

Concerning Empedocles, Heraclitus, And Aristotle

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Prefatory Note

At the suggestion of some friends I have for convenience collected here some of my translations - and notes on - fragments attributed to Heraclitus and Empedocles, as well as two translations of passages from Aristotle's Metaphysics which concern the term φύσις, and an extract from my monograph *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos* which concerns acausality in which both Heraclitus and Aristotle are quoted.

The items in question date from from 2011 to 2017.

David Myatt
2021

A Pre-Socratic Fragment: Empedocles

Text

ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,
αἶδιον, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὄρκοις·
εὐτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνωι φίλα γυῖα μίηνηι,
νεῖκεῖ θ' ὅς κε ἐπίορκον ἀμαρτήσας ἐπομόσσηι,
δαίμονες οἶτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο,
τρὶς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,

φνομένους παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἶδεα θνητῶν
ἀργαλέας βιότιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
πόντος δ' ἐς χθονὸς οὐδας ἀπέπτυσσε, γαῖα δ' ἐς αὐγὰς
ἡελίου φαέθοντος, ὁ δ' αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·
ἄλλος δ' ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.
τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
Νεῖκει μαινομένω πίσυρος.

Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, Diels-Kranz, B115

Translation

There exists an insight by Ananke, an ancient resolution
Of the gods, immutable and sealed by vows,
Regarding when one of the daimons - those whose allotted portion of life is long -
Has their own hands stained from murder
Or who, once having sworn an oath, because of some feud breaks that oath.
For they shall for ten thousand tripled seasons wander away from the beautified,
Begotten during that period in all manner of mortal form
And exchanging during that voyage one vexation for another:

The fierce Ætherials chase them to the Sea,
The Sea spits them out onto dusty ground,
Gaia hurls them to the burning light of the Sun
Who flings them back to those swirling Ætherials.
Moved from one to the other, all detest them.

I am one of those, a vagabond in exile from the gods
Who has to rely on strongful Disagreement.

Notes

Ananke (Ἀνάγκη) is the primordial goddess of incumbency; that is, of wyrd - of that which is beyond, and the origin of, what we often describe as our Fate as a mortal being.

The usual translation of "necessity" - as for example by Copenhaver in section 1 of tractate III of the *Corpus Hermeticum* [1] obscures both the subtle esotericism evident in that ἱερός λόγος and what Empedocles wrote centuries earlier about Ἀνάγκη. [2]

Disagreement (νεῖκος) is - according to what we can adduce of the philosophy of Empedocles from the fragments of his writings that we possess - a fundamental principle, and one understood in relation to another fundamental principle, Φιλότης, expressive as they both are of the logos (λόγος) by which we can possibly apprehend the workings of the cosmic order (κόσμος). However, the common translations - of 'strife' and 'love' respectively - do not in my view express what Empedocles seems to be trying to convey, which is 'disagreement' and 'fellowship' (a communal or kindred working-together in pursuit of a common interest or goal). For while disagreement sometimes disrupts fellowship, it is often necessary as the

genesis of productive change.

Thus, just as Odysseus had to rely on the support of Athena, who disagreed with how Poseidon treated Odysseus, so does the 'vagabond in exile from the deities/the gods' have to rely on disagreements among the immortals to end their own exile.

Which expression of how the immortal deities (θεοὶ) often differ and of how the Fate of mortals depend on those deities and, quite often on disagreements between them, exemplifies the ethos of Ancient Greece.

2017

This is a slightly revised version of a comment published in my 2015 translation of and commentary on the ἱερός λόγος tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum.

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[1] B. Copenhaver. *Hermetica*. Cambridge University Press. 1992.

[2] The Greek text of tractate III:1 is

Δόξα πάντων ὁ θεὸς καὶ θεῖον καὶ φύσις θεία. ἀρχὴ τῶν ὄντων ὁ θεός, καὶ νοῦς καὶ φύσις καὶ ὕλη, σοφία εἰς δεῖξιν ἀπάντων ὧν· ἀρχὴ τὸ θεῖον καὶ φύσις καὶ ἐνέργεια καὶ ἀνάγκη καὶ τέλος καὶ ἀνανέωσις. ἦν γὰρ σκότος ἄπειρον ἐν ἀβύσσῳ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ πνεῦμα λεπτὸν νοερόν, δυνάμει θείαι ὄντα ἐν χάει. ἀνείθη δὴ φῶς ἅγιον καὶ ἐπάγη <ὑφ' ἄμμωι> ἐξ ὑγρᾶς οὐσίας στοιχεῖα καὶ θεοὶ πάντες <καταδιερῶσι> φύσεως ἐνσπόρου.

A.D. Nock & A-J. Festugiere, *Corpus Hermeticum*, Paris, 1972

In my translation I have endeavoured to express something of the classical mysticism which this tractate, in particular, embodies:

"The numen of all beings is theos: numinal, and of numinal physis.
The origin of what exists is theos, who is Perceivation and Physis and Substance:
The sapientia which is a revealing of all beings.
For the numinal is the origin: physis, vigour, incumbency, accomplishment, reneance.

In the Abyss, an unmeasurable darkness, and, by the influence of the numen,
Water and delicate apprehending Pnuema, there, in Kaos.
Then, a numinous phaos arose and, from beneath the sandy ground,
Parsements coagulated from fluidic essence.
And all of the deities <particularize> seedful physis."

My commentary on the text - in *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*, 2017, ISBN 978-1976452369 - explains my interpretations of words such as δόξα, νοῦς, σοφία, ἐνέργεια, and δύναμις.

Heraclitus and Enantiodromia

The Meaning of Enantiodromia

The unusual compound Greek word *ἐναντιοδρομίας* occurs in a summary of the philosophy of Heraclitus by Diogenes Laërtius:

πάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ' εἰμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας
ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα (ix. 7)

This unusual word is usually translated as something like 'conflict of opposites' or 'opposing forces' which I consider are incorrect for several reasons.

Firstly, in my view, a transliteration should be used instead of some translation, for the Greek expression suggests something unique, something which exists in its own right as a principle or 'thing' and which uniqueness of meaning has a context, with both context and uniqueness lost if a bland translation is attempted. Lost, as the uniqueness, and context, of for example, *δαιμόνων* becomes lost if simply translated as 'spirits' (or worse, as 'gods'), or as the meaning of *κακός* in Hellenic culture is lost if mistranslated as 'evil'.

Second, the context seems to me to hint at something far more important than 'conflict of opposites', the context being the interesting description of the philosophy of Heraclitus before and after the word occurs, as given by Diogenes Laërtius:

- 1) ἐκ πυρὸς τὰ πάντα συνεστάναι
- 2) εἰς τοῦτο ἀναλύεσθαι
- 3) πάντα δὲ γίνεσθαι καθ' εἰμαρμένην καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐναντιοδρομίας
ἡρμόσθαι τὰ ὄντα
- 4) καὶ πάντα ψυχῶν εἶναι καὶ δαιμόνων πλήρη

The foundation/base/essence of all beings ['things'] is pyros to which they return, with all [of them] by genesis appropriately apportioned [separated into portions] to be bound together again by enantiodromia, and all filled/suffused/vivified with/by *ψυχή* and *Dæmons*.

This raises several interesting questions, not least concerning *ψυχή* and *δαιμόνων*, but also regarding the sense of *πυρὸς*. Is *pyros* here a philosophical principle - such as *ψυχή* - or used as in fragment 43, the source of which is also Diogenes Laërtius:

ὑβριν χρὴ σβεννύναι μᾶλλον ἢ πυρκαϊῆν (ix 2)

Better to deal with your hubris before you confront that fire

Personally, I incline toward the former, of some principle being meant, given the context, and the generalization - ἐκ πυρὸς τὰ πάντα. In respect of ψυχῶν καὶ δαιμόνων I would suggest that what is implied is the numinous, our apprehension of The Numen, and which numen is the source of ψυχή and the origin of Dæmons. For a δαίμων is not one of the pantheon of major Greek gods - θεοί - but another type of divinity (that is, another emanation of the numen; another manifestation of the numinous) who might be assigned by those numinous gods to bring good fortune or misfortune to human beings and/or who watch over certain human beings and especially over particular numinous (sacred) places.

Thus the above summary of the philosophy of Heraclitus might be paraphrased as:

The foundation of all beings is Pyros to which they return, with all by genesis appropriately apportioned to be bound together again by enantiodromia, with all beings suffused with [are emanations of] the numen.

Furthermore, hubris disrupts - and conceals - our appreciation of the numen, our appreciation of ψυχή and of Dæmons: of what is numinous and what/whom we should respect. A disruption that makes us unbalanced, makes us disrespect the numinous and that of the numinous (such as δαιμόνων and θεοί and sacred places), and which unbalance enantiodromia can correct, with enantiodromia suggesting a confrontation - that expected dealing with our hubris necessary in order to return to Pyros, the source of beings. Here, Pyros is understood not as we understand 'fire' - and not even as some sort of basic physical element among other elements such as water - but rather as akin to both the constant 'warmth and the light of the Sun' (that brings life) and the sudden lightning that, as from Zeus, can serve as warning (omen) and retribution, and which can destroy and be a cause of devastating fire and thus also of the regeneration/rebuilding that often follows from such fires and from the learning, the respect, that arises from appreciating warnings (omens) from the gods. All of which perhaps explains fragment 64:

τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακίζει Κεραυνός

All beings are guided by Lightning

Enantiodromia in the Philosophy of Pathei-Mathos

In the philosophy of pathei-mathos (formerly The Numinous Way), enantiodromia is understood as the process - the natural change - that occurs or which can occur in a human being because of or following πάθει μάθος. For part of πάθει μάθος is a 'confrontational contest' - an interior battle - and an acceptance of the need to take part in this battle and 'face the consequences', one of which is learning the (often uncomfortable) truth about one's own unbalanced, strife-causing, nature.

If successful in this confrontation, there is or there can be a positive, moral,

development of the nature, the character – the φύσις (physis) – of the person because of that revealing and that appreciation (or re-appreciation) of the numinous whose genesis is this *pathei-mathos*, and which appreciation includes an awareness of why ὕβρις is an error (often the error) of unbalance, of disrespect, of a going beyond the due limits, and which ὕβρις is the genesis of the τύραννος and of the modern error of extremism. For the tyrannos and the extremist (and their extremisms) embody and give rise to and perpetuate ἔρις [1].

Thus enantiodromia reveals the nature of, and restores in individuals, the natural balance necessary for ψυχή to flourish – which natural balance is δίκη as Δίκη [2] and which restoration of balance within the individual results in ἁρμονίη [3], manifest as ἁρμονίη is in the cultivation, in the individual, of wu-wei and σωφρονεῖν (a fair and balanced personal, individual, judgement).

April 2012

Notes

[1] Heraclitus, fragment 80: εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἔόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ' ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα [χρεῶν]

One should be aware that Polemos pervades, with discord δίκη, and that beings are naturally born by discord.

See my *Some Notes on Πόλεμος and Δίκη in Heraclitus B80* and also *The Balance of Physis - Notes on λόγος and ἀληθία in Heraclitus*.

[2] In respect of the numinous principle of Δίκη, refer to my short essay *The Principle of Δίκη*.

[3] Although φύσις has a natural tendency to become covered up (Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ – concealment accompanies Physis) it can be uncovered through λόγος and πάθει μάθος.

The Balance of Physis - Notes on λόγος and ἀληθία in Heraclitus

Part One – Fragment 112

σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μεγίστη, καὶ σοφίη ἀληθία λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν
κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαίοντας.

Most excellent is balanced reasoning, for that skill can tell inner

character from outer. [1]

This fragment is interesting because it contains what some regard as the philosophically important words σωφρονεῖν, ἀληθέα, φύσις and λόγος.

The fragment suggests that what is most excellent [ἀρετή] is thoughtful reasoning [σωφρονεῖν] - and such reasoning is both (1) to express (reveal) meaning and (2) that which is in accord with, or in sympathy with, φύσις - with our nature and the nature of Being itself.

Or, we might, perhaps more aptly, write - such reasoning is both an expressing of inner meaning (essence), and expresses our own, true, nature (as thinking beings) and the balance, the nature, of Being itself.

λέγειν [λόγος] here does not suggest what we now commonly understand by the term "word". Rather, it suggests both *a naming* (denoting), and *a telling* - not a telling as in some abstract explanation or theory, but as in a simple describing, or recounting, of what has been so denoted or so named. Which is why, in fragment 39, Heraclitus writes:

ἐν Πριήνῃ Βίας ἐγένετο ὁ Τευτάμεω, οὗ πλείων λόγος ἢ τῶν
ἄλλων [2]

and why, in respect of λέγειν, Hesiod [see below under ἀληθέα] wrote:

ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
ἴδμεν δ' , εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι [3]

φύσις here suggests the Homeric [4] usage of nature, or character, as in Herodotus (2.5.2):

Αἰγύπτου γὰρ φύσις ἐστὶ τῆς χώρας τοιήδε

but also suggests Φύσις(Physis) - as in fragment 123; the natural nature of all beings, beyond their outer appearance.

ἀληθέα - commonly translated as truth - here suggests (as often elsewhere) an exposure of *essence*, of the reality, the meaning, which lies behind the outer (false) appearance that covers or may conceal that reality or meaning, as in Hesiod (*Theog*, 27-28):

ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
ἴδμεν δ' , εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι [3]

σωφρονεῖν [σωφρονέω] here suggests balanced (or thoughtful, measured) reasoning - but not according to some abstract theory, but instead a reasoning, a natural way or manner of reasoning, in natural balance with ourselves, with our nature (our physis) as thinking beings.

Most importantly, perhaps, it is this σωφρονεῖν [5] which can incline us toward not committing ὕβρις (hubris; insolence), which ὕβρις is a going beyond the natural limits, and which thus upsets the natural balance, as, for instance, mentioned by Sophocles:

ὕβρις φυτεύει τύραννον:
ὕβρις, εἰ πολλῶν ὑπερπλησθῆ μάταν,
ἃ μὴ 'πίκαιρα μηδὲ συμφέροντα,
ἀκρότατον εἰσαναβάσ'
αἶπος ἀπότομον ὤρουσεν εἰς ἀνάγκαν,
ἔνθ' οὐ ποδὶ χρησίμῳ
χρῆται [6]

It therefore not surprising that Heraclitus considers, as expressed in fragment 112, the best person - the person with the most excellent character (that is, ἀρετῆ) - is the person who, understanding and appreciating their own true nature as a thinking being (someone who can give names to - who can denote - beings, and express or recount that denoting to others), also understands the balance of Being, the true nature of beings [cf. fragment 1 - κατὰ φύσιν διαίρων ἕκαστον], and who thus seeks to avoid committing the error of hubris, but who can not only also forget this understanding, and cease to remember such reasoning:

τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος ἀεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ
πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκούσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον [7]

but who can also deliberately, or otherwise, conceal what lies behind the names (the outer appearance) we give to beings, to "things".

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Notes

[1] Fragmentum B 112 - *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. H. Diels, Berlin 1903. My translation.

[2] "In Priene was born someone named and recalled as most worthy - Bias, that son of Teuta."

[3]

We have many ways to conceal - to name - certain things
And the skill when we wish to expose their meaning

[4] *Odyssey*, Book 10, vv. 302-3

[5] The verb σωφρονεῖν - present, infinitive, active, of σωφρονέω - could be assimilated into English as sophronein (in preference to σωφροσύνη as sophrosyne) with the meaning of "balanced - thoughtful - reasoning"

suggesting thus the wisdom that is avoidance of hubris; an avoidance whose genesis is in understanding that excess in whatever endeavour or in personal feelings upsets the natural and necessary balance (the harmony) that is δίκη, Fairness, judgement, ancestral custom. As an assimilated term, there is no inflexion.

Sophronein in preference to sophrosyne given that the former is distinctive while the latter is not only awkward but also has acquired an English meaning - "soundness of mind, moderation" - which rather distorts the meaning of the original Greek given the moral and philosophical imputations of the English words 'soundness', 'mind', and 'moderation'.

[6] "Insolence plants the tyrant. There is insolence if by a great foolishness there is a useless over-filling which goes beyond the proper limits. It is an ascending to the steepest and utmost heights and then that hurtling toward that Destiny where the useful foot has no use..." (Oedipus Tyrannus, vv.872ff)

[7] "Although this naming and expression, which I explain, exists - human beings tend to ignore it, both before and after they have become aware of it." (Fragment 1)

Some Notes on Πόλεμος and Δίκη in Heraclitus B80

εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἔόντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ' ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα [χρεῶν]. Fragmentum 80.

This fragment, attributed to Heraclitus, is generally considered to mean something rather abstract such as: war is everywhere and strife is justice and all that is arises and passes away because of strife.

That is, πόλεμος is regarded as a synonym for either *kampf*, or more generally, for war. However, I incline toward the view that this older understanding of - the accepted rendition of - πόλεμος is a misinterpretation, and that rather than *kampf* (struggle), or a general type of strife, or what we now associate with the term war, πόλεμος implies what I have elsewhere termed the acausality (a simultaneity) [1] beyond our causal ideation, and which ideation has separated object from subject, and often abstracted them into seemingly conflicting opposites [2]. Hence my particular interpretation of Fragmentum 53:

Πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς, καὶ τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς ἔδειξε τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους, τοὺς μὲν δούλους ἐποίησε τοὺς δὲ ἐλευθέρους.

Polemos our genesis, governing us all to bring forth some gods, some mortal beings with some unfettered yet others kept bound.

Hence my interpretation of Fragment 80 - εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἔοντα ξυδόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ' ἔριν καὶ χρεώμενα [χρεῶν] - as:

One should be aware that Polemos pervades, with discord δίκη, and that beings are naturally born by discord. [3]

Here, I have deliberately transliterated (instead of translated) πόλεμος, and left δίκη as δίκη - because both πόλεμος and δίκη (written Πόλεμος and, I suggest, Δίκη) should be regarded, like ψυχή (psyche/Psyche) as terms or as principles in their own right (hence the capitalization), and thus imply, suggest, and require, interpretation and explanation, something especially true, in my opinion, regarding Δίκη. To render them blandly by English terms such as 'war' and 'justice' - which have their own now particular meaning(s) - is in my view erroneous and somewhat lackadaisical. δίκη for instance could be, depending on context: the custom(s) of a folk, judgement (or Judgement personified), the natural and the necessary balance, the correct/customary/ancestral way, and so on.

In respect of Δίκη, I write it thus to intimate a new, a particular and numinous, philosophical principle, and differentiate it from the more general δίκη. As a numinous principle, or axiom, Δίκη thus suggests what lies beyond and what was the genesis of δίκη personified as the goddess, Judgement - the goddess of natural balance, of the ancestral way and ancestral customs.

Thus, Δίκη implies the balance, the reasoned judgement, the thoughtful reasoning - σωφρονεῖν - that πάθει μάθος brings and restores, and which accumulated πάθει μάθος of a particular folk or πόλις forms the basis for their ancestral customs. δίκη is therefore, as the numinous principle Δίκη, what may be said to be a particular and a necessary balance between ἀρετή and ὕβρις - between the ὕβρις that often results when the personal, the natural, quest for ἀρετή becomes unbalanced and excessive.

That is, when ἔρις (discord) is or becomes δίκη - as suggested by Heraclitus in Fragment 80.

In respect of Πόλεμος, it is perhaps interesting that in the recounted tales of Greek mythology attributed to Aesop, and in circulation at the time of Heraclitus, a personified πόλεμος (as the δαίμων of kindred strife) married a personified ὕβρις (as the δαίμων of arrogant pride) [4] and that it was a common folk belief that πόλεμος accompanied ὕβρις - that is, that Polemos followed Hubris around rather than vice versa, causing or bringing ἔρις.

As a result of ἔρις, there often arises πάθει μάθος - that practical and personal knowing, that reasoned understanding which, according to Aeschylus [5] is the new law, the new understanding, given by Zeus to replace the older more religious and dogmatic way of fear and dread, often viewed as Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονές τ' Ἐρινύες [6]. A new understanding which Aeschylus sought to explain in the *Oresteia*.

Therefore one can perhaps understand and appreciate the true and acausal

nature of Πόλεμος which, as suggested by Fragment 53, is a natural principle (or 'energy' or a manifestation of Being) which affects, or governs, all mortals and which, as suggested by Fragment 80, causes the manifestation of beings from Being (the causal separation of beings) and which natural separation results in ἔρις and thence, as suggested by Fragment 123 [7] a return to Being; a return which can result, as suggested by Fragment 112 [8] arise from thoughtful reasoning [σωφρονεῖν] - and which thoughtful, balanced, reasoning can incline us toward not committing ὕβρις.

April 2011

Notes

[1] For the axiom of acausality, see my *Introduction to The Philosophy of The Numen*.

[2] For an outline of opposites, refer to my essay *The Abstraction of Change as Opposites and Dialectic*.

[3] Some alternative renderings of this fragment are:

One should be aware that polemos is pervasive; and discord δίκη, and that beings [our being] quite naturally come-into-being through discord

One should be aware that polemos pervades; with discord δίκη, and that all beings are begotten because of discord.

[4] A δαίμων is not one of the pantheon of major Greek gods - θεοί - but rather a lesser type of divinity who might be assigned by those gods to bring good fortune or misfortune to human beings and/or watch over certain human beings and especially particular numinous (sacred) places.

Furthermore, Polemos was originally the δαίμων of kindred strife, whether familial, or of one's πόλις (one's clan and their places of dwelling). Thus, to describe Polemos, as is sometimes done, as the god of conflict (or war), is doubly incorrect.

[5] Agamemnon, 174-183. qv. my essay, *From Aeschylus To The Numinous Way - The Numinous Authority of πάθει μάθος*

[6] Aeschylus (attributed), *Prometheus Bound*, 515-6

[7] Φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ - *Concealment accompanies Physis*. See my *Physis, Nature, Concealment, and Natural Change*.

[8] σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μεγίστη, καὶ σοφίη ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαίοντας

For this fragment, see my essay *The Balance of Physis - Notes on λόγος and ἀληθέα in Heraclitus*.

Heraclitus - Fragment 62

Text

ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες. (Fragment 62, Diels-Krantz)

Translation

The deathless are deathful, the deathful deathless, with one living the other's dying with the other dying in that other's life.

Notes

° *deathless...deathful*. For these in respect of ἀθάνατος and θνητός γν. my commentary [1] on Poemandres 14, tractate VIII:1, and tractate XI:7ff. As noted in the commentary on Poemandres 14, the English terms are taken from Chapman's poetic translation of the Hymn to Venus from the Homeric Hymns: "That with a deathless goddess lay a deathful man."

° There is some similarity between this fragment and what the Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων says in the first section of tractate XII of the Corpus Hermeticum:

καὶ γὰρ ὁ Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς εἶπεν ἀθανάτους, τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους θεοὺς θνητούς

For the noble daimon spoke of deities as deathless mortals and of mortals as deathful deities.

2017

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[1] Myatt, David. *Corpus Hermeticum: Eight Tractates*. 2017. ISBN-13: 978-1976452369

Some Notes on Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 1, 987b

Text

Σωκράτους δὲ περὶ μὲν τὰ ἠθικὰ πραγματευομένου περὶ δὲ τῆς ὅλης φύσεως οὐθέν, ἐν μέντοι τούτοις τὸ καθόλου ζητοῦντος καὶ περὶ ὀρισμῶν ἐπιστήσαντος πρώτου τὴν διάνοιαν, ἐκείνον ἀποδεξάμενος διὰ τὸ τοιοῦτον ὑπέλαβεν ὡς περὶ ἐτέρων τοῦτο γιγνόμενον καὶ οὐ τῶν αἰσθητῶν: ἀδύνατον γὰρ εἶναι τὸν κοινὸν ὄρον τῶν αἰσθητῶν τινός, αἰεὶ γε μεταβαλλόντων. οὗτος οὖν τὰ μὲν τοιαῦτα τῶν ὄντων ιδέας προσηγόρευσε, τὰ δ' αἰσθητὰ παρὰ

ταῦτα καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα λέγεσθαι πάντα: κατὰ μέθεξι γὰρ εἶναι τὰ πολλὰ ὁμώνυμα τοῖς εἶδεσιν.

Translation

Now, when Socrates occupied himself with ethics, giving no heed to *Physis* while seeking for what was universal therein and being the first to consider definitions, he [Plato] not only supported that approach but also favoured other existents rather than that consideration of percipient things, since [for him] it is not possible to have a standard for percipient things since they undoubtedly are liable to change.

These other existents he termed Forms, saying that each and every perceptible thing - being related to them - was so described because of them. For the generality, similarly named, have their being by participating in those Ideals.

Notes

universal. καθόλου.

physis. φύσις. The usual translation here is 'Nature' as if 'the natural world' - and the physical cosmos beyond - are meant. According to my understanding of Aristotle, that is wrong. For, given that in Book 5, 1014b-1015a [φύσις λέγεται ἓνα μὲν τρόπον ἢ τῶν φυομένων γένεσις οἷον εἴ τις ἐπεκτείνας λέγοι τὸ ὑ ἓνα δὲ ἐξ οὗ φύεται πρῶτου τὸ φύομενον ἐνυπάρχοντος...] Aristotle describes in some detail the various meanings of *physis*, it is logical to assume that he is here probably using the term ontologically as described there. Hence a transliteration is preferable.

Thus, my understanding is that Aristotle is here critical of Socrates and Plato because - in their pursuit of abstractive definitions - they neglected *physis*: that is, neglected being *and* the potentiality of being to 'change' as in and for example (a) the motion (of 'things') and (b) the 'natural unfolding' or growth that living beings demonstrate.

percipient (things). αἰσθητός. Usually translated 'sensible' (things/entities), but *qv.* Book Three, 999b [εἰ μὲν οὖν μηδέν ἐστι παρὰ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα οὐθὲν ἂν εἶη νοητὸν ἀλλὰ πάντα αἰσθητὰ καὶ exist ἐπιστήμη οὐδενός εἰ μὴ τις εἶναι λέγει τὴν αἴσθησιν ἐπιστήμην] where it is clear that Aristotle means percipient/perceivation. [*qv.* also Book One, 980a - πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει σημεῖον δ' ἢ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἀγάπησις.]

The distinction - between percipient (a person who perceives) and sensible (perceptible by the senses) - may be subtle, but in my view is important for one relates to a person while the other relates to 'types of being' perceived. Hence why Aristotle goes on to mention the reason for Plato conjecturing his 'theory of forms' - because, according to Plato, individual percipients have changing and variable perceivations of 'sensible things'.

undoubtedly liable to change. ἀεὶ γε μεταβαλλόντων. For ἀεὶ as the more subtle 'liable to', 'subject to' (change) - rather than the bland 'always' - *qv.*

Heraclitus Fragment 1 and Herodotus Book 2, 98.

Forms. ἰδέα. Since Plato often used ἰδέα and εἶδος interchangeably, 'idea'/'ideals' is also a suitable translation here, whence εἶδος as used by Aristotle would be 'form' rather than an 'ideal'.

For the generality, similarly named, have their being by participating in those Ideals. κατὰ μέθεξιν γὰρ εἶναι τὰ πολλὰ ὁμώνυμα τοῖς εἶδεσιν.

A rather obscure passage, which Aristotle goes on to explain is because Plato himself was rather vague in respect of what he meant by 'participation' (μέθεξις).

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Some Notes on Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 5, 1015a

Text

ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἡ πρώτη φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἡ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἢ αὐτά: ἡ γὰρ ὕλη τῷ ταύτης δεκτικῇ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσει ὄντων αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐνυπάρχουσα πῶς ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ.

Translation

Given the foregoing, then principally - and to be exact - *physis* denotes the quidditas of beings having change inherent within them; for *substantia* has been denoted by *physis* because it embodies this, as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are changes predicated on it. For *physis* is inherent change either manifesting the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is.

Commentary And Notes

physis. φύσις. A transliteration, since (i) this is a fundamental philosophical principle/term that requires contextual interpretation, and (ii) the English words 'nature' and Nature not only do not adequately describe this principle but also lead to and have led to certain misunderstandings of Aristotle in particular and of classical Greek culture in general.

quidditas. οὐσία. Quidditas - post-classical Latin, from whence the English word 'quiddity' - is more appropriate here than 'essence', given the metaphysical (ontological) context and given that 'essence' now has so many non-philosophical connotations. An interesting alternative would be the scholastic term *haecceity*. As with *physis*, *quidditas* is a philosophical term which requires contextual interpretation.

change ment inherent. The expression ἀρχὴν κινήσεως is crucial to understanding what Aristotle means in respect of physis. In regard to κίνησις, since Aristotle here does not mean 'motion' or 'movement' in the sense of Newtonian physics (with its causal concepts of force, mass, velocity, kinetic energy), and since such physical movement is what the English words 'motion' and 'movement' now most usually denote, then alternatives must be found. Hence the translation 'change ment'.

For what Aristotle is describing here is 'change', as for example in the natural development, the unfolding, the growth, of some-thing living that occurs because it is living; because it is possessed of Life and which Life is the ἀρχή of the change ment, the 'original being' (the φύσις) from whence being-becomes to be often perceived and classified by us in orderly ways.

What is described is an a-causal change, of being-becoming - of being unfolding - and thus fulfilling the potentiality of being within it. Hence why here Aristotle writes ἀρχὴν κινήσεως, which describes the potential change ment inherent in certain beings. ¹ That is, the a-causal origin of beings-becoming, or having become, and which beings (having changed, developed, unfolded) we then perceive and classify in orderly ways ², such as by shape or usefulness to us, or by a notion such as causality: in terms of physical- 'movement'. Which is why, in Aristotle, there is a relation between φύσις, μορφή, and εἶδος - εἶδος in the sense of 'perceivation' and not, as in Plato, denoting an abstract 'form' or an 'ideal' - διὸ καὶ ὅσα φύσει ἔστιν ἢ γίγνεται, ἤδη ὑπάρχοντος ἐξ οὗ πέφυκε γίγνεσθαι ἢ εἶναι, οὐπω φαμέν τὴν φύσιν ἔχειν ἐὰν μὴ ἔχη τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὴν μορφήν.

Thus φύσις is what is a-causal in beings and which acausality is the origin of the 'natural' order that unfolds because of the potentiality of being to become, to presence in the causal, whence to be perceived by us in various orderly arrangements and/or arranged in terms of usefulness, and which arrangements/usefulness include τὸ καλόν - and thus schemata, τάξις ³ - and ἀρετή.

substantia. ὕλη. I have chosen to use the etymon of the English word 'substance' - σν. substantia in Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Metaphysicae* - to again (i) emphasize the need for contextual interpretation in respect of a specific philosophical term, and (ii) to avoid whatever misunderstandings may arise from the modern (non-ontological) connotations of words such as 'matter' and 'substance'.

as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are change ments predicated on it. καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. The sense of γένεσις here implies a 'coming-into-being' rather than just 'generation', just as φύω implies a being 'burgeoning' - unfolding, revealing itself (its physis) - rather than just 'growing'.

the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is. The Greek word ἐντελεχεία is compounded from ἐν ελει ἔχει and the sense here - in relation to ἐνυπάρχουσα - seems to be twofold: of a being as an unchanged being, and of what a being has become (or is becoming) as a

result of a change, for both types of being actually exist, are real. One exists as a being as it is and has remained, and one exists as the being it has become (or is in the process of becoming) through the potential for change inherent within it. Thus, for Aristotle, *physis* denotes the being of both types of being.

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[1] In respect of ἀρχὴ as implying what is primarily inherent, *qv.* 1012b-1013a.

[2] As Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Sciendum est autem, quod principium et causa licet sint idem subiecto, differunt tamen ratione. Nam hoc nomen principium ordinem quemdam importat; hoc vero nomen causa, importat influxum quemdam ad esse causati." *Sententia libri Metaphysicae*, liber 5, lectio 1, n 3.

[3] Regarding 1078a, τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ μέγιστα εἶδη τάξις καὶ συμμετρία καὶ τὸ ὠρισμένον (the most noticeable expressions of *kalos* are *schemata* and harmony and consonancy), my view - given the context - is that τάξις here is best translated as "schemata", rather than "order" or "arrangement" both of which are vague, open to mis-interpretation, and unrelated to the context, which context is mathematical beauty. Similarly, ὀρίζω (to me) suggests consonancy, echoing as that (now somewhat obscure) English word does both by its use by, among others, Shakespeare (*Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene 2, 286) and also by its relation to the almost 'mathematical beauty' of some music (as evident for example in the counterpoint of JS Bach).

Furthermore, just because the Greek has συμμετρία it does not necessarily follow that the English word 'symmetry' is an appropriate translation, considering how the word symmetry is now used and has been used, in the West for many centuries, and especially in relation to art (in terms, for example, of objects and the human body).

Given that Aristotle in 1078a is referring to geometry in particular and mathematics in general, then an appropriate translation is 'harmony' - as in "a collation of representative signs or marks, so arranged that they exhibit their agreement and account for their discrepancies or errors." A harmony, in other words, that is most evident (as I mentioned in my essay) in Euclid's *Elements*, as *schemata* and consonancy are therein evident, most of the contents (theorems) of which book - deriving from people such as Pythagoras - were known to Aristotle.

Thus, a translation such as "the chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness" can in my opinion lead to projecting onto Aristotle what he may not necessarily have meant; and projecting onto in respect of how we now, over two thousand years after Aristotle, understand and use such common English terms. Hence, also, why I sometimes use obscure English words (which may suggest a relevant meaning) or

transliterations (as in physis).

An Appreciation Of Acausality

The classical appreciation of acausality - and thus an important metaphysical difference between the classical and the Christian approach - is perhaps best illustrated by stark examples of communal sacrifice of an individual or individuals undertaken in order to try and re-establish the natural balance and thus bring good fortune for a community and dispel whatever misfortune has befallen them or may befall them.

As described in both classical myth and in the Agamemnon of Aeschylus, Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia:

ἔτλα δ' οὖν
θυτῆρ γενέσθαι θυγατρός,
γυναικοπόινων πολέμων ἄρωγὰν
καὶ προτέλεια ναῶν.
λιτὰς δὲ καὶ κληδόνας πατρώους
παρ' οὐδὲν αἰῶ τε παρθένειον
ἔθεντο φιλόμαχοι βραβῆς [...]

τὰ δ' ἔνθεν οὔτ' εἶδον οὔτ' ἐννέπω:
τέχνη δὲ Κάλχαντος οὐκ ἄκραντοι.
Δίκα δὲ τοῖς μὲν παθοῦσ-
ιν μαθεῖν ἐπιρρέπει:
τὸ μέλλον δ', ἐπεὶ γένοιτ', ἄν κλύοις: πρὸ χαιρέτω:
ἴσον δὲ τῷ προστένειν.

So he dared
To become the sacrificer of his daughter
To aid a battle to avenge a woman
By so consecrating the ships.
Her warning of 'Father!', her supplications,
Her virgin state - were counted as nothing
By those commanders lusting for battle [...]

I did not see, and do not speak of, what followed these things.
But the art of Calchas was not so incomplete:
The goddess, Judgement, favours someone learning from adversity.
But I shall hear of what will be, after it comes into being:
Before then, I leave it,
Otherwise, it is the same as a premature grieving.

(Agamemnon, vv. 224-230, 248-250)

For this sacrifice and for other deeds, Agamemnon himself is later killed by his wife, Clytemnestra, who describes the sacrifice (v. 1420) of her beloved

child as a pollution, and which pollution of the numinous could - according to custom - only be removed by the shedding of blood, usually and if possible that of the perpetrator. [1]

Centuries later, Plutarch and Livy recounted how Fabius Maximus, Pontifex of Rome, had - following the defeat of the Roman army by Hannibal at the battle of Cannae - sanctioned the sacrifice of a disgraced Vestal Virgin by having her buried alive (*stupri compertae et altera sub terra, uti mos est, ad portam Collinam necata fuerat*, according to Livy, Book XXII). This particular sacrifice - and other sacrifices - seemed, unlike the sacrifice made by Agamemnon, to be successful since Hannibal did not attack Rome and was later defeated by Scipio Africanus at the battle of Zama.

Why the apparent disparity in the outcome to two similar acts of propitiation? Because such disparity - such a manifestation of acausality, of the intuition of there being no absolutely determinable or pre-determined causal outcome to a mortal deed - is an essential if somewhat neglected and rather obscure aspect of the classical pagan *weltanschauung*; an aspect described mythologically by Sophocles in *Antigone*, 1338:

ὥς πεπρωμένης οὐκ ἔστι θνητοῖς συμφορᾶς ἀπαλλαγῆ.

Mortals cannot be delivered from the misfortunes of their fate

Philosophically, it was described in a fragment (80, Diels-Kranz) attributed to Heraclitus:

εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα ξυνόν καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ' ἔριν καὶ χρεῶν

One should be aware that Polemos pervades, with discord δίκη, and that beings are naturally born by discord.

Also by Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 5, 1015a,

καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσει ὄντων αὕτη ἐστίν,
ἐνυπάρχουσα πῶς ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ

For physis is inherent change either manifesting the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is.

That is, there is no perfect, outside agency or primal cause which consciously and in a cause-and-effect manner directs such change:

ὥστε ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνέργεια, μακαριότητι διαφέρουσα, θεωρητικὴ ἂν εἴη: καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων δὲ ἡ ταύτη συγγενεστάτη εὐδαιμονικωτάτη. σημείον δὲ καὶ τὸ μὴ μετέχειν τὰ λοιπὰ ζῶα εὐδαιμονίας. *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book X) 1178b.22

Therefore the activity of theos, excelling others in bliss, is wordless-awareness [*θεωρέω*] and the nearest thing to that among mortals arises from good-fortune [*εὐδαιμονία*]. *Nicomachean*

In modern metaphysical terms, there is a mortal apprehension that Being, and certain beings, are not or cannot be subject to, nor explainable, in terms of causality, in terms of *a* cause having *a* particular effect. Nor explained in terms of there being a primal cause which causes all effects. [2] However, such a belief in causality is the *raison d'etre* of all religions and doctrines which posit a primal cause (such as an omnipotent creator-God) who brings-into-being and who governs and determines the changes, the changement - the *polemos*, the Destiny, the fate, the fortunes, the *wyrd* - of mortals and other beings.

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[1] An often unappreciated aspect of the drama is the defiance and strength shown by Clytemnestra, who is described as a "woman with a man's resolve" (v. 11), who presents herself as a "most ancient fierce Avenger," (1499) and who says, after her killing of Agamemnon, that only "he who can overcome me in a fight will command me." (1423)

[2] In a simplified way and in terms of *mythos*, this lack of a pre-determinable outcome - a lack of one primal causation - can be understood as the divergence of opinion and deeds among the classical gods in respect of mortals, with an apposite example occurring in *The Odyssey* with the goddess Athena supporting and helping Odysseus while Poseidon was unrelenting in his rage at Odysseus. In addition Zeus, Chief among the gods, does not act unilaterally in respect of Odysseus but - in typical Hellenic fashion - says to Athena (Book I, vv. 76-77) that there will a gathering of the gods in order to consider the matter of his return to his home, ἀλλ' ἄγεθ' ἡμεῖς οἶδε περιφραζώμεθα πάντες νόστον.

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