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First Principles and the Beginning of Philosophy

St. Andrews, 1977

Ancient Metaphysics did not rest content with describing and classifying reality, but rather aimed, conceiving it as its primary task, at explaining reality (i.e. what there is in whatever way).

All explanation presupposes in general the explained fact and the explaining ground. The fact to be explained is what at each level of reality and at each stage of explanation is taken for granted, is considered as given. An explaining ground can itself become the given fact requiring to be explained by a further explaining ground. The given fact and the explaining ground can thus coincide in one and the same (numerically) reality: such a reality explains an "inferior" reality, and itself asks for an explanation.

The above is part of the "logic" of explanation. What that "logic" further requires is something which can serve as the basis on which the whole process of explanation can be instituted – and this is what we may call immediately given. The immediately given presents the matter, as it were, on which the operations of explanation are to be performed. It bounds the explanatory chain from below.

By being, ex definitione, the lower terminus in the ontological series required by explanation (taken seriously), the immediately given has its reality epistemologically prior to that of anything else. It is given as posited in reality; its reality is not arrived at by way of explanation in the first place [1], but provides the basis (to be distinguished from the ground) for the operation of all explanation.

The immediately given for ancient philosophy was the World, this World as including all the multifarious physical and psychical "facts". This was the Great Fact whose reality was indubitable as immediately given, but whose "raison d' être", whose λόγος, reason was hidden, not given at all. The task Philosophy set

to itself was to uncover that hidden, unknown reason and ground of the World's reality [2].

Philosophy then was seeking for an explanation of this World. And since no explanation could satisfy the Greek mind if it was of such a nature as not to silence further inquiries, i.e. if it was such as to intrinsically "ask" for its own explanation [3]; it came to pass that Greek philosophy was right from the beginning conceived as the quest for ultimate explanation, that is for an explanation in which the reason could abide unperturbed, without intellectual disquietude, profoundly satisfied, as it were, in the unrippled contemplation of the revealed mystery, the ultimate ground of everything.

This craving for ultimate explanation, for reaching a ground upon which Reason can freely, so to speak, rest by abnegating its fundamental drive to ask for the reason of anything pro-posed, seems to me to constitute the main operative force in the workings of any Greek metaphysical system; and this is true par excellence in the case of all Neoplatonic systems [4]. It should be remarked in this connection that such a leading demand for ultimate explanation is common to both metaphysical-transcendent and "physical"-immanent types of system [5].

Desire for ultimate explanation is then the prior motive. When such explanations have been attempted again and again with divergent, indeed opposing results, and when as a consequence of such repeated, varied attempts the complexity of the structure of reality is seen more and more clearly, a new desire is superadded to the primary one indissolubly linked with it henceforth: the desire for systematic explanation, for the representation of the totality, if possible, of the articulated network of reality as it objectively is. Hence the systematical character of the various Greek (meta)physical systems [6].

If I am right in emphasizing and brining to the forefront the overwhelming importance of this desire for ultimate and complete [7] explanation; and if, therefore, the question of this ultimate explanation, completely articulated, is the crucial one against which, as against the all-supporting background, all other

questions are to be seen, examined and answered; then this question constitutes the vantage point from which we must study any given Greek philosophy (in the present sense) in order to truly understand it.

The question as to the ultimate Principle in any given system resolves itself into two distinct questions:

1) What is it to be an ultimate principle and

2) What is (are) the ultimate principle(s).

Question (1) is further subdivided into its two moments:

1a) What is to be a principle, and

1b) What is it to be ultimate.

(1a) asks for the specification according to the philosophy in question of the mode of dependence in the dependence-relationship of the ontological posterior to its prior, of the explained fact to the explaining ground. For instance is the inferior caused by the superior, and if so, in what sense? Is it produced or created or generated by it? Is it merely dependent, and in what way? And so on. Al these distinct modes of dependence have themselves to be clearly defined as well.

(1b) asks for the character of the ultimate as such, for that in it which quenches the thirst of Reason to ask “Why?” in its case. We ask here for the most fundamental of all philosophical questions; what characteristic is that which can satisfy reason [8] about its self-explainability or, better, unexplainability. We are searching now for the upper boundary of the chain of ontological explanation, for its character as absolutely given in complete transparency to reason. For the basic given from which we start the explanatory quest is opaque to reason, it is conceived in darkness, it involves a master-mystery.

(1b) asks for the abstract conception of ontological ultimacy; (2) asks for that which satisfies that abstract conception, for the reality realizing it. Similarly, (1a) asks for the abstract nature of the dependence, according to each examined theory, or of the “explanation” (ontological always) of the explained by the

explaining; to such a question about what it is to explain ontologically there corresponds question (3):

3) How does (do) the posited ultimate principle(s) actually work in explaining the given?

It is we who divide (1a) and (1b) on the one hand from questions (2) and (3) on the other. For the ancients there is no such separation between them; nay there can be no such separation. Abstractly conceptual and real, rationalistic and empirical had not been divided as antagonistic. On the contrary: inquiries into the realms of abstract reality are to be based on what is concretely given; and true understanding of the given is effected through its systematic subsumption under the abstract; demands of reason do not really oppose empirically verified realities but rather explain them and their possibility [9]. Still, it is convenient for us to divide in the above way.

A final remark: If the theory examined is sufficiently complicated by positing various levels of reality, then questions (1a) and (3) may have to be divided into a number of questions asking the same things with respect to the various levels. But this is to be faced and analyzed in the cases where it actually occurs.

THE FIRST MAJOR STEP

At the beginnings of metaphysical speculation thinkers and philosophers were likely to tackle the problem of the first principle(s) in a rather simple way; "simple" from a purely philosophical point of view; but perhaps they were guided by some deep-seated religious ideas in the first place, or, at least, in conjunction with inchoate and faltering philosophical reasoning still imbued in the symbolic mode of thinking.

The "simple" way I have in mind is something like this: attentively and with a fresh eye (i.e. discarding commonly held prejudices) to look around in the world; to try to find some common patterns or some universal condition in the multifarious changes that occur in it (and the World presents itself as in change, wherein something new is produced out of the old); to generalize the pattern and condition observed in cosmic diversity, variability and mutability into the general law of the World; to conclude accordingly as to the World's ultimate ground.

Now a pervading pattern in cosmic changes is – transformation [10]. The newly produced seems to come out of the destroyed; the latter gives its place to the former, is transformed into the former. Philosophically, transformation can be defined as follows: A is transformed into B if B comes out of A and A is retained in B neither as a distinct element nor even as a moment [11]. B's generation is eo ipso A's destruction.

But transformation in this sense, as occurring in organic life constitutes the metaphysical foundation of development and growth (the pattern of the seed or germ and the subsequent stages in the evolution of a plant or animal). Thus

transformation and development seem to be the universal law of nature animate and inanimate.

It is this line of thought which may have been, I conjecture, Thales' response to question (1a) – as distinct in theory from question (3) – in so far as purely philosophical considerations were operating in the formation of his views. (For a possible religious side of his ideas something will be said afterwards).

It is important, before proceeding, to emphasize the specific nature of the above account. This can best be done by comparing it to Aristotle's account Metaphysica, A.3. 983b7-27. Aristotle in effect identifies Thales' notion of "principle" with his own conception of matter (ultimate material cause), and considers this latter to have been the guiding idea (not clearly perceived of course) τῶν πρώτων φιλοσοφησάντων – Ionian philosophers mainly presumably. Now Aristotle's notion of ὕλη, as evolved in Physica, Book A, can be summarily expressed as τὸ ἐξ οὗ ὑπομένοντος. Both moments are essential to it: ὕλη is that out of which something is generated or made and which is preserved within the product as one of its fundamental elements or components. In fact, in that Book, Aristotle distinguishes two senses of the ἐξ οὗ, one being the above mentioned, while the other being that out of (or from) which something comes but without being retained in this latter, in the product. (See for instance 190a9-13. But this is one of his main and fertile ideas there which he employs, among a multitude of subjects, also in his analysis of early natural philosophy. He further specifically identifies this ἐξ οὗ οὐχ ὑπομένοντος with his στέρησις – the significance of which will again appear later).

Now this is precisely how not to conceive Thales' position. The Aristotelian conceptual apparatus does not yield a true analysis of Thales' insight. His view seems clearly to be rather the one which would only conceive of a principle (absolute or relative and particular) as the ἐξ οὗ οὐχ ὑπομένοντος – without of course thereby being committed to identifying it with στέρησις. Thus, correspondingly, the Thalean ultimate ground would be that out of which everything mediately or immediately is generated, and which by giving rise to

that which comes out of (or from) it “annihilates” itself to the extent that something else comes into being in its place. When water is transformed into air, no water remains there and then. The idea that it remains potentially in the air, is totally anachronistic, in that it presupposes the Aristotelian elaborate and technical distinction between δυνάμει and ἐνεργείᾳ, not to be ascribed to Thales on any count, not even as a prefiguration. The possibility of air being turned back vice versa into water, depends on its having come into being from, and as a product (out) of water: water then appears in its place since it is the ultimate reality. The same holds in organic development, with the seed giving rise to the plant. The seed is not preserved in the evolution of the organic being, but it comes again back as its offspring, in the fruit of the plant or the semen of the animal. This, I reckon, is the simpler, “naïve” and unsophisticated way of taking the phenomena of change.

It follows that, if I am right, we cannot strictly say in any significantly valid sense that earth is “essentially” water for Thales, or that its “substance” is water.

If asked to substantiate my contention, I cannot, evidently appeal to any writing of Thales – the only conclusive proof that might have determined the matter. But nor can I allow for conclusions to be based on Aristotelian premises and Aristotelianly coloured testimony. Evidence, scanty as it is, which does not bear the obvious marks of Aristotelian conceptual apparatus and doctrine can be interpreted either way.

Perhaps I could refer to and invoke Thales DK11 A13a (“Aetius” apud Stobaeus, Eclogae, I, XVII (I p.152.4-5Wachsmuth): Θαλῆς καὶ οἱ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ κράσεις εἶναι τὰς τῶν στοιχείων μίξεις κατ’ ἀλλοίωσιν. How is the statement to be construed? Is κράσεις or μίξεις the subject? The idiomatic flow of the sentence would rather favour the second alternative. But we have to do with a doxographical piece. And the sense requires that κράσεις are such mixtures of elements that involve the transformation of the mixed into something new (τρέπεσθαι is the term often used in later conceptual articulations to refer innocuously enough to such processes). Κατ’ ἀλλοίωσιν expresses precisely this

latter defining condition, that the elements entering into a mixture change their nature in the case of a unifying blending temperament (κράσις). And this is the crucial point, in whatever way it might be expressed so as to effectively capture its original, "naïve", unsophisticated pregnancy. One could even take μίξεις as the grammatical subject, understand the intended meaning being about any composition of elements yielding a novel thing, and define it as a temperament κατ' ἀλλοίωσιν, through alteration.

But there is no need of such looser expedients. For what follows in Stobaeus makes the former construction indisputable. <οἱ περὶ Ἀναξαγόραν καὶ Δημόκριτον> τὰς κράσεις κατὰ παράθεσιν γίγνεσθαι τῶν στοιχείων. And indeed homoiomeries and atoms do not change in themselves when entering into the varying mixtures and configurations that make up the different things of this world; blending of the elements is a question really of certain collocations of them, their temperance is κατὰ παράθεσιν. Further, the third lemma in this Stobaean chapter is still on the same question, namely how the elements are compounded and composed in the making of the things.

Now the doxography is about the view that even the elements are composed of subelementary particles, whose particular collocations and concatenations constitute the body of the elements, while things are similarly configured from the elements. Ἐμπεδοκλῆς καὶ Ξενοκράτης ἐκ μικροτέρων ὄγκων τὰ στοιχεῖα συγκρίνει, ἅπερ ἐστιν ἐλάχιστα καὶ οἱονεὶ στοιχεῖα στοιχείων. The statement refers to the Empedoclean theory of the pores [cf. Apostolos Pierrris, "Ὅμοιον Ὁμοίῳ and the Δίνη: Nature and Function of Love and Strife in the Empedoclean System", in Apostolos L. Pierris (ed.), The Empedoclean Κόσμος: Structure, Process and the Question of Cyclicity, Proceedings of the Symposium Philosophiae Antiquae Tertium Myconense, July 6th – 13th, 2003, Patras, 2005, pp. 189 – 224, esp. pp. 190sqq.] and Xenocrates' doctrine of the ἄτομοι γραμμαί constitutive of the four elements. Finally, the fourth item in the first section of the Stobaean chapter under discussion, belongs to the same doxographical unity as well: how things are constituted and (correspondingly) how do they change

into one another. Now it is Plato's theory (in Timaeus) that is referred to: Πλάτων τὰ μὲν τρία σώματα τρεπτὰ εἰς ἄλληλα, πῦρ ἀέρα ὕδωρ. τὴν δὲ γῆν εἴς τι τούτων ἀμετάβλητον. There can be no doubt about the meaning of the entire section in general and of the force of the expression κατ' ἀλλλοίωσιν in Thales' doxography in particular. The expression exactly corresponds to τρεπτά in the Platonic lemma and, negatived, to the ἀμετάβλητον there. It signifies transfiguration, transformation, transubstantiation.

The proposed construal and interpretation of A13a is further confirmed by an exactly parallel formulation in a doxographical piece about Zeno the Stoic, that comes from the same Stobaean chapter [12]. Now the important phrase is the qualification μεταβολῇ, corresponding to the former κατ' ἀλλοίωσιν.

And since we are treading now Stoic ground, in this context I would interpret those phrases so as to signify the same thing which Chrysippus meant by σύγχυσις (v. SVF II 471 = Stobaeus, caput cit., p. 154.8-155.14). The Chrysippean theory of corporeal composition is here expounded, a theory that came to prevail as mainstream Stoic doctrine (v. SVF II 470). A distinction between παράθεσις, μῖξις, κρᾶσις and σύγχυσις is explicated in physical terms. The last mentioned type of composition is then described thus, Stobaeus, loc. cit. p.155.11sqq. : τὴν δὲ σύγχυσιν δύο <ἥ> καὶ πλειόνων ποιοτήτων περὶ τὰ σώματα μεταβολὴν εἰς ἑτέρας διαφερούσης τούτων ποιότητος γένεσιν, ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς συνθέσεως ἔχει τῶν μύρων καὶ τὼν ἰατρικῶν φαρμάκων. [The same general theory and the same particular account about "fusion" (σύγχυσις) in SVF II 472 (Philo) and 473 (Alexander Aphrodisiensis)]. My point is further strengthened by what is contrastingly said about the Chrysippean crasis; p.154.21-23: κρᾶσιν δὲ εἶναι λέγουσι (sc. the Stoics following Chrysippus) δύο ἥ καὶ πλειόνων σωμάτων ὑγρῶν δι' ὅλων ἀντιπαρέκτασιν τῶν περὶ αὐτὰ ποιοτήτων ὑπομενουσῶν, where ὑπομενουσῶν I take to contrast in sense rather nicely with our κατ' ἀλλοίωσιν of the Thales piece).

It is clear that before Chrysippus the Stoic doctrine of composition comprised a κρᾶσις that was the Chrysippean σύγχυσις. We can see even the

reason for this: they did not differentiate between μῖξις and κρᾶσις basically in terms of whether the particular kind of composition applied to solids or liquids, which variation is the point of Chrysippus' relative distinction (v. SVF II 471 – 3). So the Chrysippean κρᾶσις is included in the pre-Chrysippean and ordinary μῖξις.

If such an interpretation of A13a as the above is correct, then the passage is saying that for Thales and the early Ionian philosophers mixtures of elements give something distinct from the elements themselves; the latter coalesce by losing their identity in giving rise to the new product. By implication then the same might be expected to hold good in the production of one element out of another, and ultimately, in Thales' case, in the production of anything out of Water.

But, nonetheless, I am laying no very special or conclusive weight on this piece of possible evidence [13]. I would rather appeal:

a) to the intrinsic probabilities of the case

b) to how well the contending accounts fit in a coherent scheme of the philosophical development during the whole period to which the philosopher in question organically belongs

c) to the relative consonance of the different interpretations with phenomena and developments in other but neighbouring and intrinsically connected fields.

As to (a), I take it that it rather favours the view I am propounding [14]. This accredits Thales with a basic and constitutional idea able to justify his unanimously agreed position as father of Greek philosophical speculation, without ascribing to him the fatherhood of the Aristotelian conception of matter. (Although, still, he may be considered its προπάτωρ!). The driving idea is that of transformation from a first principle: it is grounded on the fundamental metaphysical Greek experience of the world as of an orderly field of unceasing variegation in space and time.

With respect to (b), the sequel will provide the materials for a correct judgment. I shall undertake it on another occasion.

Here I may develop a little theme (c); which will provide an opportunity to hint at the possible religious side of the first philosophical speculations.

I proposed above to construe Thales' fundamental mode of derivation (of things from the first principle) [15] as transformation – in the unsophisticated and non-technical sense of the term in which we may apply it to one of the two categories of pervasive change observed in the World around us. Change, that is, consisting either in an alteration in the state of existence of a certain thing or in the generation of a new thing out of another [16], I intend to signify the latter type of general change by "transformation" or "transubstantiation" – inadequate as these terms are if taken so as to import their technical philosophical connotations. As contrasted to the former mode, in which a certain thing undergoes change in its attributes (remaining the thing that it is), we have in the latter a thing giving, as it were, its place to another thing (literally, the position of the Platonic Timaeus, obtained after a former Pythagorean elaboration of the original conceptual experience): the one passes away and is destroyed, the other comes to be and will exist in the former's place; nothing is preserved in this transaction (but space, in Timaeus, significantly).

This is my hypothesis; and this we find to be the natural and obvious interpretation of Heracleitus' B36: ψυχῆισιν θάνατος ὕδωρ γενέσθαι, ὕδατι δὲ θάνατος γῆν γενέσθαι, ἐκ γῆς δὲ ὕδωρ γίνεται, ἐξ ὑδατος δὲ ψυχή. (Cf. B76). From earth water is made – and thus it is death for the water to become earth; and similarly for the pair ὕδωρ-ψυχή. What is more, the fragment is coupled by Clement (Strom. VI 2, 17, 1-2) with Orphic Fr. 226 (Kern) [17] where the idea is clearly enunciated: in the generation of some-thing out of something else, that out of which the new comes "dies". Notice especially the pregnant words ἀμοιβή and ἀνταμοιβή, exchange, change one with another, interchange. The first, in Heracleitus A5 I, p. 145.14-5 (from Simplicius; the same phrase in Diogenes Laertius, DK I, p. 141.18; ultimately from Theophrast, Φυσικῶν Δοξῶν, 1, p.475.18 Diels, Doxographi Graeci) : πυρὸς γὰρ ἀμοιβήν εἶναί φησιν Ἡράκλειτος πάντα. Obviously these are the ipsissima verba of the "dark" philosopher;

strangely they are not found among the literal fragments in series B. Cf. also I p.190.21 (Heracleitus apud Lucianum, in Vita Auctorum, 14. And in the Heracleitean Hippocratic, de victu, I, 5 = I p. 182.13. And Heracleitus, Allegoriae, 43). In any case, Heracleitus used also the compound word ἀνταμοιβή; B90: πυρός τε ἀνταμοιβή τὰ πάντα καὶ πῦρ ἁπάντων ὅκωσπερ χρυσοῦ χρήματα καὶ χρημάτων χρυσός. The idea of "this in place or instead of that" is emphasized (in exchange or in recompense of, as in economic exchange, in buying and selling through the medium of money) [18].

Mention and co-implication of the Orphic fragment sets us on the road to the religious beginnings of philosophical thought. We may start by asking why it was Water that was pronounced by Thales as the first principle (answer to question (2) above). Aristotle (Metaphysica, A3, 983b17 sqq.) and, following him, Theophrast (Phys. Opin. fr. 1 Diels, Doxographi Graeci, pp.475 sqq.– apud Simplicium, Comm. In Phys. 23.21) [19] suggest reasons which are evidently inadequate as such, being rather of the nature of hints towards or, at most, confirmations of a view drawn from elsewhere. Aristotle himself, quasi-accidentally, seems to supply the source: the πρῶτοι θεολογήσαντες, the θεολόγοι before the φιλόσοφοι in stricter sense.

Homer is repeatedly mentioned in antiquity as upholding the view that the first principle is watery in nature [20]. Ilias, Ξ 201:

Ὠκεανόν τε, θεῶν γένεσιν, καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν,

and Ξ 246

Ὠκεανοῦ, ὅς περ γένεσις πάντεσσι τέτυκται.

(Aristotle – loc cit. – adds a reference to various passages where Στύξ is referred to as ὅρκος θεῶν, arguing thus: τιμιώτατον μὲν γὰρ τὸ πρεσβύτατον, ὅρκος δὲ τὸ τιμιώτατόν ἐστιν. Again, that is, a confirmation of the ontological primacy of water. Styx was itself having its sources in the Great Ocean).

The force of the claim in the second verse regarding Ocean as the universal originator (γένεσις πάντεσσιν) was perhaps considered excessive by

Crates (teste Plutarcho, de facie in orbem lunae, 24), who as a result thought, among other things, probably of mitigating it by interpolating verse 246a:

ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ θεοῖς, πλείστην δ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἴησιν.

But the point is precisely that we have to do with a worldview which makes Ocean and Tethys the original creative pair in place of the standard Heaven and Earth of Hesiodean orthodoxy. The difference between the two accounts is further accentuated by the fact that Homer seems in fact to uphold the commoner, and Hesiodean, acceptation of the Titans as being procreated by the Heaven – Earth couple (E 898). On the other hand, but in the same direction, we find in this very same Iliadic episode, to which vv. 201 and 246 belong, also the preeminence of Night affirmed unequivocally in the strongest manner; Zeus himself stands in awe of her majesty:

ἄζετο γὰρ (sc. Zeus) μὴ Νυκτὶ θοῇ ἀποθύμια ἔρδοι.

This is a clear early Orphic trait. As is the Oceanic pre-dominance; cf. Plato, Cratylus, 402B: λέγει δέ που καὶ Ὀρφεύς ὅτι

Ὠκεανὸς πρῶτος καλλίρροος ἦρξε γάμοιο,
ὅς ρα κασιγνήτην ὁμομήτορα Τηθὺν ὄπυιεν.

[I have treated the Orphic complex regarding the first principles in "The Monism of Darkness and the Dualism of Limit and Indeterminacy", Chapter 10 of "Mystery and religion", vol. II of The Emergence of Reason from the Spirit of Mystery: An Inquiry into the Origin and nature of Ancient Greek Rationality, pp. 43 – 118.]

There is thus a Homerico-Orphic tradition in Ilias, Ξ, contrasted to the Hesiodic theogony. And this posits a precedence of the watery principle over all the other elements and features of the world, including the basic couple Heaven – Earth. (Although Tethys of the former account probably more than corresponds to the Earth of the latter).

Besides Homer, the Orphic Theology called by Damascius «ἡ κατὰ τὸν Ἱερώνυμον φερομένη καὶ Ἑλλάνικον Ὀρφικὴ θεολογία [21]» posits Water and Earth as the two primeval principles – with a certain precedence assigned to

Water in that the Earth ἐπάγη ἐκ τῆς ἰλύος (substituting ἰλὺς for ὕλη in Damascius I, p. 317.16 with Zoega – v. Kern Fr. 54, critical apparatus – and, before Zoega, with Creuzer as testified by Kopp – v. Ruelle's ed. ad loc. –), which ἰλύς (mud, slime) presumably was dispersed (or dissolved?) in the aboriginal water [22], it came out of the water literally.

It might be said that the relatively later date of the compilation of the Theology in question (at most 5th century B.C. if the identification for Hellanicus is correct), precludes the validity of any inference as to possible religious influences on Thales. But: firstly such compilations did not happen to create new elements; rather, drawing on existing materials (such as written dispersed documents and unwritten tradition), they combined and articulated them in the nexus of a coherent (more or less) account or relation. And secondly: the idea of a watery first principle is a rather common one in diverse religious traditions – for instance in the religion of Egypt, as can be testified quite irrespectively of Greek and Latin testimonies to the same effect [23].

There is thus ample reason for thinking of a possible religious influence on Thales' selection of ὕδωρ as the first principle. The reality of that precisely influence was maintained in antiquity by Zeno the Stoic, from Citium (v. SVF Vol. I Frs. 103, 104, 105). The discernment of this valid (I think) point is vitiated by Stoic insistence on deriving Thales' first principle from the Hesiodic Chaos: hanc quidem Thaletis opinionem (i.e. that ὕδωρ is the first principle) ab Hesiodo putant (i.e. the Stoics, by implication; sunt qui singulis elementis principia adsignarerunt; cf. Fr. 169, vol. I) manare qui dixerit: ἤτοι μὲν πρώτιστα χάος γένετ', αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα. nam Zenon Citieus sic interpretatur, aquam χάος appellatum ἀπὸ τοῦ χέεσθαι. Val. Probus in Virgilii Ecl. (= SVF Fr. 103). Same etymology in Cornutus c. 17: ἔστι δὲ χάος μὲν τὸ πρὸ τῆς διακοσμήσεως γενόμενον ὑγρόν, ἀπὸ τῆς χύσεως οὕτως ὠνομασμένον. And in Philo, de Incorrupt. Mund. 225, 5B (= SVF, II, Fr. 437), where one finds the crucial contrast to Aristotle's interpretation:

Χάος δ᾽ ὁ μὲν Ἀριστοτέλης τόπον οἴεται εἶναι, ὅτι τὸ δεξόμενον ἀνάγκη προϋποιεῖσθαι σώματι, τῶν δὲ Στωϊκῶν ἔνιοι τὸ ὕδωρ, παρὰ τὴν χύσιν τοὔνομα πεποιῆσθαι νομίζοντες [24]. Aristotle's δεξόμενον goes straight back to the Platonic receptacle, the spatial acceptation of "matter" in Timaeus.

That the Hesiodean Chaos is really a first aquatic Principle named after its fluidity or state of flux (dispersion, inability to conserve a given definite shape), may suit the naturalistic allegorical interpretation of Stoicism [25], but does not capture the spirit of the Hesiodean Theogony. For, to begin with, firstly, the first occurrence of a distinctly watery principle in the Hesiodic Theogony is in v. 131:

ἠδέ καὶ ἀτρύγετον πέλαγος τέκεν (sc. ἡ Γαῖα), οἴδματι θῦον,
Πόντον, ἄτερ φιλότητος ἐφιμέρου· αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα
Οὐρανῷ εὐνηθεῖσα τέ κ᾽ Ὠκεανὸν βαθυδίνην etc.

where Πόντος is the Principle of Fluidity as born by Earth alone, without sexual love and coition, the (interior) salt and bitter, pungent sea. Oceanos is by contrast the outer sea encircling the earth, the Water that forms the boundary between Earth and Heaven, and thus generated by their copulation. Not to mention, secondly, the even more important point about the violent allegorization on a very naturalistic basis which, as customary, is evidently in play in the Stoic interpretation [26].

The significance of Chaos as first principle emerges first in Anaximandros. My point was here to indicate the bearing of religious considerations in understanding the first attempts at rationalization on the part of Greek speculation. This bearing was exhibited in our case now as regards the selection of Water as first principle by Thales. Doubtless considerations like those adduced by Aristotle and Theophrastus on behalf of Thales played their important role in selecting and supporting the view in question, though one can perhaps doubt whether they could lead one to it, or suffice to absolutely justify its assertion. But here we come near the core of what I intend to maintain in the end, namely that "Myth" and Reason [27] interact and interpenetrate in the field of ancient speculation.

Interconnection we find also in relation to the respective views as to the mode of derivation of the posterior products from the (first) principle – which was really the reason for the above corroborating development. To anticipate what will be treated more fully elsewhere, the pattern of explanation of that derivation for the “religiously” orientated attempts to understand in a deep sense the world is – generation, taken from actual birth or bringing forth in animals [28]. In this generation we have something coming out of something in the literal sense. And this leaves the source intact; nor can it be thought in this type of coming out of something that the generator is preserved within the generated. The latter may take the place of the former, further and eventually, not on a physical basis (for the former obviously continues in existence), but as regards authority.

Now if we couple the expectation and requirement for a religious foundation of the mode of ontological derivation operating in Thales’ worldview to the fact (as shown) of the religious basis for his choice of first Principle; and if we demand, as we are entitled to, that principle and derivation must be suited one to another, and therefore must form a unified, coherent whole; then the above account of generation physically conceived corresponds closely to what I submitted was Thales’ conception of the derivation in question. The crucial difference being of course that, according to my construal, this latter involved the physical substitution, of the portion of the generating principle which was transformed into the product, by the product [29]. Thus, the primary organic and physical modes of change in the production of something new coalesced at the beginning of philosophy.

In any case we cannot speak at all of Aristotle’s conception of ὕλη in this area.

NOTES

[1] I say “in the first place”, because higher order realities may also be capable of being given immediately to an appropriate apprehending apprehensive faculty or “sense”; but such a sense would need cultivation in order to become able to apprehend them directly, and such cultivation can only be offered by the necessary λογική τριβή in attempts at explanation.

[2] It cannot be sufficiently strongly emphasized that the primacy and dominant character assumed by this World in the above indicated view is entirely epistemological, not in the least ontological. With all its certainty, this World’s reality is the datum by way of constraint rather than of ground, a constraint to be satisfied by the explanation, not the reason on which the explanation rests; it is what ensures that the explanation is not vacuous, not that which makes the explanation operative, as it were.

Connected with the above is the observation that the reality of the world is taken for granted as a mere “brute” fact; nothing is taken for granted as regards its φύσις, nature and constitution. This will really be determined when the true explanation of its fact-hood has been discovered. So, that the immediately given exists and is real is taken for granted; but not what it is that does exist and is real. Which makes my talk of “constraints” above more pregnant.

Finally, it ought to be remarked that the apparent repugnance of certain Schools, like Eleatism, to fit in the above roughly drawn framework is really non-existent. To fully substantiate this would require an account of my view of the ancient Greek philosophical idea of existence and reality, which I have given elsewhere. But this little can be said here, that from a certain viewpoint, the only way to account for the apparent reality of the given is by denying of it real reality. (Compare a modern analogue: Bradley’s philosophy). In any case, both Eleatism and the degrees-of-reality theory (which presupposes in a certain sense

Eleatism) can be given their proper place in the above scheme, when the later has been “realized” or filled with content.

[3] This is of course to give its “formal” character; it does not explain what it is that can perform the required function of, so to speak, self-explainability. But the content was provided differently by different systems; and here I am attempting to sketch a framework within which every ancient metaphysical system can be fitted; such a framework cannot but represent the most general, formal features in which all such systems agree – formal as contrasted to their material (= “contentual”, of content) disagreements.

[4] The same search for the absolutely unconditioned has, it may be said, as a byproduct that peculiar and remarkable indifference of so many ancient philosophers to a properly scientific (in the modern sense) investigation of the World. Classification and description of things in this World is just a (necessary) subservient to the properly philosophical activity – and as such something willingly to be discarded as soon as enough has been collected to provide an adequate starting point for the process of metaphysical explanation and the ascent towards the absolutely ungrounded, the ἀνυπόθετον. Of course the amount of information considered necessary to be gathered from this World varies from philosopher to philosopher, but the disposition to get freed from the study of the “constraint”, if not from the constraint itself, is unmistakable in perhaps most cases. Even philosophers who do seem to display real and genuine interest in a minute, “scientific” observation of this World (Aristotle and Poseidonius may be mentioned here), betray their true priorities both by generally making clear that they undertake their scientific researches for the sake of their philosophical speculations (in the sense I am trying to clarify); i.e. as so many “handles” (λαβαί) for the latter, and by conducting such investigations in the conceptual framework of their philosophical convictions,

wherein lies the essential difference between ancient philosophically-scientific procedures and those of proper modern science.

[5] There was even in ancient times that characteristically “modern” reaction against the “ultra-ultimatism”, on grounds of the paramount danger, inherent in that attitude, of falling into empty hypostatization of the products or requirements of (human) mind – its imaginations (fantastic-mythological realism) or its conceptions (rationalistic realism). The issue, very crucial as it is, will be treated fully elsewhere.

Here I may just refer to the important passage by Xenarchus the Peripatetic apud Emperor Julian’s discourse “On the Mother of Gods” 162A-C, as an early (and misplaced) example of the operations of Ockham’s razor. Julian starts from the given differentiation between matter and inherent form (εἶναί τι λέγομεν ὕλην, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔνυλον εἶδος). This du ality requires a preexisting causal principle over and above it, otherwise we would be driven to a merely chance and accidental co-implication of its two terms in the making of the world order (Julian talks of Epicureanism in this connection). Thus the necessity seems to be unavoidable of postulating a superior intelligible order (the Aristotelian God or νοῦς ἑαυτὸν νοῶν as pure actuality or the Platonic Ideas, the Demiurge, the First Principles etc.)

But not so, says Xenarchus. “ἀλλ’ ὁρῶμεν”, φησὶ περιπατητικός τις ἀγχίνους ὥσπερ ὁ Ξέναρχος, ”τούτων (of the original aforementioned duality) αἴτιον ὂν τὸ πέμπτον καὶ κυκλικὸν σῶμα (the heavenly substance). γελοῖος δὲ καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ὑπὲρ τούτων ζητῶν τε καὶ πολυπραγμονῶν, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Θεόφραστος: ἠγνόησε γοῦν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φωνήν. ὥσπερ γὰρ εἰς τὴν ἀσώματον οὐσίαν ἐλθὼν καὶ νοητὴν, ἔστη μὴ πολυπραγμονῶν τὴν αἰτίαν, ἀλλὰ φὰς “οὕτω ταῦτα πεφυκέναι”, <οὕτως> [addidi] <ἐ>χρῆν [δὲ] (delevi) δήπουθεν καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πέμπτου σώματος τὸ πεφυκέναι ταύτῃ λαμβάνοντα μηκέτι ζητεῖν τὰς αἰτίας, ἵστασθαι δὲ μετ’ αὐτῶν καὶ μὴ πρὸς τὸ ἐκπίπτειν, ὃν μὲν οὐθὲν φύσει καθ’ ἑαυτό, ἔχον δὲ ἄλλως κενὴν ὑπόνοιαν”. Such an attitude was going of course against

the groin of Greek Logos. Who could unperturbedly maintain the ultimate reality of the celestial existence, its absolute self-explainability as a first principle? Xenarchus apparently, for sure. But who else of importance would rather not side with anything like the “ridiculous” Aristotelian position and argument?

[6] The same two characters may be held to be exhibited by most of the systems of modern Philosophy as well, from the Renaissance onwards – with the exception of certain twentieth-century approaches to philosophy. But it seems to me that they rather formally, o,r better, schematically, characterize such systems; the content-specifying context and substantial form are very different. Part of the difference may be expressed by indicating the objectivistic, ontological nature of ancient philosophical thought, with its clear distinction between the ontological and the psychological or epistemological.

[7] This is not really a new characteristic; an explanation could not be really ultimate if it left unexplained a portion, however small, of the given “Fact” to be explained.

[8] Which involves the power to ask for reasons!

[9] Apparent exceptions, like Eleatism, can again be viewed in harmony with this view, through appropriate, only apparently sophistical, treatment. There are also exceptions at the other end of speculative reasoning. I noticed above the Peripatetic Xenarchus and his razor.

The meaning of Poseidonius’ distinction καθ’ ὑπόστασιν / ἐπινοίᾳ (Fr. 92 Edelstein – Kidd) has been unduly vexed. (Cf. e. g. I. G. Kidd, Posidonius, Vol. II (i), The Commentary, pp. 368 – 74). ... διαφέρειν δὲ τὴν οὐσίαν τῆς ὕλης, τὴν <αὐτὴν> οὖσαν κατὰ τὴν ὑπόστασιν, ἐπινοίᾳ μόνον (accepting Hirzel’s addition and construal). The distinction is not that between real and conceptual in the modern European sense of the terms. In existence οὐσία and ὕλη coincide, while

they differ in essential character. Οὐσία ις what substantiates the existent, whereas ὕλη is what underlies its form of existence. The two are the same "thing". The point is similar to the Aristotelian distinction between identical (the same) numerically identical (the same) essentially, between ταὐτὸν ἀριθμῷ / ταὐτὸν λόγῳ or οὐσίᾳ. For instance, the action of the active principle and the corresponding passion of the passive one are one and the same thing in number (they are "one"), but they are two in the account of their being (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας). Thus, e. g., in the case of the cutting of the labourer and the cutting of the thing being cut. –

The Aristotelian distinction with Stoic terminology provided the foundation for the notorious contrast between ὑπόστασις and οὐσία, which played such a dominant role in the development of Christian Dogmatics. – And in any case, the ontological doctrine of the absolute coincidence of logos and world-order is not compromised by arguments against this or that inadequacy of "logical" (in the ancient objectivistic sense of the word) articulation of reality. One thinks archetypically in this connection of Heracleitus, and his affirmation of the sleeping state of private reason.

[10] Or better for the period under question but presupposing the terminology of later developments without some of the implications expressed through them – transubstantiation.

[11] At most it is a moment of the (pre-)history of B, not a moment of B itself.

[12] Stobaeus, Eclogae, I, XVII, 3 (Arius Didymus Fr. Phys. 4, p. 449, H. Diels, Doxographi Graeci) : Ζήνωνα δὲ οὕτως ἀποφαίνεσθαι διαρρήδην (SVF, I, Fr. 102) "τοιαύτην δὲ δείσει εἶναι ἐν περιόδῳ τὴν τοῦ ὅλου διακάσμησιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας, ὅταν ἐκ πυρὸς τροπὴ εἰς ὕδωρ δι' ἀέρος γένηται, τὸ μέν τι ὑφίστασθαι καὶ γῆν συνίστασθαι, [καὶ] ἐκ τοῦ λοιποῦ δὲ τὸ μὲν διαμένειν ὕδωρ, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ

ἀτμιζομένου ἀέρα γίγνεσθαι, ἐκ τινὸς (so the mss., Wachsmuth wrote λεπτυνομένου, which is an improvement, cf. Diogenes Laertius, VII, 142 = Zeno Fr. 102, SVF I, p.28.32) δὲ τοῦ ἀέρος πῦρ ἐξάπτεσθαι, τὴν δὲ μῖξιν κρᾶσιν γίνεσθαι τῇ εἰς ἄλληλα τῶν στοιχείων μεταβολῇ σώματος ὅλου δι' ὅλου τινὸς ἑτέρου διερχομένου. Wachsmuth deleted [μῖξιν], while Diels added <καὶ> between μῖξιν and κρᾶσιν. But there is no need for such remedies: the parallelism to the doxographical piece on Thales shows that mixtures here is the common generic term and κρᾶσις the specific technical. Cf. Chrysippus, Fr. 473.10; 25-6; 28-9. –

And so, still, I think on the whole μίξεις is to be preferred as a subject in Thales A13a, because τῶν στοιχείων can, of course, be taken only with μίξεις, and it is more plausible to say that the mixtures of elements are κράσεις (in a technical perhaps sense) κατ' ἀλλοίωσιν, than that κράσεις are mixtures of στοιχεῖα (why not of compound things as well?) κατ' ἀλλοίωσιν. But this would not be conclusive either by itself. – The crucial point is the concept of μεταβολή, transformative change without residue remaining from the thing changing. Cf. Stobaeus, Eclogae, I, 16c, vol. I, p. 129.7 sqq. = Chrysippus, Fr 413, SVF II, p.136.11sqq.: τὸ δὲ <πῦρ καὶ> κατ' ἐξοχὴν στοιχεῖον λέγεσθαι διὰ τὸ ἐξ αὐτοῦ πρώτου τὰ λοιπὰ συνίστασθαι κατὰ μεταβολὴν καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἔσχατον πάντα χεόμενα διαλύεσθαι, τοῦτο δὲ μὴ ἐπιδέχ εσθαι τὴν εἰς ἄλλο χύσιν ἢ ἀνάλυσιν. Cf. Stobaeus, loc. cit. p.130.2-4. Stobaeus, op. cit., I, XVII, 4, vol. I, p. 155.11Wachsmuth = Chrysippus Fr. 471, SVF II, p.152.24.

[13] The mere fact of the passage being couched in obviously later terminology is not by itself a good reason for absolutely discounting it. (Diels, ad loc., comments: "Solche spätere Terminologie verratende Artikel der Placita über Th. stammen vermutlich aus Poseidonios (! as if nobody else could use the same language!) und sind geschichtlich wertlos"). There are cases where later form means untrustworthy testimony (I have urged for such a view with respect to Aristotle's account above); but there are also other cases where terminology

relatively foreign to the subject at hand formulates, in the technical terms of later times, the substance of a doctrine of former times – there is no reason whatever why this should always be a failure.

In the present case, of course, what is really suspect is the indiscriminative «καὶ οἱ ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ», even though old Ionian philosophers are probably only meant, the ones for whom there is one elementary substance of the world, out of which all other "elements" and further all things come and develop by radical transformation or transubstantiation. And also suspicious sounds the existence of the parallel passage above quoted: Stobaeus, Ecl. I 17, §3 p. 53.3-6 (= SVF, I, p. 28.20) which should be kept, I think, as it stands: τὴν δὲ μῖξιν κρᾶσιν γίγνεσθαι (μῖξιν: subject, κρᾶσιν: predicate) τῇ εἰς ἄλληλα τῶν στοιχείων μεταβολῇ σώματος ὅλου δι᾽ ὅλου τινὸς ἑτέρου διερχομένου. (The ultimate foundation of the possibility of κρᾶσις is the possibility of change from one element to another). This is ascribed explicitly to Zeno – and not anyway to Poseidonius!

As to this later ("middle") Stoicist, his theory of change (Fr. 96 Edelstein – Kidd) is peculiar, and as such will not help in the present connection. Diels was completely off the mark in this. On the other hand, Aristotle's philosophy of change presupposes a conceptual framework which is precisely the point of contention in so far as its applicability to Thales' (and early Ionian) understanding of cosmic origins and mutations is concerned.

[14] Something more in this respect will be said after a while.

[15] Of course this is our language, not Thales'. But this, I hold, does not ipso facto invalidate our endeavour to "understand" his, or anyone's else for that matter, position.

[16] And, I take it, this is the obvious division of the phenomena of change for the not-yet-developed philosophical speculation, in particular, I emphasize, for a non-Aristotelian conceptual framework.

[17] Clement supposes Heracleitus to have taken the idea from Orpheus (cf. also Strom. VI 2, 27, 1); Kern, Orphicorum Fragmenta, Fr. 225, and see p. 243, the contrary (also Marcovich, Heraclitus, p. 352). I do not quite see the reasons why the moderns must be right in their surmise. It seems to me quite possible that the idea (involving, as it does, the emphasis on the prerogatives of fire and aetherial substance esp. in the psychic constitution) might have been Orphic (or Orphic-Pythagorean), even if later formulated or handled by Onomacritus in the shape that it is reported by Clement; even in that case we could say that Heracleitus might have taken it from Onomacritus' formulations – provided that one is very anxious to establish borrowings. In any case the point is that the notion was afloat even as late as the end of the sixth century; therefore we can with difficulty and only under special warrant in particular cases, speak of the existence of Aristotle's concept of ὕλη at earlier times.

[18] This conception of interchange or exchange and of the "in-place-of" is much better suited to express the first idea of (the phenomena of) change than the Aristotelian notion of change in so far as this latter entails the existence (and preservation) of a substrate in every instance.

[19] Thales, A12 and 13. The difference between Aristotle and Theophrastus lying chiefly in the fact that the latter (or is it Simplicius?) reports as certain (ὕδωρ ἔλεγον – sc. οἱ ἰδίως φυσικοί – τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκ τῶν φαινομένων κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν (!) εἰς τοῦτο προαχθέντες· καὶ γὰρ τὸ θερμὸν etc.) what the former mentions as a surmise (ὕδωρ εἶναί φησιν (sc. ὁ Θαλῆς τὴν ἀρχὴν)... λαβὼν ἴσως τὴν ὑπόληψιν etc.), further qualified perhaps after a few lines by the reference to the opinions of the πρῶτοι θεολογήσαντες.

[20] Damascius (I p. 319.11-16) contends that Eudemus is wrong in thinking that Homer begins with Ὠκεανός and Τηθύς. He thinks that Ξ 261: ἄζετο γὰρ (sc. Ζεὺς) μὴ Νυκτὶ θοῇ ἀποθύμια Ἔρδοι, acknowledges the supremacy of Νύξ.

[21] V. Damascius, I p. 317.15 sqq. Ruelle. As to the names of the authors (Damascius hints that they may refer to the same person but does not appear to have any positive evidence for that (?)), Hellanicus seems to be Hellanicus from Lesbos (v. Jacoby, FrGrHist. Vol. 1, Hellanikos Fr. 87, and comments p. 458). Hieronymus is ordinarily understood to be the author of the Φοινικικὴ Ἀρχαιολογία, Josephus, Antiquitates Iudaicae, I 94 (see also Kern, Orphicorum Fragmenta, p. 130(*); Kern doubts it without apparent cause. This Orphic Theology according to Hieronymus and Hellanicus is distinguished by Damascius from that which is contained in the 24 Orphic Rhapsodies, the latter being the one which the (Neoplatonic) philosophers treat (v. I, p. 316.19), the "usual" and normal one (ἡ συνήθης 317.14). He also distinguishes both these from that which is related by Eudemus(**) (v. p. 319.8 sqq.) and it begins from Νύξ.

(*) Esp. for the connection of Orpheus with the Phoenician theology as testified by an excerpt from a codex Matritensis.

(**) That he is Eudemus from Rhodus, Aristotle's disciple is formally, and rather pedantically, demonstrated in Kern, Orph. Fr., p. 98 by an appeal to Diogenes Laertius, I, prooemium, 9 together with Damascius 322.8 sqq.

[22] This interpretation, it is true, cannot be read into Damascius' actual words (in any case, on the other hand, Damascius would have not been interested at all in a "Stoic" interpretation) – but the change from ὕλη to ἰλύς paves the way to it. Warrant for the change is supplied by Athenagoras, Legatio pro Christianis, 18 = Kern, Fr. 57. Among others: ἦν γὰρ ὕδωρ ἀρχὴ κατ᾽ αὐτὸν (sc. τὸν Ὀρφέα) τοῖς ὅλοις, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ ὕδατος ἰλύς κατέστη (= it subsided,

settled down), ἐκ δὲ ἑκατέρων ἐγεννήθη ζῷον etc. (Cf. also Gregory Nazianzenus, Oratio 31, c. 16 – quoted by Kern loc. cit.). The precedence of Water is clear in another passage of Athenagoras, Leg. pro Chr., 20 = Kern, Fr. 58 ad in.; it is evidently about the same theogony, as the sequel shows. It can be shown that the passages of Athenagoras are much more closely connected to the Damascian report, and that neither Apion nor Rufinus (Frs. 55 and 56) are intimately connected with it. See below. –

Zeno's interpretation of the Hesiodic cosmic beginnings follows closely this Orphism, SVF I, Fr. 104: καὶ Ζήνων δὲ τὸ παρ' Ἡσιόδῳ χάος ὕδωρ εἶναί φησιν, οὗ συνιζάνοντος ἰλὺν γίνεσθαι, ἧς πηγνυμένης ἡ γῆ στερεμνιοῦται. Τρίτον δὲ Ἔρωτα γεγονέναι καθ' Ἡσίοδον, ἵνα τὸ πῦρ παραστήσῃ.

[23] V. e.g. H. Bonnet, Reallexikon der Agyptischen Religionsgeschichte, articles "Nun" and "Weltbeginn" – the earth emerges there out of the primeval Water as an "Urhügel", the aboriginal hill – contrariwise to the settling down of the sediment, dreg, mud or better alluvial soil, according to the Orphic theology in question.

[24] Cf. SVF II, Fr. 564. The passage seems out of order in more than one respect (cf. v. Arnim's suggestion at bottom of p. 177). The second interpretation [οἱ δέ φασιν ἀπὸ τοῦ χαδεῖν, ὅ ἐστι χωρεῖν (in the sense of containing)· «Ἥρη δ' οὐκ ἔχαδε χόλον» (Ilias, Δ 24)] seems very akin to Aristotle's (Χάος = τόπος); but it can with difficulty be accommodated to the following passage: ἡ οὖν εἰς τὰ στοιχεῖα διάκρισις καὶ διαχώρησις χάος. Is then there a lacuna before ἡ οὖν, to be filled by something like: <οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ χωρίζειν>? Pretty likely. As to the point noted by v. Arnim, his suggestion seems very reasonable. – Οὐράνιον ὕδωρ appears related to the Biblical account of creation. (The same idea and form of expression appears also in some Gnostics).

[25] V. SVF I Fr. 167 (cf. Fr. 169). As to the details: v. Scholia on Hesiodus, Theogonia, ad v. 119 (= SVF II Fr. 563, p. 177.12-3): Τάρταρα τὸν ἀέρα (sc. λέγει ὁ Ἡσίοδος) ἀπὸ τοῦ ταράττεσθαι, ἐπειδή, ὥς φασιν (sc. οἱ Στωϊκοί presumably), ἕως ὧδε εἶπε (sc. ὁ Ἡσίοδος) τὰ δ΄ στοιχεῖα. Here is the sequence : Χάος = ὕδωρ, then Γῆ, then ἔρως = πῦρ (v. Scholia on Apollonius Rhodius, I 498 = SVF I Fr. 104: τρίτον δὲ Ἔρωτα γεγονέναι καθ᾽ Ἡσίοδον, ἵνα τὸ πῦρ παραστήσῃ· πυρωδέστερον γὰρ πάθος <ὁ ?> Ἔρως.

There is a major problem here: in our transmitted Hesiodean text Ἔρως is born[1] after Tartarus, hence fourth, counting as first the chaos. But the passage mentioned and SVF II Fr. 505 (τρία πρῶτον ἐγένοντο: Χάος, Γῆ, Ἔρως οὐράνιος etc.) as well as I Fr. 105 (τρίτον δὲ Ἔρωτα γεγονέναι) make clear that for Zeno Ἔρως is third in the order of "appearance" in rerum naturam. (It is significant that Aristotle does not acknowledge the Tartara verse in his quotation of this Hesiodean passage, Metaphysica, A, 984b26 sqq. And similarly the verse was ignored before him by Plato, Symposium, 178B). In fact, the last mentioned fragment goes so far as to the state that because Ἔρως should be third in the order of existence, the "following line" was athetized (presumably by Zeno and other Stoics). But as this occurs in the comment ad v. 117, the "following line" in our transmitted text would be line 118: ...ἀθανάτων, οἳ ἔχουσι κάρη νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου, an interpolation to the text, and besides irrelevant as to the series of first productions. Hence the next verse 119 should be the one in question: Τάρταρά τ᾽ ἠερόεντα μυχῷ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης.

But if this is athetized there is nothing in the vicinity which could be interpreted as the remaining fourth element – air; indeed Τάρταρα was considered to signify allegorically air in the above mentioned passage (Fr. 563). The completeness thus gained is really very attractive; it is therefore quite a problem why Zeno and those of the Stoics who directly followed him (as opposed to the others who propounded the identification Τάρταρα = Ἀήρ) did not avail themselves of it – indeed in effect explicitly threw it away (unless we wish to

speculate that Zeno did not read actually the line[2] and his latter followers athetized it).

An explanation may be that the Hesiodic description of Τάρταρα as lying ἐν μυχῷ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης was thought to preclude the attractive identification, air filling a sphere surrounding earth and not filling subterranean cavities (cf. Diogenes Laertius VII 155 = Fr. 558 vol. II). But this is no unsurmountable difficulty. On the other hand to arrive at πῦρ (Ἔρως) from Chaos (Water) via Τάρταρα (Air) is so very Stoic (even Zenonian, v. Diog. Laert. VII 142 and Stobaeus Ecl. I 17, 3 = SVF, I, Fr. 102 p. 28.17-19 and 31-32) that the interpretation in SVF, II Fr. 563 seems very natural from a Stoic point of view[3]. Still a difficulty might have been felt in the attribute ἠερόεντα as applied to Τάρταρα; for air may not be held ordinarily to be murky. But here we may be reminded of the doctrine specifically ascribed to Chrysippus to the effect that the air is naturally dark and naturally cold – v. SVF II Frs. 429-430, in the latter passage we find an explicit reference to precisely the Hesiodean line in question (p. 141.29). Original, and Homeric, usage may be adduced in support of a notion of air as dense and foggy, an ἀχλύς.

Even so, on the whole it is, I think, very difficult to account for Zeno Fr. 105. Perhaps he was following a particular Orphic formulation of the Hesiodic Theogony[4]. Cf. for instance Orphei Argonautica, 421-425, where, appropriately interpreted, Ἔρως seems to be the third entity, first being the Chaos. It is true that Kern (p. 100) thinks that the passage containing the above indicated lines is an imitation of Apollonius Rhodius, Argonautica, I 494 (= Frg. 29) where earth, heaven and sea come out of a primitive unity in which they lie, as it were, coalesced, under one form; in which case Orphei Arg. 422-3 would describe the separation of these parts of the World out of the initial integral unity.

But, I submit, closer investigation leaves nothing more than an external imitation of poetic form at most. For the theogonies concerned in the respective passages seem to be distinct: there is no mention of Ἔρως in the Apollonian passage; no mention of Ὀφίων in the Orphic one – instead Κρόνος precedes Ζεύς

and no kingship prior to that of Cronus is mentioned; no mention of Βριμώ[5] in Apollonius; further, if I am not mistaken, there is noticeable a tendency in Apollonius to separate cosmogony from theogony, clear proof of late age of course; finally vv. 496-8 in Apollonius are Empedoclean as noted by the scholiast (Kern p. 99)[6].

Still, against all these signs of dissimilarity it might be urged that Orphic Argonautica, 422-423 contain the idea of the production out of Chaos, by a certain separation of formerly unified forms, of Οὐρανός, Γῆ and θάλασσα, which is also the idea contained in Apollonius Argonautica, 496-8[7]. Yet, contra:

1) There is not, strictly speaking, a generation or production of θάλασσα but of the πυθμένες θαλάσσης – something γεῶδες, of the nature of earth.

2) Οὐρανός may be conceived not as aethereal here, but as solid – that which circumscribes the World and delimitates it, something naturally to be expected, in Archaic thinking, to be something solid and "substantial". Cf. the Parmenidean conception of an outward κέλυφος, as it were; v. A 37 (from Aetius): καὶ τὸ περιέχον δὲ πάσας (sc. τὰς στεφάνας) τείχους δίκην στερεὸν ὑπάρχειν[a]. Notice also that in Hesiod the Οὐρανός is generated directly from the Earth[8] (hence, presumably, γεώδης in nature) so as to provide an eternally safe abode[9] to Gods: vv. 126-8: Γαῖα δέ τοι πρῶτον μὲν ἐγείνατο Ἶσον ἑαυτῇ / Οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεσθ᾽ ἵνα μιν περὶ πάντα καλύπτοι, / ὅφρ᾽ εἴῃ μακάρεσσι θεοῖς ἕδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεί. And cf. also the Platonic notion (in the Phaedon's myth) that Pure Earth really constitutes Heavens. (On this consult some valuable testimonies and interpretations in the Anonymous Commentaries on Phaedo (Norvin C and D), esp. C. λβ΄ and νζ΄, D ρλα΄).

3) In support of (1) above, further: v. Euripides, Melanippe, Fr. 488 Nauck, v. 2: ὡς οὐρανός τε γαῖα τ᾽ ἦν μορφὴ μία, without mention of θάλασσα. The same idea with the same absence of θάλασσα in Diodorus Siculus I, VII, 1 (transcribed by Eusebius also Praeparatio Evangelica, I, 7, 4): Κατὰ γὰρ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τῶν ὅλων σύστασιν μίαν ἔχειν ἰδέαν οὐρανόν τε καὶ γῆν, μεμιγμένης

αὐτῶν τῆς φύσεως – though the sequel presents a “Parmenidean” recension of the subsequent cosmogonical development.

It seems therefore reasonable to suppose that in Orphica Argonautica, 422-3, various forms of γῆ are mentioned – the Olympian earth in Heaven, the ordinary earth, and the solid bottom of sea down deep; hence the πρεσβύτατος καὶ αὐτοτελὴς Ἔρως of v. 424 is third in order, after the primeval Chaos and the triple Earth.

Orphica Argonautica, 12 sqq. may be further connected here, although it represents a differing, and more normative Orphic tradition: ἀρχαίου μὲν πρῶτα Χάους ἀμέγαρτον Ἀνάγκην/ καὶ Χρόνον (corrected from the mss. Κρόνον), ὡς (better than the transmitted ὅς) ἐλόχευσεν ἀπειρεσίοισιν ὑφ’ ὁλκοῖς (so with Estienne from the mss. ὑπ’ ὁλκοῖς, changed to ὑπὸ κόλποις by Steuchius)/ Αἰθέρα καὶ διφυῆ περιωπέα κυδρὸν Ἔρωτα etc. If this αἰθήρ is heaven, the οὐρανός, it might well be solid! (Cf. again Parmenides apud Aetius apud Stobaeus I p. 195W, comparing ll. 7-8 with 16-17: αἰθὴρ is στερεός there. Notice among other things the peculiarity of Aristotle’s αἰθήρ, which is not at all like ἀήρ, although it is not of course solid). And Ἔρως is third, after Time-Cronus and Aether.

Be that as it may, the variety of Orphic traditions intermingled with interpretations is so great, that the above examples suffice to render understandable Zeno’s reading of Hesiod through the possible mediation of some Orphic tradition. It seems further that Chrysippus had (received or created) the fuller interpretation with Τάρταρα = ἀήρ.

(1) Or at least mentioned.

(2) “versus 118.119 Zenonem aut ignorasse aut dammasse suo iure conclusit Krische”; v. Arnim II p. 29 critical note.

(3) Cf. SVF II Fr. 569 (from Dio Chrysostomus). And see the interesting Fr. 565 where the view that the third entity is Ἔρως is combined with the derivation from water on the one hand of earth, and on the other of air and fire (in this order). Fire is the ultimate rarefication of air, and might thus be grouped

together. Cf. Plutarch quoting verbatim Chrysippus in Fr. II 579 : λεπτυνομένου δὲ τοῦ ἀέρος ὁ αἰθὴρ περιχεῖται κύκλῳ.

(4) For the Stoic tendency to accommodate all older theologies within their system, v. SVF I Fr. 529. Also Cicero, De Natura Deorum, I, 15, 41.

(5) Which is separate from Ρέα – v. Kern Fr. 31, I. 5-6; and consider their different role, Βριμώ being somehow "before" even the ἐκτομή of Οὐρανός v. Orphei Argonautica, 17. Is Βριμώ = Γαία? Or, better, = Νύξ, v. loc.cit. She is the Potent One, the Mighty, and thus with many aspectual identifications. Preeminently Persephone.

(6) As to vv. 494-502, Diels remarks "aus Empedokles, nicht aus d. Orphica".

(7) Though again, in the latter we have the idea of the principle containing implicitly and undistinguishedly and indistinguishably within itself its distinct offsprings or products – an idea both philosophical and later, as it will become apparent from a subsequent stage of this inquiry.

(a) Cf. 28B12, where the Cosmic system is composed by alternate spheres of the two principles, radiant fire and dark earth. The character of the two principles is explained unmistakably in B853-9.

(8) Without μεῖξιν and συνουσίαν with anything else.

(9) Rather here: foundation, base.

[26] As an important testimony against such down to earth "naturalization", we possess Aristophanes' Aves, 690-702. Notice esp. 694: γῆ δ᾽ οὐδ᾽ ἀὴρ οὐδ᾽ οὐρανὸς ἦν and compare with 700-702. One cannot refuse to see the point: we are with these ultimate "explanations" at a level of abstractness much above that of our ordinary experience of the World, and of the World as it is immediately given to us.

On the other hand we can understand even historically Zeno's attempt at interpreting the Hesiodic beginnings; cf. e.g. Bonnet, op.cit. p. 864b: "Sie lassen

(i.e. Egyptian beliefs) die Erde in der Tiefe eines trägen Urwassers (s. Nun) ruhen, das damit einem Chaos gleich am Anfang steht”.

[27] I.e. religious and philosophical “understanding” or “comprehending”.

[28] Qualification is needed; for some developed forms of Orphism “coital” generation begins rather “late” in the series of derivations which constitute the World out of the First Principle. But of this later. On the other hand v. the golden lamella of Thurii (Kern Fr. 47):

1. πρατογόνῳ Γῆ ματρὶ etc.

where Γῆ, coming presumably immediately after Chaos (if we assume this type of theogony in the present case, or after Night otherwise) is first born.

[29] This difference may be accounted by the difference of the type of phaenomena of change which attracted the attention of religious and philosophical thinkers respectively: bringing forth or generation in animals for the one; physical transformation or transmutation or transubstantiation for the other.