1.

Hermippus. But there seems to be no reason not to identify this man with the Calliphon named by Herodotus (3. 125. 1) as the father of the famous physician Democedes. If this is the case, as scholars generally assume,⁴⁵ then we know from the *Suda* the additional fact (if it is indeed a fact) that Calliphon was a priest of Asclepius in Cnidos, and from Herodotus that he had a nasty temper.⁴⁶ And we know a good deal about Democedes.⁴⁷ Democedes was born in Croton, which is the obvious location of the story connecting his father with Pythagoras, but he travelled widely. According to Herodotus, he practiced medicine in both Aegina and Athens before joining the court of Polycrates of Samos. He accompanied Polycrates to Magnesia, where the tyrant was murdered by the Persian governor Oroetes and where Democedes was himself taken prisoner. Later, Democedes became associated with the court of Darius and lived at Susa. He eventually persuaded Darius to allow him to return home to Croton by way of Sidon, on a Phoenician ship. When Darius sent Democedes back to Greece he sent with him presents for Democedes' father and brothers (Hdt. 3. 135. 2), so that, if Herodotus' narrative preserves anything resembling the truth, Calliphon was still alive when Democedes returned from his travels and settled down in Croton to marry the daughter of the wrestler Milo (3. 137. 5). Thus Calliphon had every opportunity available to a Greek citizen of the sixth century to learn about the practices of his contemporaries in the Near East. Cnidos had connections in that century with Egypt, being one of the cities that joined in the construction of the Hellenion near Naucratis (Hdt. 2. 178. 2). And Democedes' various experiences in Persia, Lydia and Phoenicia will have enabled him to come into contact with the Jews' closest neighbors and, most likely, with Jews themselves. And he could well have communicated some of what he learned to his father Calliphon, who in turn transmitted that knowledge to his associate Pythagoras, either before or after his soul was separated from his body.

One final question remains, namely the matter of the Thracians and their connection with these precepts. For, according to Hermippus,

⁴⁵ See, e.g., H. Gossen, "Kalliphon 7," *RE* X (1917) 1656; Timpanaro Cardini (above, note 35) 108; Burkert (above, note 3) 293 n. 82; B. Centrone, "Calliphon de Crotone," in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* II (Paris 1994) 177. Our Calliphon (1) was from Croton and (2) associated with Pythagoras. Calliphon's son Democedes (1) was from Croton and (2) both he (Iamb. *VP* 257) and his father-in-law Milo (Str. 6. 1. 12 C263; Iamb. *VP* 104, 249, 267) associated with Pythagoras. How many Crotoniates named Calliphon can have belonged to Pythagoras' circle?

⁴⁶ *Suda* Δ 442 Adler; Hdt. 3. 131. 1.

⁴⁷ Hdt. 3. 125, 129–37; M. Michler, "Demokedes von Kroton: Der älteste Vertreter westgriechischen Heilkunde," *Gesnerus* 23 (1966) 213–29; J. Hofstetter, *Die Griechen in Persien: Prosopographie der Griechen im persischen Reich vor Alexander*, Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran, Ergänzungsband 5 (Berlin 1978) no. 79; A. Griffiths, "Democedes of Croton: A Greek Doctor at the Court of Darius," *Achaemenid History* 2 (1987) 37–51.

Pythagoras⁴⁸ observed and taught these precepts “in imitation of the beliefs of the Jews and Thracians.” Jacobson has shown that all three of these precepts have Jewish elements. What, then, is left for the Thracians? As we have seen, the three precepts, at least in their Pythagorean garb, have associations with the underworld, with the mysteries and with the soul’s journey after death. These associations are obviously not Jewish. But it is, of course, quite natural for a Greek writer to attribute them to a Thracian origin. For Thrace is the home of Orpheus and it is the Thracian Getae whom Herodotus characterizes as “those who believe in immortality.”⁴⁹ The story that Hermippus tells about Pythagoras and his subterranean chamber has clear connections with Herodotus’ account of the Thracian Zalmoxis.⁵⁰ And, finally, we have evidence at least as early as the fifth century B.C. for a belief in the existence of a Thracian background to the Eleusinian Mysteries and to the priestly family of the Eumolpidae.⁵¹ So that, although we cannot be confident about the reconstruction of the details of transmission, it looks as though these Jewish precepts were adopted by some Greeks who had contact with the Near East in the sixth century B.C., were combined with the “Thracian” belief in the immortality of the individual soul, and were taken over into the body of doctrine professed by the Pythagoreans.

Appendix: The Ass of Ocnus

Pausanias describes in detail Polygnotus’ painting of the underworld in the Cnidian Lesche at Delphi. Among the figures depicted and described (10. 29. 1–2) is Ocnus, who perpetually plaits a rope, which in turn is perpetually eaten by an ass that stands next to him. For this figure, see W. Felten, s.v. “Oknos,” in *LIMC* VII.1 (1994) 33–35, with further bibliography, to which should be added W. G. Arnott, “Ocnus, With Reference to a Passage of Apuleius and to a Black-Figure Lekythos in Palermo,” *C&M* 23 (1962) 233–47 and Graf (above, note 26) 188–94

⁴⁸ If, that is, Pythagoras is the subject of ἔπραττε καὶ ἔλεγε, as Reinach, *Textes* (above, note 36) assumes. But if, as I have argued, Calliphon is the subject of παρεκελεύετο, he could just as well be the subject of ἔπραττε καὶ ἔλεγε also.

⁴⁹ Hdt. 4. 93 Γέτας τοὺς ἀθανατίζοντας. Cf. Pl. *Chrm.* 156d τῶν Θρακῶν τῶν Ζαλμόξιδος ἱατρῶν, οἱ λέγονται καὶ ἀπαθανατίζειν.

⁵⁰ D.L. 8. 41 = Hermippus, fr. 20 Wehrli; cf. Hdt. 4. 95. 4–5. See Burkert (above, note 3) 155–59; Dodds (above, note 38) 144, 165–66; W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* I (Cambridge 1962) 158–60; D. Asheri, “Herodotus on Thracian Society and History,” in *Hérodote et les peuples non grecs*, Entretiens Hardt 35 (Vandoeuvres-Geneva 1988) 148–49 and (the discussion between Asheri and Burkert) 166–67. The fundamental study is K. Meuli, “Scythica,” *Hermes* 70 (1935) 121–76 = *Gesammelte Schriften* II (Basel 1975) 817–79.

⁵¹ The evidence is to be found in the fragments of Euripides’ *Erechtheus*. See R. Parker, “Myths of Early Athens,” in J. Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London 1987) 202–04.

("Exkurs II: Oknos"). There are two unexplained features of this account. In the first place, "we are never told what Oknos did to merit this punishment" (H. A. Shapiro, *Personifications in Greek Art* [Zurich 1993] 178). In the second place, the man's name is surprising, inasmuch as his punishment "exemplifies futility rather than hesitation or timidity" (D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson [eds.], *Menander Rhetor* [Oxford 1981] 231). Both these features can, I think, be accounted for by reference to a story told by Nicander and Aelian, and examined by Malcolm Davies in "The Ancient Greeks on Why Mankind Does not Live Forever," *MH* 44 (1987) 65–75. (I should like to thank Dr. Helma Dik for bringing this article to my attention and for initiating the skein of thought that resulted in this Appendix.) Nicander, *Theriaca* 343–58 and Aelian, *De Natura Animalium* 6. 51 recount the story of the ass and the dipsas. According to the tale, Zeus wished to reward those mortals who had denounced Prometheus' theft of fire by giving them a remedy against aging. But they, out of laziness (νόθηις . . . κάμνοντες, Nic. *Ther.* 349; N. Hopkinson, *A Hellenistic Anthology* [Cambridge 1988] 145 prefers to follow the *deteriores* and read νόθηϊ, in agreement with the ass, for reasons which I do not find compelling), handed over the remedy to an ass to carry. As it was summer, the ass was very thirsty. It came to a spring guarded by a snake. (Compare the underworld pool that has guards posted over it, in the hexameter texts giving instructions to the souls of the deceased.) The ass is only too happy to trade its burden, the value of which it does not know, for a drink from the spring. As a result, the snake receives from the ass the remedy against old age, so that it is able to slough off its skin and be periodically rejuvenated. In addition, the snake takes on the ass' burning thirst (an aition for the name "dipsas").

There is no explicit connection between this story and that of Ocnus and his ass. But the two stories complement each other perfectly. As Davies (70) notes, the story of the ass and the dipsas seems truncated, as it does not specify a punishment of the ass to balance that of the snake. But that punishment may be supplied from the story of Ocnus, which places the ass in the underworld. As we saw above, there is no explicit explanation for the presence of Ocnus and his ass in the underworld. (We may also imagine that the story of the ass and the dipsas supplies the original explanation for the proverb concerning the ass and the mysteries: As punishment for having squandered the gift of immortality, the ass must serve the mysteries in some menial capacity.) And the story of the ass and the dipsas suggests an explanation for the name of Ocnus: Instead of speedily conveying the gift of perpetual youth to the rest of mankind, Ocnus lazily (*piger* is Pliny's gloss on Ocnus' name: *NH* 35. 137) and carelessly entrusts it to an ass. And yet, the punishment fits the crime. Ocnus spends eternity braiding a rope, presumably the one with which he intends to secure the burden on his ass. And so the punishment exemplifies not only futility, but also endless delay.

It may be objected that there are too many loose ends, that there is nothing that ties one story explicitly to the other, that the plural “denouncers” in Nicander and Aelian do not mesh with the singular sinner Ocnus. And, further, we are bound to wonder how (if at all) this is all connected with the Jewish and Pythagorean precept regarding the collapsing ass. But we must remember that this whole nexus of accounts is associated with the mysteries. (See especially Graf, who suggests a possible connection—although not the one proposed here—between Ocnus and the mysteries.) And it is entirely possible, perhaps even likely, that only odds and ends of the account known fully to the initiates ever surfaced in the texts that have survived to us, and that those odds and ends were subject to the kinds of alterations and embroideries that even coherent narratives have been known to suffer.

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