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8180 Giuliana Scalera McClintock
La questione orfica p 13 - 25
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8181 Richard Seaford, Aeschylus, Herakleitos, and Pythagoreanism p 17 - 38
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BOOK

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8183 Sousa, Eudoro Fontes da História da Filosofia Antiga – Secção I (1a parte)
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BOOK

AESCHYLUS, HERAKLEITOS, AND PYTHAGOREANISM

Richard Seaford

1. Introductory

In the cosmos of Herakleitos opposites are identical with each other, or ceaselessly transformed into each other. But in the cosmos constructed by fifth-century Pythagoreanism we can detect the idea that opposites retain their identities in being combined into a stable whole. I argued in 2003 that in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* the action moves from the Herakleitean unity of opposites to their Pythagorean reconciliation.¹ I will now take this case further, in particular by exploring the significance of the number three in early Pythagoreanism and in Aeschylus.

The philosophers most often used to illuminate Greek tragedy are Plato, Aristotle, and – for Euripides – the sophists. But Aeschylus is a contemporary of *presocratic* philosophy. Surprisingly, there has been very little research on the relations between tragedy and presocratic philosophy. And almost all the research so far is based on the wrong question, namely 'is the tragedian here alluding to (or influenced by) this fragment of presocratic philosophy?' Even an unequivocal 'yes' to this question, which in fact is never possible, would not take us very far.²

Much clearer and more interesting is that certain basic structures are shared by tragedy and presocratic cosmology. The point is not that the tragedian has read a particular philosopher, possible though that is. Cosmological ideas may travel from one city-state to another, whether in 'philosophical' or mythical form, whether in written texts (mostly now lost) or orally. Or similar cosmological ideas may be produced independently in various city-states. Such receptivity and such independent production are both possible because the city-states are at the same stage of economic and political development. This correlation between social process and 'philosophical' cosmology I will not explore here, as I have done so in other publications.³ I note instead merely that the correlation is in fact confirmed by my argument here, for in Aeschylus, with his concern with revenge and accumulation of wealth as well as with (in the broad sense) cosmology, we

Richard Seaford

can observe in detail an instance of the very link between social process and cosmology that my earlier argument implies.

We must distinguish between three senses in which ideas may be 'Pythagorean': (a) as held by people as adherents of a sect or movement with allegiance to Pythagoras (I call this adherence 'Pythagorean[ism]'); (b) as directly or indirectly influenced by Pythagoreanism but held by non-adherents;⁴ (c) as identical or similar to Pythagorean ideas, but uninfluenced by Pythagoreanism.

Although the Pythagoreans were of more historical importance than the Herakleiteans (Ἡρακλείτειοι: Pl. *Tht.* 179d), the previous paragraph could be written with Herakleitean(ism) substituted for Pythagorean(ism).

To which category should we assign Aeschylus' *Oresteia*? My main concern is to show, on the basis of *internal* evidence, that (c) is true of the *Oresteia* with respect to both Pythagorean and Herakleitean ideas. But I start with (b), by setting out all the *external* evidence for the likelihood of Pythagorean influence on Aeschylus, because to the best of my knowledge this has never been done.

Firstly, there was an ancient tradition – preserved by Cicero – that Aeschylus was a Pythagorean.⁵

Secondly, Pythagoras is mentioned by three Ionian contemporaries of Aeschylus – Herakleitos, Ion of Chios, and Herodotos.⁶ Ion wrote a work of Pythagorean content (§4 below) and spent much time in Athens,⁷ where he produced drama, and so we might well have inferred – without having to rely on the ancient reports⁸ to that effect – that he knew Aeschylus personally.

Even if he encountered Pythagoreanism after the death of Aeschylus, he embodies a connection between tragedy in fifth-century Athens and Pythagoreanism.⁹

Thirdly, Aeschylus himself, on his voyages to Sicily, could not have avoided southern Italy, at the very time when – according to Aristoxenos and others – Pythagoreanism was powerful and successful there.¹⁰ If Aeschylus encountered Pythagorean ideas on those journeys, undertaken late in his life, this might explain why it was his last extant work, the *Oresteia*, that seems influenced by Pythagoreanism.

Fourthly, Aeschylus' lost *Lykourgeia* (of unknown date) may well have dramatized reconciliation between Dionysiac and Pythagorean mystery-cults.¹¹ It is perhaps worth adding the likelihood of a Pythagorean provenance for the influence of mystic ideas on the anonymous Prometheian trilogy.¹²

As for Aeschylus being influenced by the ideas of Herakleitos, the only external evidence is that Herakleitos was probably born about fifteen years before Aeschylus, and that his influence in fifth-century Athens is attested by both Plato and Aristotle.¹³

2. Aeschylus and the unity of opposites

In *Agamemnon* a relay of beacons brings to Argos the news of the fall of Troy. Klutaimestra (312–14) describes it in terms of the Athenian torch-races (*lampadēphorai* or *lampadēdromiai*):

Such are my laws of torch-bearers (λαμπαδηφόρων), one filled from another in succession, and the winner is the one who ran first and last (νικᾷ δ' ὁ πρῶτος καὶ τελευταῖος δραμών).

The much discussed¹⁴ third line means that the winner is – as indeed was the case in Athens – the winning *team*, which includes the runners of the first and last legs.¹⁵ Indeed the phrase used here for ‘the one running first’ (ὁ πρῶτος δραμών) is used by Herodotus to describe the first leg of the Persian relay system, which he compares to the Greek *lampadēphoria*.¹⁶ But this metaphor, taken by itself, is pointless, as well as inappropriate – there is only one team of beacons, and so no ‘victory’. Some scholars have accordingly rejected this interpretation of 314. But we should instead look for secondary meaning to give it point.

In 314 ‘first’ and ‘last’ surely form an opposition, but the runners of the first and last legs are not in opposition – they are rather two members of the same team. What then is the opposition? The words ‘victory goes to the first...runner’ suggest the first to *finish*, and that is what πρῶτος δραμών normally meant.¹⁷ And indeed the *lampadēphoria* itself is described by an ancient notice¹⁸ thus: ‘the first to light (the altar with the torch) was the victor and so was his tribe’: ὁ πρῶτος ἄψας ἐνίκα καὶ ἡ τοῦτου φυλή.

Line 314 may then suggest the mild paradox that the first runner to finish (the victor) is the last of the team to run.¹⁹ But the paradox acquires substance, and interest in the context, only if ‘last’ also connotes the opposite of ‘first’ meaning ‘victor’, i.e. only if ‘last’ connotes *finishing* last (i.e. *losing*). This is surely the riddling, secondary meaning implied here. The *formulation* of the innocent but irrelevant idea of the whole team winning implies (by virtue of ‘first’ and ‘last’ being taken as opposed terms) the sinister paradox that defeat is somehow the same as victory. The paradox resembles such Herakleitean ones as ‘the way up and down is one and the same’, and ‘immortals are mortal and mortals immortal’.²⁰ The victory transmitted by the fire is both Agamemnon’s over Troy and Klutaimestra’s over Agamemnon,²¹ who is therefore both winner and loser. The seemliness of the victor being defeated is even made explicit by a charming Klutaimestra (941). His desire ‘let victory, since it attended me, remain fixed’ (854) is precisely what cannot be fulfilled.

We may add a further point of similarity with Herakleitos. With what is each of the torch-bearers successively (as if) ‘filled’ (πληρούμενοι)? It cannot

Richard Seaford

be anything other than the fire. The structure of thought is like that of Herakleitos, for whom change in the cosmos is a process of the transformation of opposites into each other, and through this transformation fire persists as the single underlying substance. It is fire that persists throughout the relay, and ‘fills’ (a strong word) each runner, so that there is no difference between the opposites of first and last. I do not mean that Aeschylus was influenced here specifically by Herakleitos. And it may be insignificant that the underlying substance is common to both (fire). But I insist on the structural similarity with the Herakleitean notion of a single substance persisting through a process of transformation in which opposites are unified.

This is merely one instance of the unity of opposites in *Agamemnon* and *Libation Bearers*, to be added to the many others that I have discussed elsewhere,²² and from which I select for mention here only the aforementioned scene in which Klutaimestra urges the seemliness of defeat on the victor of Troy, in *stichomuthia* in which Agamemnon allows himself to be treated like a woman, a barbarian, and a god, thereby confusing within himself the opposites – male-female, Greek-barbarian, mortal-immortal – by which a Greek male was primarily defined.

The cosmology of Aeschylus in these two plays, pervaded as they are by instances of the unity of opposites, may be said to be Herakleitean, in sense (c) above. What is not of course found in Herakleitos is the effect of anxiety and tension that such pervasion creates in *drama*. A substantial instance of such anxiety is provided by the identity of offence with counter-offence:

ὄνειδος ἦκει τόδ’ ἀντ’ ὀνειδούς,
 δύσμαχα δ’ ἐστὶ κρίναι. 1560
 φέρει φέροντ’, ἐκτίνει δ’ ὁ καίνων.

This insult has come in exchange for insult, and they are hard to separate/
 judge. He plunders the plunderer. The killer pays (*Ag.* 1559–62).

Similarly,

ἀντὶ μὲν ἐχθρᾶς γλώσσης ἐχθρὰ
 γλώσσα τελείσθω· τοῦφειλόμενον 310
 πράσσουσα Δίκη μέγ’ ἀντεῖ·
 ἀντὶ δὲ πλήγης φονίας φονίαν
 πλήγην τινέτω...

‘In exchange for hostile speech let hostile speech be paid’
 In exacting what is owed Justice shouts aloud,
 ‘In exchange for bloody blow let (someone) pay bloody blow’ (*Cbo.* 309–13).

Aeschylus, Herakleitos, and Pythagoreanism

Counter-violence, if identical with the violence that elicits it, will elicit more violence, and the cycle of violence is ‘hard to put a stop to’ (*Cho.* 470; cf. 1075–6). A seemingly unceasing cycle, cosmic in Herakleitos, in the *Oresteia* excludes peace.

We should, finally, note two further features shared by Herakleitos and *Oresteia*. The first is that the unity of opposites is – as in the passages just quoted – frequently expressed in the same *style*, which I dub form-parallelism, and which is frequent in the ritual contexts of lamentation and mystic initiation.²³

The second feature shared by Herakleitos and *Oresteia* is that the principle of the unity of opposites is expressed by an instrument formed by a simple internal tension. ‘They do not understand’ writes Herakleitos ‘how being at variance (brought apart) it agrees (is brought together) with itself: there is a back-stretching *harmonie* (fitting together), as of bow and of lyre’. In the *Oresteia* the instrument is the balance (scales), which is frequent there (and elsewhere in Aeschylus) as a metaphor.²⁴

Of special interest here is the parodos of the *Agamemnon*.²⁵ The narrative of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia at Aulis is structured to emphasize the impasse produced by *opposition between equal forces*. The omen that appeared to the Atreidai as they set out for Troy, of eagles ‘sacrificing’ a hare, is interpreted by the seer Kalchas as ‘favourable on the one hand, inauspicious on the other’ (145 δέξια μὲν κατάμομφα δέ). For it prefigures the fall of Troy, but may demand ‘the other²⁶ sacrifice’ (of Iphigeneia), which will create future conflict. ‘Such things’, conclude the Chorus, ‘did Kalchas cry out with blessings as fated from the birds on the way for the royal house. In consonance therewith say woe, woe, but may the good prevail’ (156–9...αἶλινον αἶλινον εἰπέ, τὸ δ’ εὖ νικάτω).

It is at this very moment, in which the emphasized ambivalence of the omen itself as well as of Kalchas’ utterance (‘with blessings’) is reproduced (‘in consonance’) in the liturgical syntax of the refrain,²⁷ that the Chorus breaks off the narrative to invoke Zeus:

οὐκ ἔχω προσεικάσαι
πάντ’ ἐπισταθμώμενος
πλὴν Διός, εἰ τὸ μάταν ἀπὸ φροντίδος ἄχθος
χρὴ βαλεῖν ἐτητύμῳς. 165

I am unable to liken him (i.e. Zeus) to anything as an equivalent,²⁸ putting everything on the balance, except Zeus, if from my mind I am to throw off genuinely the vain weight.

The commentators have noted, but failed to explain, the seeming abruptness of this transition, and failed to see the allusion to the balance in the *Iliad*

Richard Seaford

that is operated by Zeus and determines victory in battle.²⁹ It was adopted by Aeschylus as a central theme in his (lost) *Psychostasia*, and is invoked at critical moments in his *Suppliants* (403, 405, 823). Having just referred to Aeschylus' use of the *metaphor* of the balance, we now find that it is imagined as a (divine) *reality* – albeit a reality created by metaphorical thinking.³⁰

The human crisis of equally opposed forces (equilibrium) requires one side of the divine balance to fall. A balance, unlike bow and lyre, resolves (ends) the unity of opposites – if one side outweighs the other, which is how the battle is decided in Homer. In the Aulis narrative, as elsewhere, a crisis of the unity of opposites is resolved at the divine level. Only Zeus can outweigh the Chorus' mental 'weight'.

This brings us to the overall necessity, in the *Oresteia* though not Herakleitos, for the unity of opposites to be resolved so that one opposite may prevail permanently over the other. For the cycle of violence to end, the acts of violence have to be differentiated, as indeed occurs in the *Eumenides*: killing the mother was not the same as killing the husband (625, etc.). Along with this differentiation of formerly united opposites go several other such differentiations. For instance, the unity of male and female within the warrior Athena is – at the crucial point of judicial decision – differentiated in favour of the male: she favours the male because she has no mother (736–40). Another instance: the unity of victory and defeat, and the transformation of victory and defeat into each other, are both permanently ended by the 'victory' of Orestes (741) that is explicitly declared *not* to be a 'defeat' for the Furies (795). Victory (for all) prevails permanently (974–5) over defeat.

This transition, of which I can give only a brief indication here, represents the transition from Herakleitean to Pythagorean cosmology. In the former, opposites are identical with each other, or are transformed into each other in an unceasing cycle. In the latter, on the other hand, within each opposition one opposite prevails over the other in a stable structure. In *Agamemnon* and *Choephoroi* there is a pervasive unity of opposites, and opposites are transformed into each other in a seemingly unceasing cycle. Then in *Eumenides* permanent well-being is achieved by differentiation of the opposites with one prevailing over the other.

In our best evidence for fifth-century Pythagoreanism, Aristotle gives a table of ten pairs of opposites that he says are held by some Pythagoreans to be the fundamental constituents of the world (*Met.* 986a). This probably goes back to the time of Aeschylus if not before.³¹ Implicit or explicit in *Eumenides* are six of these pairs: male prevails over female, limit over the unlimited, light over darkness, one over many, still over moving, good over

Aeschylus, Herakleitos, and Pythagoreanism

bad.³² But how, in contrast to Herakleitos, may the Pythagorean opposites be combined into a stable whole? To answer this question I will make a detour to (§3) an abstract problem, that will lead us to (§4) a metaphysical feature found in early Pythagoreanism and (§5) in the *Oresteia*.

3. Limit, odd, and even

For fifth-century Pythagoreanism Guthrie³³ demonstrates that

there are in a sense only two opposites, of which the ten listed by Aristotle are no more than different aspects or manifestations...the ultimate principles are the two contraries limited and unlimited. With these are equated numerical oddness and evenness respectively, and they thus form the principle of the number series which in turn is to provide the elements of all existing things... The general principle applied by the Pythagoreans to the construction of a kosmos is that of the imposition of limit (*peras*) on the unlimited (*apeiron*) to make the limited (*to peperasmenon*).

But *why* is limited numerically odd and the unlimited even? A clue is preserved by Simplicius:³⁴ ‘an odd number added (to an even number) limits it, for it prevents its division into equals.’ Odd numbers are divided into unequals and so, as Aristoxenos (fr. 23 Wehrli) put it, ‘have a middle (*meson*)’ (i.e. a number left over in the middle). But when an even number is divided, then ‘an empty space is left that is without a master (*adespotos*) and without number (*anarithmos*),’ and so it (the even number) is lacking and incomplete (*ateleis*).³⁵

What an even number lacks is an *internal* limit that makes it one complete number, prevents it disintegrating into two identical numbers. The assumption is that doubleness is inconsistent with unity. The ‘empty space’ that separates the two identical numbers is (in contrast to the *meson*) *anarithmos* (there is no number there) and *adespotos* (there is no master there, no control). All this taken together implies that what makes the odd number complete (in contrast to the ‘incomplete’ even number) is the control exercised by its *meson*, which – we have seen – prevents disintegration by *limiting*.

In a doctrine preserved in Plutarch (*Mor.* 388ab) this control acquires the dimension of gender. ‘Complete separation’ of an even number leaves a ‘receptive space’ that resembles the female, whereas the *meson* left by an odd number divided resembles the male (penis). The odd number, continues Plutarch, ‘in combination always dominates and is never dominated’. Of this combination of odd with even he has in fact just given an example: the first (female) even number (two) combined with the first (male) odd number (three) makes five, which has been called ‘marriage’. This is Pythagorean doctrine, alluded to already by Aristotle.³⁶ Such reasoning

Richard Seaford

would produce the alignment of three sets of opposites in Aristotle's table: odd, limited, and male set against even, unlimited, and female. Moreover, the latter group is associated with what is lacking, incomplete, and uncontrolled, and is accordingly in Aristotle aligned with bad.³⁷

These abstractions may seem remote from Aeschylus. But they illustrate the ideological determination of Pythagorean metaphysics. Even the most abstract reasoning, the mathematical basis of the metaphysics, is determined not by mathematics but by ideology.

Fundamental is, I suggest, the need to resolve conflict, to integrate opposites into a whole, both within the polis generally and specifically between male and female. Equality between opposed parties provides no limit, no means of resolving the conflict, and so makes possible a Herakleitean cosmology of opposites identical with – or ceaselessly transformed into – each other. Limit may be provided in principle by (a) the domination of one opposite by the other, or (b) the mediating effect of a third party. In this problem projected onto what the Pythagoreans regarded as the constituents of the world, numbers, we find both of these ways: (a) an odd number combined with an even number dominates it in the sense of creating an odd total number (as Plutarch notes); (b) an odd number is complete because it contains a limiting *meson*, i.e. a third party between two equals.³⁸

There is in principle no reason why (a) and (b) should not combine, why mediation should not produce the domination of one opposite by the other, as we shall soon see is indeed the case with the domination of the unlimited by limit (limiting the unlimited) through the mediation of *harmonia* in the earliest extant fragments of Pythagoreanism (Philolaos). Indeed, at the political level domination without mediation may be considered unsatisfactory and unstable.

4. The triad in early Pythagoreanism

The late Pythagorean texts discussed above imply that completeness is composed of *three* elements (two plus a mediating *meson*). We find the same idea in *early* Pythagoreanism. In the words of Aristotle (*De Caelo* 268a10):

As the Pythagoreans say, the universe and all things are defined by the number three; for end, the middle (*meson*), and beginning have the number of the whole, and their number is the triad.

The *meson* is required for creating completeness out of difference or opposition, and *meson* plus the opposites of beginning and end makes three. Accordingly, threeness is required for the world to come into being. In the Pythagorean cosmogony of the *Timaios* Plato states, on the original combination of fire and earth to make the universe, that (31bc)

Aeschylus, Herakleitos, and Pythagoreanism

it is not possible for two things alone to combine well without a third, for it is necessary for there to be some bond in the middle (*meson*) to bring them together. And the fairest bond is the one that most unites itself and the things bound together.³⁹

And in his Pythagoreanizing ontology⁴⁰ in the *Philebos* Plato states the view that limit (*peras*) should control the unlimited (*apeiron*). The mixture of the finite with infinite produces offspring, a 'third thing', that 'puts an end to the conflict of opposites'. By introducing limit 'this goddess' brings salvation (*ἀποσώσαι*) in countless (*μυρία*) spheres, notably in health and music (25d–26c).

A similar cosmic structure is found even earlier, among the very few fifth-century texts that are certainly Pythagorean in our senses (a) or (b) (§1). Philolaos lived from circa 470 to circa 390 BC, but probably derives ideas from an earlier period.⁴¹ Among his very few genuine fragments⁴² are the following:

Nature in the *kosmos* (world-order) was fitted together (or 'harmonized', *ἀρμόχθη*) from unlimiteds and limiters, both the whole *kosmos* and all the things in it (B1).

...since these beginnings (the unlimiteds and limiters) pre-existed and were neither alike each other nor even related, they could not have been ordered if *harmonia* (fitting-together, harmony) had not come upon them (*ἐπεγέμετο*)... (B6).

One basic opposite (limiters) prevails over the other (unlimiteds)⁴³ by their being fitted together by a third element, *harmonia*.⁴⁴ If taken together with another genuine fragment:

all things that are known have number; for nothing can be known or understood without this (B4),

this implies cosmogonical importance for the number three.

Ion of Chios, Aeschylus' contemporary, wrote a work entitled *Triagmoi*.⁴⁵ Of the four surviving fragments two refer by name to Pythagoras, and a third is as follows:

(This is the) beginning of my account. All things are three, and there is nothing more or less than this three. Of each one thing the virtue (*aretē*) is a triad (*trias*): understanding (*sunesis*) and power (*kratos*) and chance (*tuchē*).⁴⁶

Ion also maintained (B3) that cleverness (*sophia*) and chance (*tuchē*) are very unlike each other and yet have very similar results.

This is puzzling. How can understanding, which only animate beings have, be in each and every thing? And what does it mean to say that

Richard Seaford

cleverness and chance have very similar results? These questions have never been answered.⁴⁷

For presocratic cosmology understanding need not be confined to human action but may, like *nous* in Anaxagoras, order everything in the cosmos. Philolaos implies that knowing involves limiting,⁴⁸ and limiting – Pythagoreanism maintains – creates the cosmos. The Pythagorean way of life is based, it seems, on understanding the universe (§6). Understanding aims at control, but the human mind cannot create a perfect world. It is in its activity itself limited, by the power of chance, which is by definition uncontrolled. Understanding and chance may be regarded as – in the sphere of action or virtue – aligned with the basic Pythagorean opposition between limit and unlimited. If understanding and chance ‘have very similar results’, it can only be because in action they must combine. In the Pythagorean cosmogony in Plato’s *Timaios* (48a) the *kosmos* was created by the combination (*sustasis*) of mind and necessity, with mind ruling necessity by persuasion (*peithō*). In *Ion* the opposites of understanding and chance are integrated – by *kratos*, the middle term – into the triad that is the virtue of each one thing. *Kratos* plays a role analogous to that played by *peithō* in the *Timaios* passage, and in the cosmogony of Philolaos by *harmonia*, which as the middle term combines limiters and the unlimited.

The idea that the cosmos is three is not of course a product of mere logic or mere observation but rooted in preconception. I have indicated, as relevant preconceptions, the need for political stability and for male domination of the female. But this is not to deny that there are others, for instance whatever it is that gives the number three its wide appeal in religious belief and ritual.⁴⁹

Finally, before returning to the *Oresteia*, it is worth emphasizing the opposition between Pythagoreanism and Herakleitos. Philolaos’ insistence in B6 that ‘they could not have been ordered if *harmonia* (fitting-together, harmony) had not *come upon them* (ἐπεγένετο)’ seems polemical. In the *kosmos* of Herakleitos, *harmonia* inheres in opposition or results from opposition.⁵⁰ Herakleitean opposites are ‘one’, ‘the same’,⁵¹ or identified with the same thing or with each other,⁵² and so do not need a third entity to unite them. But Philolaos insists that *harmonia* must have come into being *in addition to* (ἐπεγένετο) the opposites to combine them.⁵³ For Herakleitos the *logos* is a formula according to which ‘all things happen’. It is not a third entity that brings opposites into combination. For Herakleitos the universe is not three: rather ‘all things are one’ (B50, B10).

Further, whereas Pythagoreanism privileges the limited, Herakleitos privileges the unlimited. For Herakleitos the *kosmos* has neither beginning nor end; the conflicting opposites are ceaselessly transformed into each

Aeschylus, Herakleitos, and Pythagoreanism

other; the soul has no limits.⁵⁴ Early Pythagoreanism and Herakleitos seem to agree that opposites by themselves cannot enter stable combinations, but differ in that whereas Herakleitos accepts limitless conflict between them as the reality of the cosmos, the early Pythagoreans emphasize the existence of a third entity to mediate between the opposites. Whereas in the Pythagorean oppositions reported by Aristotle ‘still’ is aligned with limit and good (‘moving’ with unlimit and bad), for Herakleitos everything is in constant motion,⁵⁵ and even the opposites of justice and injustice are one and the same.⁵⁶ Small wonder that Herakleitos expressed hostility to Pythagoras.⁵⁷

5. The *meson* in the *Oresteia*

The unity of opposites, and their transformation into each other, is ended by the verdict of the law court. Fundamental is – as in Aristotle’s account of Pythagoreanism – limiting the unlimited, for the verdict ends the potentially unlimited conflict. Fundamental also is the opposition male-female, for the acquittal of Orestes depends on the principle that it also establishes – that the male rather than the female is the parent of the child.

The transformation is brought about by a third party. But who or what exactly is the third party? Is it the newly founded law court? Or its founder, Athena? We will soon see that another candidate is Zeus. And yet another candidate is *peithō* (persuasion), which is used by Athena and praised as a deity.⁵⁸ Indeed, *peithō* may be regarded as the political correlate of the cosmological mediating power of *harmonia* in Philolaos, and in the Pythagorean cosmogony in Plato’s *Timaios* it is itself the third element through which mind prevails over necessity (§4).

However, in *Eumenides* a specific identification of the third element is impossible, because whereas Pythagoreanism produces abstraction from the life of the polis, Aeschylus dramatizes that life in the concrete multiplicity of (mythical) narrative. In early Pythagoreanism the fundamental opposition limit-unlimited is metaphysical and abstract, and the importance of mediating opposites gives rise to the abstract idea of a middle entity (*meson*) with universal power. But in the political dramatization of myth ultimate power belongs to personal deity, and the *Oresteia* is no exception. This is not to deny that the Aeschylean Zeus is sometimes represented in abstract terms.⁵⁹ But here in *Eumenides* the contradiction between Pythagorean abstraction and dramatic myth is resolved by the Chorus stating that power is *passed by deity to an abstraction*, the middle (*meson*):

There is a place where the *deinon* (awesome) is good and fear watching over the mind... Who without nourishing his heart at all with innate fear⁶⁰ would revere Justice? Approve neither an anarchic life nor one ruled by a despot.

Richard Seaford

To every middle (*meson*) god gave power, but he oversees different things in different ways. A *summetron* ('with measure') word I say. *Hubris* is child of impiety truly, but from health of mind comes prosperity that is dear to all and much prayed for (*Eum.* 517–37).

The opposites of 'anarchic' and 'ruled by a despot' represent from a political perspective the fundamental opposition of unlimited and limit. And the *meson* here is emphatically⁶¹ *universalized*. In the Pythagoreanizing *Philebos*, we remember, it is in 'countless spheres' that the goddess ends the conflict of opposites by introducing limit. In Pythagoreanism the universality of limiting the unlimited, and of the *meson*, was an abstract principle, but may have been put into practice in politics.⁶²

It must however be emphasized again that this passage of the *Oresteia* may be Pythagorean only in sense (c). Another instance of the political importance of the *meson*, and of limiting the unlimited, is provided by the only Athenian literary text – other than Aeschylus – to have survived from Athens from before the mid-fifth century, namely the poems of Solon. If authentic, they are too early to be influenced by Pythagoreanism, but rather illustrate the kind of economic malfunction that I believe contributed to the importance of limiting the unlimited in Pythagorean metaphysics. In a period of incipient monetization, the excessive pursuit of wealth threatens to destroy the polis (4.5–6), and the poor are being sold into slavery. Solon allows neither side an unjust victory (5.6) and stands in the middle like a boundary-marker (37.9–10). 'Of wealth there is no limit that appears to men. For those of us who have the most wealth are eager to double it'.⁶³ The people (*dēmos*) should be restrained neither too little nor too much, for *koros* (excess) breeds *hubris* (insolence), when much wealth comes to men who are not of sound mind (6). The limit (measure) that must be imposed on this disastrous unlimitedness can come only from the *mind*. 'Put your great mind in measured things (*metrioiisi*)' (4c.3). And because this measure is invisible and yet crucial, it is projected from the (invisible) mind onto the cosmos: 'it is very difficult to understand (*noēsai*) the intelligence's invisible measure (*metron*)',⁶⁴ which alone holds the limits (*peirata*) of all things' (16). This is not metaphor. Rather, what is socially integrative must – as so often (e.g. in Pythagoreanism) – be imagined as extending to everything. The closely inter-related notions of *meson*, *metron*, and limiting the unlimited⁶⁵ acquire in Solon central significance – in the economic, political, ethical, psychological, and cosmological spheres.

So too *Eumenides* 517–37 universalizes the *meson* ('god gave power to every *meson*'), and the same passage implies its desirability in politics, language, ethics, psychology, wealth, and health. But it does so in language

Aeschylus, Herakleitos, and Pythagoreanism

that is sometimes found also in Pythagoreanism. As in many choral passages of Aeschylus, its allusiveness obscures its coherence.

Firstly, politics. Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism were traditionally hostile to tyranny, on both political and ethical grounds.⁶⁶ And on the other hand in Aristoxenos' account of Pythagorean ethics the greatest evil is *anarchia*. Desire leads on to the unlimited (*apeiron*); and because the human is by nature a *hubristikon* creature (prone to *hubris*), respect for the divine is needed to create self-control and order.⁶⁷

Secondly, language. Even the 'word I say' is *summetron* (533), i.e. has measure. This contrasts with the earlier anxiety at the dangerous power of utterance to unite opposites – for instance (*Agamemnon* 636–7)

It is not seemly to pollute an auspicious ('well-spoken') day with the voice of bad news. Separate is the honour (for the gods below) from the (Olympian) gods.⁶⁸

Moreover *summetron* here is the earliest extant occurrence of the root *summetr-*, which only very rarely has evaluative content before Plato. But it is applied to harmonized opposites in Pythagorean discourse in Plato's *Philebos* (25e1, 26a8), and in later accounts of early Pythagorean doctrine.⁶⁹ More significantly, in Aristoxenos' account of Pythagorean ethics *summetria* is praised in one of the passages (fr. 35) in which he condemns *anarchia*.

Thirdly, ethics, wealth, and psychology. *Hubris* is proverbially the offspring of *koros* (excess),⁷⁰ with which it is constantly and intimately associated, especially in the accumulation of wealth.⁷¹ The idea of *hubris* as the offspring of impiety (534) echoes *Agamemnon* 750–2, where the Chorus reject the (Herakleitean) idea that 'insatiable (*akorestos*) disaster' is engendered by its opposite (prosperity), and claim instead that impiety and *hubris* have offspring like themselves: the effect of this is to emphasize human agency, which would be excluded by the mere (Herakleitean) transformation of opposites into each other. So too here in *Eumenides* true prosperity requires health of *mind*, in contrast to the desire for gain that in the next stanza tramples on the altar of Justice, although limit (*telos*) remains in control (544). And, as we have seen, Solon mediates conflict by occupying the middle, warns that in wealth-accumulation *koros* (excess) begets *hubris*, and recommends limit and – for the mind – measure (*metron*), which holds the limit of all things. For Aeschylus the mind should be limited by fear, though not excessively.

Finally, with the implied association of *health* with limit we should compare *Agamemnon* 1001–3. The text is corrupt, but the preserved words ὑγείας (of health), and ἀκόρεστον (insatiable) and τέμα (boundary, limit) give good sense,⁷² 'the boundary of insatiable health'. This coheres well

Richard Seaford

with what follows: ‘for disease, wall-sharing neighbour, presses upon it’. The opposites are health and disease, with in the middle a third entity, limit, imagined as a wall between dwellings, to prevent the (Herakleitean) interpenetration of opposites.

True, the idea of health as ‘insatiable’ (and so needing to be limited) may seem odd. But excess in bodily ‘well-being’ (*enexia*) may be undesirable.⁷³ And we move to another instance of the same principle. The vital dividing wall prompts the idea of the side of a ship keeping out the sea, as well as the idea of a more abstract limit (on prosperity): when the ship strikes a reef, to jettison part of the cargo preserves the rest along with the ship (1005–13). Prosperity may have to be limited so as to avoid being transformed into its opposite.⁷⁴ In the world described by Solon, in which the polis may be destroyed by the unlimited (desire for wealth), even what is good must be limited. With wealth, as with health, limiting a good thing that is insatiable (*Ag.* 1331, ἀκόρεστον) prevents encroachment on (and so unity with) its opposite. The disastrous unity of opposites is in various spheres, including revenge,⁷⁵ created by insatiable excess.⁷⁶

Finally, praise of the *meson* by the Furies seems out of character with their hitherto uncompromising devotion to their function as persecutors. Such discrepancies are often significant. What is the reason for this one?⁷⁷ Athena as mediator is accepted by both parties to the conflict, but the invitation comes from one of them (Orestes under instruction from Apollo). Praise of the *meson* then comes from the other party, because this has the advantage of suggesting symmetrical convergence by the opposites themselves. More specifically their words obviously prefigure in detail the words of Athena later in the play:

I advise the citizens to maintain and revere what is neither anarchic nor despotic, and not to throw all the *deinon* out of the polis. For who is just if he fears nothing? (696–9).

The detailed similarity between the two passages expresses convergence between chthonic (Furies) and Olympian (Athena) deities. The Furies will exercise their deterrent role,⁷⁸ in a cave ‘under the earth’ but lit by festive torchlight, spatially limited (in contrast to their earlier unlimited roaming)⁷⁹ – and integrated into polis and cosmos – between the opposites of upper and lower world.

6. Zeus as third in the *Oresteia*

We return to the Pythagorean content of the *Triagmoi* of Ion of Chios, tragedian and contemporary of Aeschylus. The word *triagmos* occurs only of this book. What does it mean? It has been connected with the verb

Aeschylus, Herakleitos, and Pythagoreanism

agnumi, ‘break’, and with the rare verb *triazoō* or *triassō*, which refers to winning in wrestling (by virtue of three throws).⁸⁰ The most recent discussion is by Baltussen,⁸¹ who compares it with the noun *triaktēr*, ‘victor by virtue of three throws’ (in wrestling), which occurs only at Aeschylus *Ag.* 171–2. But Baltussen has no interest in what might be its broader significance in Aeschylus. That is left for us to pursue.

The crisis of the unity of opposites produces the invocation of Zeus and his balance (§2). It is in the very next stanza that *triaktēr* occurs:

He who before was great,
swelling with the boldness of all kinds of fighting,
will not even be mentioned as previously existing.
And he who next came into being
met his *triaktēr* and is gone.
Anyone who with good will shouts Zeus in victory-song
Will obtain understanding completely (167–75).

The cosmic succession, in which Zeus is the third ruler, after Ouranos and Kronos, is adorned with a metaphor from wrestling (*triaktēr*, victor by virtue of three throws).⁸² In the great lament to enlist the dead for the cycle of revenge, *atā* (disastrous delusion) will be called *a-triaktos* (*Cho.* 339), to exclude the prospect of the kind of victorious completeness that comes with the third throw in wrestling.

And so *triaktēr* here of Zeus evokes also the third place in the *cosmic* succession. The mutual embrace of opposed forces in successive wrestling matches (Ouranos-Kronos, Kronos-Zeus) ends in permanent victory for the *third* ruler of the world. It is a cosmogony that, though traditional and mythical, is presented as a third element supervening on two opposed and conflicting elements. It is as bringing completion (after the unity of opposites) to the cosmos that Zeus is called *triaktēr*, which may – like Ion’s *Triagmoi* – have Pythagorean associations. Recognition of his victory brings complete understanding.⁸³ The Pythagorean way of life⁸⁴ is based presumably on understanding the universe.⁸⁵ The act of *knowing*, Philolaos implies, involves limiting.⁸⁶ And understanding is itself a factor in Pythagorean cosmogony (§4).

In the third and final stanza of the Hymn, Zeus is he who ‘put mortals on the road to understanding, who made πάθει μάθος (learning by suffering) a rule’ (176–8). The crisis of the unity of opposites at Aulis (bad and good in equilibrium) produces the appeal to the Zeus who, having inclined the scales, separates the equal opposites into successive temporal phases: the road through anxiety and πάθος will (despite the form-parallelism of πάθει μάθος) *end* in μάθος. Justice too, at the end of the Aulis narrative, outweighs πάθος with μάθος: she ‘inclines the scales (ἐπιρρέπει) with learning (μαθεῖν) for the sufferers (παθοῦσιν)’.⁸⁷

Richard Seaford

Aristotle, having said that the whole world is defined by the number three (§4), adds ‘hence we have taken this number from nature, as it were one of her laws, and made use of it even for the worship of the gods.’ An instance of threeness in the worship of the gods is in a fragment of Aeschylus (55): a first libation was poured for Zeus and Hera, the second for the heroes, and the third for Zeus Saviour (*Sōtēr*). This series of three libations – for Olympians, (chthonic) Heroes, Zeus Saviour – was a general practice.⁸⁸ Hence the association of ‘third’ with ‘(Zeus) Saviour’.⁸⁹ Aeschylus has the Danaids pray to ‘the gods above and the honoured chthonic ones occupying tombs and Zeus saviour third’ (*Su.* 24–6). According to Iamblichus⁹⁰ Pythagoras recommended a tripartite pre-meal libation, for Zeus Saviour, Herakles, and the Dioskouroi. And according to Philochoros of Athens ‘the third krater was for Zeus *Teleios*⁹¹ *Sōtēr* because three is the first *teleios* (complete) number, having beginning and end (*telos*) and middle (*mesa*)’.⁹² Might this connection between the ritual and the Pythagorean privileging of the number three⁹³ have been already known at Athens two centuries earlier, in the time of Aeschylus? The frequent evocation of this ritual is a striking feature of the *Oresteia*.⁹⁴

For instance, Klutaimestra’s third blow to Agamemnon is given for ‘Zeus beneath the earth, Saviour of the dead’ (*Ag.* 1387). Threeness may express a vain desire for *completion*, for instance when Klutaimestra then calls the *daimōn* of the clan, whom she desires to leave the house (1572), *tripachuntos*, ‘thrice-gorged’ (1476): this may express her hope that now, after the third killing, he will want no more blood. We have seen that in the lament in *Choephoroi* disastrous delusion (*atē*) is *atriaktos* (339, another *hapax*), meaning that there is no prospect of the kind of victorious completeness that comes with the third throw in wrestling (as *triaktēr*). Orestes appeals to Power and Justice ‘with the third, greatest of all, Zeus’ (*Cho.* 244–5), and his description of his proposed killing of Aigisthos as the Fury drinking ‘unmixed blood, a third drink’ (578) implies the hope of completion.⁹⁵ Each perpetrator of a violent act sees it as the final one in a series of three.⁹⁶ But in the final words of the play (1065–76) the Chorus mention the killings first of Thyestes’ children, then of Agamemnon, and continue

but now there came from somewhere a third saviour (*sōtēr*) – or should I say a doom (*moron*)? Whither indeed will there be completion, whither will the power of *atē* be brought to rest and cease?⁹⁷

The completion desired in evoking the third libation to Zeus *Sōtēr* turns out to be merely the third killing in the seemingly unstoppable cycle of violence in a world of the Herakleitean unity of opposites (salvation may

Aeschylus, Herakleitos, and Pythagoreanism

be doom). In the last words of the final play, by contrast, Zeus and *Moirai* are harmoniously conjoined.

The idea of the completing third libation to Zeus is in *Agamemnon* and *Choephoroi* perverted by the horrors of violent revenge, as a third blow, a third drink of blood, a third killing. But in *Eumenides* it is transferred to a wider sphere that has been prefigured in the role of Zeus *triaktēr* in the parodos of *Agamemnon*. Orestes, once acquitted, refers to his salvation as ‘by the will of Pallas and of Loxias and of the third Saviour who completes all things’ (τοῦ πάντα κραίνοντος τρίτου Σωτήρος).⁹⁸ The completing function of Zeus *Sōtēr* is perhaps why there were sacrifices to him on the last day of the Athenian year.⁹⁹

‘Third’ here combines ritual propriety (Zeus Saviour is third in the list) with his power to ‘complete all things’ – here through the polis institutions (law court and cult) that integrate the opposed positions expressed in the trial. And this is the conclusion of the third play in a trilogy in which the first and second plays focus on – respectively – the violence and counter-violence of the opposed positions. This ‘third’ Zeus is similar in effect to the Zeus who in the three stanzas of the Hymn ended the crisis of equilibrium, emerged victor in wrestling against Ouranos and Kronos,¹⁰⁰ and put men on the road to understanding. Just as the conclusion of this cosmogony is that Zeus, *triaktēr* and third ruler, rules permanently and everywhere, so too the three libations have a cosmological dimension: they move – we have seen – from the Olympian to the chthonic, and then to the ‘third’ Zeus who is ‘Saviour’, even ‘Saviour of the dead’.¹⁰¹

Such a third Zeus unites Olympian with chthonic, the upper with the lower world,¹⁰² as does also in its way the introduction of festive light into the Furies’ cave ‘beneath the earth’ (1006, 1023). In the figure of Zeus political unity is expressed cosmologically.¹⁰³ His power to mediate between opposites (in cosmological space) and to transform equilibrium into transition (in cosmological time) qualifies him to preside as all-seeing and all-completing ‘third Saviour’ over the final resolution of the trilogy. Ritual utterance, dramatic form, narrative, polis, and cosmology finally cohere in the Saviour who, I suggest, personifies the universality of the completing function of three in early Pythagoreanism.

Richard Seaford

Notes

¹ Seaford 2003.

² The most recent case for Pythagorean influence on Aeschylus was made as long ago as 1966 by George Thomson, who in his commentary on the *Oresteia* adduces Pythagorean texts in thirteen places (*Ag.* 36–7, 76–82, 179–80, 1001–4, 1232–4, 1663; *Cbo.* 315–22, 583–5; *Eum.* 269–72, 307, 526–31, 650–1, 1045–6). Although this may perhaps have some cumulative persuasiveness, there is no single instance in which it is persuasive. Rösler (1970) criticizes Thomson, and concludes (36–7) that there was no Pythagorean influence on Aeschylus.

³ Seaford 2004, 2012.

⁴ Plato is generally regarded as much influenced by Pythagoreanism, but he does not explicitly acknowledge it, and mentions Pythagoras only once and the Pythagoreans only once (*Rep.* 600b, 530d: here he expresses agreement only). We should therefore assign his Pythagorean ideas to category (b).

⁵ Cic. *Tusc.* 3. 23. Cicero had access to Greek philosophical traditions, and studied in Athens.

⁶ DK 22B40, B129; 36B2, B4 (= Leurini 2000, fr. 116, 92); Hdt. 4.95–6.

⁷ Ion's date of birth is unknown, but was probably in the 480s. He was dead by 421 (*Ar. Peace* 834–7). For Ion see most recently Jennings and Katsaros 2007; material: Leurini 2000.

⁸ fr. 108 Leurini (= *FGrHist* 392F22) (at Isthmian games).

⁹ For the later influence of Pythagorean mathematics on the design of the theatre at Epidauros see Käppel 1989.

¹⁰ Aristox. fr. 11–25 Wehrli; Iambl. *Vit. Pyth.* 129–30, 249–51; Minar 1942, 73–5 calls it 'a golden age', which he dates from the expulsion of the tyrant Kleinias (c. 494 BC) to the catastrophic defeat about fifty years later (perhaps 454 BC: Minar 1942, 77–8). Aristoxenos was a fourth century BC scholar from southern Italy who consorted with Pythagoreans.

¹¹ Seaford 2005, developing M. L. West 1990b, 26–50. Such a reconciliation would be welcome to one who was both inspired by Dionysos (Lada-Richards 1999, 234–47) and impressed by the political effectiveness of the Pythagorean group constituted by mystic initiation (Burkert 1972, 115, 119; Minar 1942, 15–35).

¹² Seaford 1986.

¹³ Pl. *Tht.* 179–80; Arist. *Met.* 987a, 1010a.

¹⁴ To the report of various views in Fraenkel's commentary (1950, ad loc.) add Kaimio 1985 and Judet de la Combe 2001, ad loc.

¹⁵ For the syntax cf. 324.

¹⁶ Hdt. 8.98. The fact that he writes ὁ πρῶτος δραμῶν of a team of *horsemen* suggests (even though δραμῶν might be metaphorical) that it was already in his mind as the term used of the *lampadēphoria*.

¹⁷ Despite Hdt. 8.98; cf. e.g. Thuc. 4.111.2; Xen. *Anab.* 4.7.11; Eupolis fr. 129K-A; Pi. *O.* 6.75.

¹⁸ Schol. Patm. Dem. 57.43.

¹⁹ So Foucart 1899.

²⁰ B60, 62.

²¹ 1378, where victory should not be emended away: Thomson 1966, ad loc.; cf. Judet de la Combe 2001, ad loc.

Aeschylus, Herakleitos, and Pythagoreanism

²² See Seaford 2003.

²³ Seaford 2003.

²⁴ *Pers.* 346, 437, 440, *Su.* 403, 405, 605, 823, 982, *Tb.* 21, *Ag.* 251, 349, 574, 707, 1042, 1272, *Cho.* 61, 240, *Eum.* 888; Seaford 2003, 154.

²⁵ See further Seaford 2012.

²⁶ 150 ἑτέραν, always mistranslated as ‘an other’.

²⁷ Repeated from 121 and 139.

²⁸ For this translation cf. *Cho.* 518–20; Seaford 2003, 151.

²⁹ At *Il.* 8. 69–72 and 22. 209–19 the fall of one side of the divine scales is caused by the (respective weights of) the two fates put on the scales by Zeus. At 19. 223–4 it is caused by Zeus himself (κλίνῃσι). Cf. 14. 99; 16. 658.

³⁰ On metaphorical thinking as imagining the divine see Cairns in this volume, and on the lack of a clear boundary between cosmology (in the broad sense) and metaphor see Seaford 2012, 245–9.

³¹ According to Aristotle the table influenced – or was influenced by – Alkmaion of Kroton, who probably lived in the early to middle part of the fifth century: W. K. C. Guthrie 1962, 341–4, 357–9. For differing opinions on its date see Raven 1948, 11; Burkert 1972, 52, 294–5.

³² Seaford 2012, 293–6.

³³ W. K. C. Guthrie 1962, 246–8; Burkert 1972, 32–3. NB Arist. *Met.* 986a17; 987a14 ff. (with Guthrie 240–4); 990a8; *EN* 1106b29.

³⁴ In Arist. *Phys.*, 455. 20.

³⁵ Pythagorean doctrine preserved in Stobaeus I p. 22. 19 Wachsmuth. Imagining even and odd numbers as occupying space also underlies Aristotle’s obscure ‘illustration’ involving gnomons at *Phys.* 203b.

³⁶ Aristotle fr. 203 (=Alex. Aphr. *Comm. Met.* 39.8); fr. 199; 1078b23; Burkert 1972, 34 n. 31, 467 n. 8.

³⁷ Arist. *EN* 1106b29: ‘Bad is of the unlimited, as the Pythagoreans surmised, and good is of the limited’. Cf. Burkert 1972, 51. That may help to explain the absence of hot-cold, wet-dry.

³⁸ Cf. Arist. *Met.* 1083b28: for the Platonists the one is middle (*meson*) in odd numbers.

³⁹ The Pythagoreanizing ontology of Pl. *Phlb.* is fourfold: (a) unlimited, (b) limit, (c) what is mixed out of unlimited and limit, (d) the cause of the mixture (27b). But (d) is easily seen as derivative.

⁴⁰ Huffman 1993, 106.

⁴¹ Recent scholarship favours this view: Kahn 2001, 34–8; Riedweg 2005, 79.

⁴² Burkert 1972; Huffman 1993.

⁴³ notably in the cosmogonic limiting of the unlimited (fire) to produce a central ‘hearth’: B17; Huffman 1993, 42–3.

⁴⁴ In Philolaos *harmonia* means ‘harmonious fitting together,’ ‘both because it is specifically tied to a musical attunement in F6a, and because it is explicitly used not just to explain any old combination of dissimilar elements but a combination of elements into an order (*kosmos*):’ Huffman 1993, 139. Pythagorean also no doubt is the idea ‘that the soul is a kind of harmony, for harmony is a blend or composition of contraries, and the body is composed out of contraries’ (Arist. *De Anima* 407b27): W. K. C. Guthrie 1962, 307–8.

⁴⁵ Another title transmitted from antiquity is the singular *Triagmos* (A1: Harpokration).

Richard Seaford

Such titles may have been invented (on the basis of the opening words) in the Hellenistic age. Discussion: Baltussen 2007, 311–15. Another title attributed to Ion is *Kosmologikos*, which was perhaps of the same work.

⁴⁶ Cf. also A6; Pl. *Soph.* 242cd.

⁴⁷ The best existing account is by Dover 1988.

⁴⁸ B3: Huffman 1993, 118–20.

⁴⁹ Burkert 1972, 469, 474–6. A detailed study of the number three in Greek religion (though not in Pythagoreanism) is Usener 1903. Cf. e.g. Pl. *Parm.* 145a.

⁵⁰ B51 ‘in being at variance it agrees with itself; backward-stretching *harmonia*, as of bow and lyre’; B8 ‘from things at variance the finest *harmonia*’.

⁵¹ B10, 60, 88, 103.

⁵² B8, 10, 48, 61, 62, 67, 84a.

⁵³ For Philolaos ‘limiters’ set boundaries within a continuum, but to produce an order the combining of opposites by *harmonia* is also required. For instance, ‘in itself hot is an unlimited and can cause disease, but heat that is limited in accordance with *harmonia* produces health’: Huffman 1993, 48, 89, 140, 145.

⁵⁴ B12, B30, B31, B36, B62, B67, B77, B88, B91, B126; B45; cf. B115.

⁵⁵ B12, 91, A6 rest and the static are for the dead. Cf. also Pl. *Tht.* 179–80 on the followers of Herakleitos.

⁵⁶ This is the implication of B102: ‘For god all things are fine and good and just, but humans assume some things as just and others as unjust’.

⁵⁷ B40, 81, 129; cf. 35. The criticism of P. for his *polumathiē*, ‘much learning’, may impute failure to understand that things happen according to a single principle (B1, 41).

⁵⁸ *Eum.* 829, 885, 970.

⁵⁹ Notably when invoked to resolve opposition between equal forces, as at *Ag.* 160–7: Seaford 2012.

⁶⁰ I read ἐμφυεῖ...φόβῳ τρέφων (Thomson) for MS ἐν φάει...ἀνατρέφων. But this problem does not affect my argument.

⁶¹ ‘Every’ (παντί) is in emphatic position.

⁶² The aristocratic Cylon and democrat Ninon both spoke against the Pythagoreans in the same assembly: Iamblichos *VP* 258, derived from Apollonios of Tyana, who may have derived it from Timaios: Minar 1942, 54–65, and bibl. in Burkert 1972, 104 n. 37.

⁶³ 13.71–3. The unlimited accumulation of individual wealth, an idea not found in the premonetary world of Homer, becomes a preoccupation of the monetized polis (e.g. Ar. *Wealth* 189–97; Arist. *Pol.* 1256b26–57a4; Seaford 2004, 165–9). It is not just that there was no point in accumulating millions of e.g. tripods. Rather, the old ideology of reciprocity created a limit that is eroded by the individualistic self-sufficiency fostered by money: Seaford 2004, 292–8.

⁶⁴ Cf. also the invisibility of the mind (*nous*) of the gods (17).

⁶⁵ This is not to deny that limiting the unlimited is after all a general feature of cultural action (an insight approached by Philolaos B2; Seaford 2004, 277 n. 52), and is found as the originating act in Greek mythical cosmogony: e.g. Orph. *fr.* 55, 56; Burkert 1972, 37–9.

⁶⁶ Aristox. *fr.* 16 Wehrli. In Iambl. *VP* alone see 11, 78, 133, 189, 214, 215–6, 220, 248, 266; Minar (1942) 2, 71–3.

⁶⁷ *Fr.* 33, 35, 38 Wehrli, from the *Pythagorean Precepts*, which have recently been

Aeschylus, Herakleitos, and Pythagoreanism

shown to be ‘precisely what they purport to be, a summary of Pythagorean ethics as taught in the fourth century’: Huffman 2008; Minar 1942, 99 n. 13; Burkert 1972, 101 n. 17.

⁶⁸ cf. also 645, 648–51, 156–9, 349, 926–7; Seaford 2003, 152–3.

⁶⁹ 58 DK B15, D1, D4, D8; Aristoxenos.

⁷⁰ Aristotle fr. 57.

⁷¹ *Hubris* and excess (*koros*): Fisher 1992, 19, 21, 72–6, 187, 212–42, 272–80, 336, 350, 375–6; *hubris* and wealth: 20–1, 48, 69–72, 102–4, 273–6, 337, 350, 421, 491, 496–7.

⁷² with the slight change to ἀκορέστου (or ἀκορέτου) to go with ὑγείας.

⁷³ Hippocr. *Aphorismoi* 1.3 (much of this collection may derive from the fifth century BC); Dio Chrys. 1.470R; Thomson 1966, ad *Ag.* 1001–4.

⁷⁴ The transformation is beautifully expressed as a simultaneity at 1013 ‘filled excessively with suffering’, πημονᾶς γέμων ἄγαν in which πημονᾶς may be replaced by the Doric form παμονᾶς Headlam) but not by πλημονᾶς (Schütz, followed by e.g. Fraenkel and Page), which gives a pointless and flat pleonasm.

⁷⁵ Note the following lines (1018–24). The reciprocal violence is insatiable (ἀκόρεστος; *Ag.* 1117; 1484) and a unity of equal opposites (e.g. *Cbo.* 310–14). In *Eumenides* the Furies, now upholders of the middle, pray that there never be insatiable (976 ἄπληστος) conflict in the polis.

⁷⁶ In *Ag.* alone see also 1117, 1484, 1331; Seaford 2003, 157.

⁷⁷ According to Sommerstein in his commentary (1989 ad loc.) it is so that ‘we be reminded that there is another side to the case’.

⁷⁸ 927–37, 950–5, 990–1.

⁷⁹ *Eum.* 75–9, 240–1, 248–51.

⁸⁰ e.g. Janko 2001, 7 compares it with Protagoras’ *Kataballontes Logoi* (‘Knock-down Arguments’).

⁸¹ Baltussen 2007, 313–14.

⁸² Cf. *Eum.* 589. Thomson in his commentary (1966 ad loc.) compares the wrestling contest between Kronos and Zeus at Olympia (Paus. 5.7.10; 8.2.2).

⁸³ 174–5, in metrical corresponsion with the weight of anxiety at 165–6.

⁸⁴ Pl. *Rep.* 600b (cf. 530d).

⁸⁵ See e.g. W. K. C. Guthrie 1962, 148.

⁸⁶ B3: Huffman 1993, 118–20. For Herakleitos, by contrast, the soul has no limits (B45).

⁸⁷ For *epirrhepein* with this sense cf. *Eum.* 888; Seaford 2003, 151–4.

⁸⁸ Schol. Pl. *I.* 6.10a; Schol. Pl. *Phlb.* 66d; Pollux *Onom.* 6.15; Thomson 1966, on *Ag.* 246–7.

⁸⁹ Examples are given by Thomson 1966, on *Eum.* 759–60.

⁹⁰ *Vit. Pyth.* 28.155.

⁹¹ Zeus *Teleios* is invoked at *Ag.* 973 and evoked at *Eum.* 214. It seems that *Sōtēr* was identified with *Teleios* in Euripides’ *Andromeda* and Aristophanes’ *Tēganistai*: schol. Pl. *Phlb.* 66d.

⁹² 328 *FGrHist* F87.

⁹³ Detectable also perhaps in the recapitulation that concludes the (Pythagoreanizing) *Philebos*, where Plato re-states his view that thought is superior to pleasure, adding that neither thought nor pleasure is the good itself. Rather, ‘when a third appeared more powerful than either of these, thought appeared infinitely more closely related and

Richard Seaford

naturally connected with the form of the victor' (67a7). We have encountered in *Agamemnon* the metaphor of the supervening third as athletic victor, and the power of the supervening third establishing hierarchy between the other two. Further, the recapitulation has just been introduced as 'the third for the *Sôtēr*' (66d3).

⁹⁴ The best and most comprehensive discussion of this theme is by Burian 1986, 332–42, but he mentions Pythagoreanism only in a footnote.

⁹⁵ Cf. Zeitlin 1965, 484.

⁹⁶ As observed by Clay 1969.

⁹⁷ Whereas if Klutaimestra had three specific killings in mind, they may be those of Thyestes' children, Iphigeneia, and Agamemnon.

⁹⁸ 758–60. Already at *Cbo.* 244–5 the 'third Zeus' is invoked (with Power and Justice) as 'the greatest of all'.

⁹⁹ Lysias 26.6.

¹⁰⁰ It may or may not be relevant that Ouranos personifies the sky and Kronos was imprisoned in the underworld.

¹⁰¹ Scullion 2005 argues that Aeschylus is influenced by the combination of Olympian and chthonic in the cult of the *Hausgott* Zeus *Sôtēr*.

¹⁰² Tripartite cosmic unity is radically personified by Zeus in fragment 70 R of Aeschylus: 'Zeus is *aithēr*, Zeus is earth, Zeus is sky. Zeus is all things, and what is above them'. The idea of god as the beginning, middle, and end of all things at Pl. *Laws* 715e may have been influenced by Pythagoreanism (*pace* Burkert 1972, 467 n. 6), or alternatively may perpetuate an ancient preconception (of the kind referred to in the pre-penultimate paragraph of §4) that may have influenced Pythagoreanism. Plato's remark may derive from Orphic poetry (*Orph. Fr.* 21, 21a; Derveni papyrus 17.12): for the connections between Pythagoreanism and Orphic doctrine see Burkert 1972, 135–32.

¹⁰³ On the politico-cosmological dimension of the Orphic Zeus absorbing all things see Seaford 2004, 221–2.