FIRE IN THREE IMAGES, FROM HERACLITUS TO THE ANTHROPOCENE

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims at reassessing three of fire's most thought-provoking metaphors throughout the history of Western thought, from Heraclitus to the present. It shows that fire functions as conceptual figure for the analysis of human situatedness. Each image is extracted from a series of texts, referred to a conceptual issue, and explored in relation to a contemporary discussion. The first is *Kosmos*; the issue, *physis* and time; the texts, Heraclitus's and Parmenides's fragments; the discussion turns around Bachelard's, Deleuze's, and Severino's interpretations of the present. The second is *Hybris*; the issue is the replacement of *physis* by technology; the texts, Aeschylus's *Prometheus* and Heraclitus's fragments; the discussion turns around modern misrepresentations of Prometheus. The third is *Innigkeit*; the issue is that of the re-tuning in to *physis*; the texts are Empedocles's and Heraclitus fragments, Hölderlin's *Empedocles* and *Essays*, and Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*; the discussion turns around Hegel's sources and legacy, with a reference to works of Malabou and Negarestani reread in light of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*. The paper concludes with a brief reflection on *hybris* and the Anthropocene.

KEYWORDS: Anthropocene; Being; Cosmos; Hybris; Innigkeit; Physis

KOSMOS

Heraclitus's frag. B30 reads thus: κόσμον τόνδε, τὸν αὐτὸν ἁπάντων, οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ' ἦν ἀεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται πῦρ ἀείζωον, ἁπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ ἀποσβεννύμενον μέτρα.[1] In English: "this gleam (κόσμος), the same for all things, neither the gods nor men have made it, but it always was, is, and will be an ever-living *fire* measuredly kindling and measuredly going out" (emphasis

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[1] For the Pre-Socratic fragments, see Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers.* All other Greek texts are (with the sole exception of Aeschylus's fragments) available at the Perseus Digital Library of Tufts University (http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the Greek are mine.

added).[2]

We have here a first image of "fire" – as κόσμος. But what does Heraclitus mean by "gleam," what does the expression "and ever-living fire that measuredly kindles and goes out" designate? A brief excursus is in order to respond to this question. It will lead us to Parmenides's frag. B8. For, despite differences in focus, Heraclitus's thought and Parmenides thought refer to the *same* thing.[3] Yet in order to show this I should like to call the reader's attention to the use of *aorist* verbs in the *Iliad*. Reading Parmenides through Homer's lens should come as no surprise.[4] Furthermore, Homer's aorists are the key to interpreting Parmenides "being," and vice versa: Parmenides definition of "being" is the key to interpreting Homer's aorists; while brought together, Homer and Parmenides are the key to understanding Heraclitus's identification of being's ever-living "fire" (πῦρ ἀείζωον) with a "gleam." Why this "gleam" is also an "order," as per the habitual translation of κόσμος, is something to which I shall return in due course.

Let's ask for now: how do aorist verbs function in the *Iliad*? What tense or tenses correspond to them remains unclear.[5] And while everybody acknowledges their perfective quality, everyone suspects, too, that an aorist (ἀόριστος, "without limits") does not necessarily evoke the past. In fact, unlike past verbs ("Patroclus climbed the wall"), present verbs ("Patroclus is climbing the wall"), and future verbs "he will climb the wall"), aorist verbs express actions as though they were occurring *now* ("he climbs the wall") exactly as they occurred *once* and as they will occur *again* whenever the action in question is evoked in the future. In other words, aorist verbs avoid to circumscribe the actions they express to any particular time (past, present, or future). But then, can it not be said that aorist verbs – especially as they are employed in the *Iliad*, on which more below – *reflect* what the ancient Greeks called, in opposition to χρόνος or the "*passing* of time" that devours all its children, αἰών, i.e. the "*now*" which is "*always*," not because it *lasts* eternally but because it is *perfect and complete in its being*, in the sense that what *is* expresses always-already being's *full* positiveness, i.e. being's effective *fighting off*

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[2] On the rendering of κόσμος as "gleam," see Heidegger, *Heraclitus*, 123-124.
[3] Martínez Marzoa, *Historia de la filosofía antigua*, 35-52; Severino, *Dike*, 34-41.
[4] Coxon, "Introduction," 9-12.
[5] Bakker, *Pointing at the Past*.

the darkness of non-being?[6] And if this is correct, would not the *Iliad*'s aorists (which make 54 percent of its verbs) be the *narrative equivalent* of Calchas's and, hence, Apollo's vision – whose oracle Calchas (blind to the appearance of things) utters?[7] For Homer says of Calcha's vision that it sees "what is, what will be, and what was" (τά τ᾽ ἐόντα τά τ᾽ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ᾽ ἐόντα) (*Iliad* 1.69-70). Put differently: Calchas's vision dissolves (like Zeus's all-powerful *light*, of which Apollo is the manifestation) Cronus's *cruel* dominion. Consider, for example, Patroclus's ἀριστεία in *Iliad* 16.702-711, 783-867: it is mostly built on aorist verbs to render all the more *vivid* by making them *incandescent*, as it were, not only Patroclus's actions, but also Apollo's, which put limit to Patroclus's ὕβρις causing his death. Achilles's killing of Hector in *Iliad* 22.247-369 is built, too, on aorist verbs. Compare, furthermore, the verbs assigned to the Dawn and to Zeus in *Iliad* 2.48-51: they prove that *αἰών is not exclusively connected to human action, but extensive to the whole cosmos, of which the gods are but the ever-living (or, again, incandescent) forces that shine through it.*[8] Even non-aorist verbs are employed in the *Iliad* to convey the presentness of the actions mentioned in it! Notice, for example, the stress put on the *shining* qualities of Achilles's helmet, in this case by means of a verb in the imperfect, in *Iliad* 22.131-135: "Thus he [= Hector] pondered, waiting, while Achilles approached him /– the equal of Enyalios,[9] that bright-helmed warrior! – / above his right shoulder wielding his spear of Pēlian ash, / so fearsome, while all about him the bronze *now glinted* / like blazing fire or the rays of the rising sun," in Green's translation.[10] Green's adverbial choice ("*now* glinted") is an excellent option indeed, as it captures perfectly the shining forth of things, and, ultimately, of Achilles, when Hector sees him for the first time, *which rather than a past episode, is an event that receives its aliveness from the poet's lips whenever he sings it, as though it were untouched by the passage of time… now!* Only *this* can explain why the poets'

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[6] Severino, *The Essence of Nihilism*, 33-145.

[7] On oracles and seers in ancient Greece, see Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece*; Dillon, *Omen and Oracles*.

[8] As I have written elsewhere (Gevorkyan and Segovia, "An Anthropological and Meta-philosophical Critique of Hilan Bensusan's Indexicalism," n30), the ancient-Greek gods are not supernatural beings, let alone supernatural persons: they name the brightness and the shadows of everything which is, i.e. the ever-living forces of the earth, whether positive or negative, that make and unmake the world, that is, any world, for example love (Aphrodite), the clear vision of things (Athena), darkness (Nyx), and discord (Eris). Put otherwise: they are pointers that help to reshape the earth's forces as tonal music.

[9] A spirit of war, attendant of Ares.

[10] Homer, *The Iliad*, 403.

performances were *accompanied* with beating feet and clapping hands on the part of the audience.[11] Accordingly, I disagree with Martínez Marzoa[12] when he claims that, in contrast to "cursive" (or imperfect) verbs and "estative" (or perfect) verbs, aorists are "factitive" verbs that *lack* any "actual" dimension, for which reason they must thus be viewed as evoking a *past* "closed" action. Conversely Benveniste,[13] and Beekes after him,[14] are into something really important when they observe the existence of a *semantic* connection between (*i*) αἰών, (*ii*) the time in which something "lives," and (*iii*) the idea of "vital strength."

Yet if the secret of αἰών can be said to lie *somewhere* it is in Parmenides's frag. B8. Parmenides says of "what *is*" (ὡς ἔστιν) that "it is not born" (ἀγένητον) and "imperishable" (ἀνώλεθρον); hence, he adds, it can neither be said that "it has been" (οὐδέ ποτ᾽ἦν) or that "it will be" (οὐδ᾽ἔσται) as it is "one" (ἕν) "now" (νῦν ἔστιν) "altogether" (ὁμοῦ πᾶν). With this, however, Parmenides does *not* have a "spheric" being in mind – safe *metaphorically*.[15] He is rather thematising one of the two sides of the "dimensional difference" (the expression is Severino's) found *between being's incandescent glow and the ephemeral nature (read: the coming into being and passing away) of all things, which are (both) equally incontestable.* Severino's paraphrase of Parmenides is superb in this respect:

> Being, *all* Being, is;[16] and so it is immutable.[17] But Being that is manifest is manifest as coming-to-be. *Therefore* (which is to say, precisely because it is manifest as coming-to-be), *this manifest Being, insofar as it is immutable* (and it, too, must be immutable, if it is Being), *is other than itself* qua coming-to-be. […] [T]his green color of the plant outside my window is Being, *and* insofar as it is Being it is immutable, eternal (there is no time when it was-not or will not-be). But then, this "same" green color was born just now, when the sun began to illuminate the plant; and now, when I have moved my head and see it in a different perspective, it is already vanished. This "same" color (like the countless events that make up our experience) is therefore immutable, insofar as it is Being, *and* is manifest as coming-to-be. This means that

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[11] Havelock, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences.*

[12] Martínez Marzoa, Lengua y tiempo, 16-17.

[13] Benveniste, "Expression indo-européenne de l' « éternité »."

[14] Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, vol. 1, 46-47.

[15] On metaphor and cognition (after Roy Wagner), see Segovia, "Metaphor and the Analytic-Philosophy Cuisine."

[16] Cf. Aristotle, *De interpretatione*, 19a26: τὸ ἁπλῶς εἶναι ἐξ ἀνάγκης ("being is: simply, necessarily").

[17] I.e. sheltered within its own positiveness. Cf. Parmenides frag. B4: οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἐὸν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχεσθαι ("you shall not sunder being from its connection with being").

the "same" (this color) *differentiates itself*; i.e., that *qua* immutable it constitutes itself *as* and *in* a *different dimension* from itself *qua* coming-to-be.[18]

 This difference, which is the authentic "ontological difference,"[19] is implied by the fact (for indeed it is a matter of *fact*) that "the same" is subject to two opposite determinations (immutable, coming-to-be), and so is not the same, but different (i.e., this eternal color is *not* this color that is born and perishes).[20]

Put otherwise: even if what is opposes non-being only for a while (i.e. while it is), while it does so it opposes non-being absolutely, or with all the *positiveness* of being. In a nutshell, then: "every being is eternal (*aion*) […] and the variation of the world's spectacle, the appearing of variation, is the rising and setting, the showing and the hiding of the eternal" (Severino 2016: 31).[21] Heraclitus does not point far from Parmenides when he writes that "the never-submerging before which one cannot hide" (τὸ μὴ δῦνόν ποτε πῶς ἄν τις λάθοι) (frag. B16)" was, is, and will be an ever-living fire" (πῦρ ἀείζωον)" whose "gleam" (κόσμος) all things display (frag. 30).[22] In short, for Heraclitus being's *glow* is φύσις's ever-living *fire*.[23] According to Aristotle (***Metaphysics*** 986b31–987a2) Parmenides himself equated "being" (τὸ ὄν), "heat" (θερμός), and "fire" (πῦρ). In their wake, Heidegger speaks *once* of "the fire of being."[24]

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[18] Cf. Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 36: "There are not two 'paths,' as Parmenides' poem suggests, but a single 'voice' of Being which includes all its modes, including the most diverse, the most varied, the most differentiated. Being is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs: it is said of difference itself." Deleuze thus thinks being in substantial/material terms, so as to explain its morphogenesis. In this he is closer to Melissus than to Parmenides. On Melissus's ontology, see Solmsen, "The 'Eleatic One' in Melissus"; Harriman, *Melissus and Eleatic Monism.*

[19] *Contra* Heidegger's understanding of the latter as the difference between a non-thematisable "Being" and the "beings" that such being makes present, on which see Haas, "The Ambiguity of Being," 18. Cf. the brief discussion of Heidegger in Severino, *Dike* 28–9).

[20] Severino, *The Essence of Nihilism*, 46.

[21] Cf. the reference to αἰών on p. 45, and the pun therein on Plato: "The young Socrates deserved reproach because he thought there could be no ideas of insignificant things (the hairs of one's beard…): which means, for us, that any thing, no matter how insignificant, if a thing, is eternal. This sheet of paper, this pen, this room, these colors and sounds and shades and shadows of things and of the mind are eternal – "eternal" in the essential sense attributed by the Greeks to aion: "that it is" (without limitations)."

[22] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 983b7-13, commenting on the concept of ἀρχή from the standpoint of the "earliest philosophers": ἀρχὴ πάντων […] φύσις αἰεὶ σωζομένη ("φύσις is [for them] the always-self-guarded principle of everything"). This explains their ἀρχή is not only that "from" within which (without ever abandoning it) all things "come into being," but also "wherein" they find shelter – thus Severino's rejection of Heidegger's reduction of being to "dis-closure" [ἀ-λήθεια]) when they"pass away."

[23] Cf. Heidegger's (Heraclitus, 15) reference to Artemis, goddess of φύσις, as φωσφόρος ("light bringer").

[24] Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 340.

Hence Deleuze's early view that "Aión" is the instant that "subverts" Cronus's order by "mixing" present, future, and past in an *endless becoming*[25] makes no sense except in the context of Deleuze's own philosophy. Only Deleuze's later take on the "virtual" in his studies on painting and cinema as that which *subsists* and *insists* beyond any given "state of things," can be said to somehow approach, while remaining at considerable distance from, the Pre-Socratic notion of αἰών.[26] As for Bachelard,[27] he was also wrong, therefore, in that the "instant," i.e. the glowing "now" – which, following Roupnel, he views as that which truly "is" despite its ephemeral nature[28] – is *non-repeatable*; although "repeatable" may not be the best synonym for its incandescent *recurrence*.

HYBRIS

Heraclitus's frag. B43 reads thus: ὕβριν χρὴ σβεννύναι μᾶλλον ἢ πυρκαϊήν. In English: "excess" (ὕβρις) must be extinguished more than a *fire*" (emphasis added).

We have here our second image of "fire" – as ὕβρις. But why does Heraclitus compare "excess" to a "fire"?[29] To understand why one may need to bear in mind two other texts. First, frag. B62 of Heraclitus, which reads: ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάντατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες. In English: "immortal mortals, mortal immortals: living each other's death, dying each other's life." Secondly, Aeschylus's *Prometheus*. They are connected to one another in that what Aeschylus examines in a play which gravitates around the *symbolic* intertwining of fire and ὕβρις is, precisely, the *confusion* of thew two terms both linked and distinguished in Heraclitus's frag. B62: ἀθάνατοι ("immortals") and θνητοί ("mortals").[30]

But who is Aeschylus's "Prometheus"? Προμηθεύς means "forethought" (from προ- ["fore-"] + μανθάνω [to "think"]). Hence "Prometheus" should *not* be identified with anyone." He" is *nobody*: he is just the *figural* manifestation of a

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[25] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 162-168.

[26] On Deleuze and the Greeks, see Bennett, *Deleuze and Ancient Greek Physics*.

[27] Bachelard, *Intuition of the instant*.

[28] Cf. Widder, *Reflections on Time and Politics*, 43.

[29] The assimilation of ὕβρις to "fire" is also found in Sophocles's Ajax, vv. 196-7.

30 A new interpretation of what their mirroring each other and yet being distinct from one another entails will be found in Segovia, "Rethinking Death's Sacredness."

distinctively (if not exclusively) human *aptitude*. Fancying that Prometheus is someone *because* he is a *mythical* character (not only in Aeschylus but also in Hesiod) is totally absurd; like pretending he is a sort of Christ *avant la lettre*, who *sacrificed* himself on behalf of humanity. But he is a Titan!, it might be objected. Well, that only means "he" is – in addition to being a *human* aptitude – a *telluric* force, that is to say, a *blind* force that raises from the bowels of the earth, a force *not* adumbrated from above, from Zeus's domain of light… since it can be used for *any* purpose, including *dark* purposes. *Technology*, which constitutes Prometheus's *gift*" to" humankind, is the proof of it.[31]

Again, προμηθεύς means "forethought." "Calculative" or "instrumental reason"[32] could well be another name for it. Accordingly, Prometheus's forethought *differs* from Athena's *pure* thought, which is pure in *two* different ways: first, because it *springs* directly from Zeus's forehead; secondly, because it is – as recalled in the *scholia* to Aeschylus's *Prometheus* – *nurtured* by αἰδώς;[33] which means (its semantic field is quite vast) "purity," "modesty," "respect," "reverence," "awe."[34] For this reason, too, Athena is the goddess of *wisdom*; as Schelling has it,[35] she is Zeus's consciousness, and thus the *thought* of all which is (in the two senses of the genitive). For whatever is – we shall return to it in short – is brought into being by Zeus's light.[36] In this Athena opposes Prometheus's *blindness*. Blindness of what kind? "I have caused in their [= the mortals'] chests," confesses Aeschylus's Prometheus, "blind hope" (τυφλὰς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐλπίδας κατῴκισα, v. 252);

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31 Severino, Téchne. Cf. Heidegger, Bremen and Freiburg Lectures, 1-73. In Heidegger, technology is a mode of revealing, that is, of bringing things into presence in their readiness. In Severino, it is a mode of relating to things that restricts their being to their ephemeral nature, thus turning them into things susceptible of being produced and destroyed. In the first case, being is reduced to availability. In the second case, it is subordinated to time. In both cases the autopoietic cum eternal shining forth of things is darkened.

32 Cf. Horkheimer, *Critique of Instrumental Reason*.

33 Otto, *Theophania*, 72.

34 The Latin equivalent is pudor (Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish: pudor; French: pudeur). On the relation between αἰδώς and thought, see Cairns, *Aidōs*, 126–30.

35 Schelling, *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 12, 665.

36 Cf. Heraclitus's frag. B64: τὰ δὲ πὰντα οἰακίζει κεραυνός ("everything is guided by [Zeus's] lightening"); Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, vv. 1485-1487: διαὶ Διὸς / παναιτίου πανεργέτα ("through Zeus / all is caused and made"). Most English translations introduce Zeus's "will" where there is none, thereby tacitly transforming Zeus into a supernatural being or person, in the image of the biblical god. Grave mistake. Cf. Kerényi's remark in "Theos und Mythos" that, before the arrival of Christianity, θεός was mostly used in Greece as an exclamation before the apparition or shining forth of something; hence to point to an event.

and further in the play Hermes tells him: "you have not learned to be wise" (καὶ μὴν σύ γ᾽ οὔπω σωφρονεῖν ἐπίστασαι, v. 982). The "blind hope" caused by Prometheus in the "chests of the mortals" amounts, he remarks, *to have persuaded them that they could become immortals*: "Yes, I caused mortals to cease foreseeing their doom" (θνητούς γ᾽ ἔπαυσα μὴ προδέρκεσθαι μόρον, v. 250). How? By teaching them numberless τέχναι (sing. τέχνη), i.e. "technologies" (vv. 436-506), of which fire's secret is but the *epitome* – such, indeed, is the unwise φάρμακον ("remedy," v. 251) given by Prometheus to them: a calculative, instrumental" forethought" that makes them no longer "foresee" their *mortal* condition, thus rendering them *blind* to what they *are*.

If Athena is nurtured with/by αἰδώς, Prometheus is the champion of ὕβρις.

He acknowledges his *mistake*, though: "knowingly, knowingly I have erred, why deny it?" (ἑκὼν ἑκὼν ἥμαρτον, οὐκ ἀρνήσομαι, v. 267). And if the Oceanids pity him (vv. 127-285) one cannot help but remind that – being the daughters of Oceanus, a Titan, and Tethys – they speak on behalf of a *pre*-cosmic "order" (κόσμος) to which Zeus's "glow" (κεραυνός, but also κόσμος, as suggested in the previous section) had put an *end*. Even to give birth to Athena with his *own* mind Zeus had to impregnate and swallow Metis, an Oceanid who, in contrast to Athena's intelligence, symbolised, *like Prometheus*, a form of tricky *proto*-intelligence.[37] Besides, the Oceanids were protectors of the youth. What, then, could one expect from them, but *compassion* towards Prometheus?

But Prometheus does not only acknowledge his mistake. There is, he goes on to say, something stronger than any τέχνη, namely, "necessity" (ἀνάγκη, v. 515). Necessity, however, does not allude here, as it is often assumed, to Prometheus "destiny" (μοῖρα, v. 511). It refers, more likely, to Zeus's *inflexibility*, about which Prometheus complains earlier in the play:" For Zeus's mind [or, alternatively: chest]," he says, "is inflexible" (Διὸς γὰρ δυσπαραίτητοι φρένες, v. 34). *Reasonably so!*, one is tempted to add, as, no matter how hard they try," mortals" (θνητοί) *cannot* become "immortals" (ἀθάνατοι), and the *vain* pretension to do so with recourse to technology can only prove a dangerous *sham*. Such – what else indeed? – is Zeus's "order" (κόσμος): the very order out of which the world (as we know it) is made.

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[37] On Metis's ambivalence, trickster-like nature, and association with Prometheus, see Brown, "The Birth of Athena," 132-133.

Zeus's inflexibility, therefore, has nothing to do with any will on his part. I have already highlighted it: the Greek gods are *not* (supernatural) persons.

Once more: Zeus is the *shining forth* of what is, but this means "he" is the *determination* under which each thing *is*. Correspondingly, Aeschylus's frag. 70 declares: Ζεύς ἐστιν αἰθήρ, Ζεὺς δὲ γῆ, Ζεὺς δ᾽οὐρανός, Ζεύς τοι τὰ πάντα χὤτι τῶν δ᾽ὑπερτέρον.[38] In English: "Zeus is the ether, Zeus is the earth, Zeus is the sky, Zeus is all things, and that which is above them." In other words, Zeus is the measure of *all* things insofar as he is the measure of *each* thing, for he is its very *being*, its *positiveness*, its *reality*, which, as Parmenides stresses in frag. B8, is "imperishable" (ἀνώλεθρον).[39] It is *this* Aeschylus evokes, too, in the so-called "Hymn to Zeus" contained in vv. 160-83 of his *Agamemnon*, where it is emphasised that bearing *this* in mind is the only "true remedy" for the "pain" which drives "mortals" irretrievably "mad," i.e. the only remedy for their anguish before the contingent nature of all things.[40] For it reminds them – it reminds *mortals* – of what, following Severino, I have called *the dimensional difference that exists between being's incandescent glow and the ephemeral nature of all things, which are (both) equally incontestable* and, therefore, in need of being equally affirmed, which is why Parmenides's goddess does *not* only teach the "truth" ['αλήθεια] to the charioteer-philosopher (Parmenides, frag. B1, vv. 24ff.).[41]

All in all, then, and against what is commonly believed, Aeschylus is not more sympathetic to Prometheus than Hesiod is. The modern *misrepresentation* of the myth is thus patent. Byron vindicates Prometheus's sensibility towards humankind's "sufferings,"[42] while, influenced by Byron, P. B. Shelley views him

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[38] Aeschylus, *Fragments*, 72.

[39] Cf. Sophocles's correlation of Zeus and αἰδώς in Oedipus at Colonus (v. 1267) and Heidegger's commentary on it in his Parmenides: "Being itself sustains awe, namely the awe over the 'to be.' In this way Being at the very beginning is protective of its own essence" (*Parmenides*, 75).

[40] Severino, *Il giogo*, 21-31. Cf. the contraposition between that which is ἄφραστος ("unpredictable") and that which is ἀσφαλής ("steadfast)" in Aeschylus's Suppliants, vv. 91-5.

[41] Notice that the notion of a dimensional difference between being's incandescent glow and the ephemeral nature of all things opposes both Heidegger's ontological difference between Being and beings and Deleuze's univocity of being – that is to say, it falls right between the former's transcendence and the latter's immanence. A provocative new reading of Heidegger's ontological difference will be found in Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger*; see also Gevorkyan, "Meaning: That Demonic Hyperbole," who stresses the need to reinterpret Heidegger's being as meaning in dialogue with Plato, Kant, and Wittgenstein.

[42] In his poem "Prometheus," included in his 1816 volume The Prisoner of Chillon and Other Poems.

as "the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends" (1820: viii–ix). They rework the tragedy into the "misotheistic" (Runkel) drama of an ill-treated "philanthropist" (after Aeschylus's *Prometheus*, v. 11) who triumphs over Zeus's tyranny despite all. In turn, M. Shelley recasts the myth in gothic terms: her modern Prometheus is a brilliant *cum* devote scientist who attempts to play God by creating a humanoid who, "promoted from darkness," finds himself lost in life.[43] Regardless of her work's relevance for current dystopian narrative[44] and discussions on AI and cybernetics,[45] M. Shelley misses the whole point of Aeschylus's tragedy – and she ought not to have missed it, given her novel's subtitle: *the Modern Prometheus*; for in her *Frankenstein* concerns about *origin and creation* – which is a major Christian preoccupation – replace Aeschylus's original problem, which has to do with *mortality* instead. As for Byron and P. B. Shelley, they do not only misconstrue prometheus's figure, but, again too, Aeschylus's original problem, which is less about *freedom* – as Ihab Hassan also thinks[46] – than about ὕβρις over that which is, i.e. over *being's incandescent glow*.

In short, then: ὕβρις is the *counterfigure* of being's (or φύσις's) ever-living fire/κόσμος, which, says Aeschylus, "glows everywhere" (παντᾶ φλεγέθει, *The Suppliants*, v. 88) but ὕβρις tries to overstep (vv. 81, 104).

TRANSITION

One *fire* image (ὕβρις) thus substitutes for another (κόσμος). Fire as κόσμος speaks of the *awe* before that which *is* and *glows*. In turn, fire as ὕβρις speaks of the *domination* over that which *is*, but *no longer* glows. Contingency replaces necessity, for what is, is no longer perceived to be but by *chance* alone, and only *as long as it is*.[47] And will – the *will to will* – replaces care. By the same token, a

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[43] As much as Milton's Adam, which supplies the exergum to the anonymously published first edition of Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Friedman and Kavey, *Monstrous Progeny*.

[45] King, Frankenstein's Legacy; Hunt Botting, *Artificial Life After Frankenstein*.

[46] Hassan, "Prometheus as Performer."

[47] Severino, *The Essence of Nihilism*, 37. For a critique of the categorial consecration of contingency in today's philosophical arena, see Gevorkyan and Segovia, "Paul and the Plea for Contingency in Contemporary Philosophy."

wonder-less *wandering* replaces dwelling.[48] The earth no longer shines forth: it becomes land to *conquer* and on which to *build*. And an *un*-world in which things are no longer cared for but produced, investigated, experimented-with, manipulated, modified, exchanged, destroyed, and replaced – them too – under the law of their permanent *requisition* and their generalised *circulation*, replaces what used to be not one, but *many* worlds. Ὕβρις *overtakes* κόσμος.

INNIGKEIT

"The tragic ode begins in supreme *fire* [*höchsten Feuer*]: [when] the pure[st] spirit [*der reine Geist*], [that of] the pure[st] intimacy [*die reine Innigkeit*] [between Man and Nature], has over-stepped its limits [*Grenze*]" writes Hölderlin in "The Tragic Ode," the first of his *Essays towards a Theory of the Tragic* (Krell's title).[49] Hölderlin alludes thus to the *division* of what was once united.[50] Yet the cause of such division is less human ὕβρις than an (the) "excess of intimacy" ([das] *Übermaas der Innigkeit*)[51] between two domains which, as a result, separate from one another[52] – so that "discord" (*Zwist*) reigns therein where total – in fact "excessive" – *unity* (or again, "intimacy") formerly did.

Empedocles's frag. B17, l. 6 reads: καὶ ταῦτ᾽ ἀλλάσσοντα διαμπερὲς οὐδαμὰ λήγει, ἄλλοτε μὲν Φιλότητι συνεπχόμεν᾽ εἰς ἕν απαντά, ἄλλοτε δ᾽ αὖ δίχ᾽ ἕκαστα φορεύμενα Νείκεος ἔχθει. In English: "for things never cease to constantly shift, at one time all uniting through Love [Φιλία], at another each being borne apart from the others through Rift [Νείκος]." By making of the separation of that which is united a *cosmic force*, Hölderlin *echoes* this very idea in a text that, moreover, supplements his (unfinished) tragedy on Empedocles's death.[53]

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[48] Gevorkyan and Segovia, "Post-Heideggerian Drifts."

[49] Henceforth I follow Knaupp's ed. (Hölderlin, *Empédocles*, 278). The translation is mine, though. Krell renders Innigkeit as "intensity," which is also a feasible option, but less suitable here, I think, given the purpose of Hölderlin's Vereinigungsphilosophie ("philosophy of unification").

[50] Not only Man and Nature but, apparently too, Nature's forms and Nature's force, according to his parallel distinction between the "aorgic" (*Aorgische*) and the "organic" or "organised," on which see Hölderlin, *Empédocles*: 286, 288, 290, 292. A whole line of thought that goes from Nietzsche to Deleuze (and that is reminiscent of Spinoza's distinction between *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*) is prefigured thus, although, unlike Nietzsche and, especially, Deleuze, Hölderlin does not proclaim the need to jump back into the "aorgic."

[51] Variant: "the deepest intimacy" (die tiefste Innigkeit) (Hölderlin, *Empédocles*, 280).

[52] Cf. Grimm, "Fichtes Gedanke der Wechselwirkung in Hölderlins Empedokles-Trago ̈die," 13.

[53] Of which a preliminary plan and three different incomplete versions are preserved.

Yet Hölderlin does not only look backwards – to both Empedocles and Heraclitus, as we shall immediately see. He also looks forward, as it were. For he anticipates Hegel's dialectic, wherein opposition between any given thesis and its corresponding antithesis is solved through their synthesis. Or maybe it might be better to say that Hegel inspired himself in Hölderlin,[54] who in turn inspired himself in Heraclitus's frag. B51 and parallels (B8, B10, B54.): "they do not understand that what diverges coincides: back-bent attunement, like that of the bow and the lyre" (οὐ ξυνιᾶσιν ὅκως διαφερόμενον ἑωυτῷ ὁμολογέει· παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη ὅκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης"). The formula is patent: Συμφέρω : Διαφέρω, Διαφέρω : Συμφέρω – "Convergence" : "Divergence," "Divergence" : "Convergence." Besides, Hölderlin expressly acknowledges in *Hyperion* his debt to frag. B51 of Heraclitus, whose content he qualifies as philosophically "divine" and as the very "ideal of beauty".[55] Consider, too, these verses (nos. 1799-1801) pronounced by Hölderlin's Empedocles right before suiciding, i.e. right before throwing himself into the Etna's *devouring fire*:

> O Iris Bogen über stürzenden
> Gewässern, wenn die Woog in Silberwolken
> Auffliegt, wie du bist, so ist meine Freude.[56]

i.e.

> O rainbow over the tumbling
> Waters, when the wave in silver clouds
> Takes off, like you are, so is my happiness.

The rainbow *reflects* the form of the bow and the lyre of Heraclitus, while the *ascending* movement of the wave and its foam contrasts with the *descending* movement of the water (an oblique metaphor for the volcano's lava?). Empedocles's (paradoxical) happiness (for he is about do die) consists, then, in the *back-bent attunement* of these two *diverging* forces, since being swallowed by the volcano means that he will *reunite* himself with Nature after having experienced

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[54] Shelton, *The Young Hölderlin*, 107.
[55] Hölderlin, *Hyperion or The Hermit in Greece*, 18.
[56] Hölderlin, *Empédocles*, 202.

human hostility towards him and towards Nature – for Hölderlin's Empedocles lives, we read at the very outset of the play, in a garden (vv. 1-4), and it is said that "the plants gaze up at / him as he walks by, […] the waters 'neath the earth / […] strive upward to the surface when his staff grazes the ground / […] and [that] when in a storm he looks at the sky / the clouds part and reveal the shimmering / cheerful day!" (vv. 14-19).[57] Nevertheless, Hölderlin views the potential *reunion* (through Φιλία, one might venture) of that which is *set apart* (through Νείκος's activity) as *a new form of union that will thereinafter keep (and hence respect) the differences of what is reunited thus by bringing it together into the domain of an "intimacy"* (Innigkeit) *"more modest"* (bescheidener),[58] *"more cointained"* (gehaltener) (290), *"more capable of distinguishing"* (unterscheidender) (290), *and "clearer"* (klarer) (290), *i.e. less excessive, than the initial one.*

In short, intimacy's fire can either *burn* it all or discretely *warm* it up.

It is unquestionably from this, on the other hand, that Heidegger – who had worked on Hölderlin's poetry one year before publishing *The Origin of the Work of Art* – draws the view that while "earth" (*Erde*) and "world" (*Welt*) do not form "an empty unity [*leeren Einheit*] of opposites unconcerned with one another"[59] their "strife" (*Streit*) is not a "rift" (*Riß*) of mutually exclusive opposites, but a relation of belligerent "intimacy" (*Innigkeit*).[60] For, Heidegger goes on to say, "[w]orld is grounded [*gründet*] on earth, and earth rises [*ragt*] up through world,"[61] so that it is "[i]n its resting upon [the] earth [that] the world strives to surmount it."[62] Notice Heidegger's *chiasmatic reasoning*:[63] instead of an "empty unity," the relation between "earth" and "world" is "strife"; instead of a "rift," it is "intimacy"; and while the earth *raises* up above through world, the latter strives to surmount the former by *simultaneously* resting on it. Now, the reciprocity of "earth" and "world" is not only one of the key themes in Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*. It is

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[57] This time in Krell's translation (Hölderlin, *Hyperion or The Hermit in Greece*, 38).

[58] Hölderlin, *Empédocles*, 278.

[59] Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 26; *Holzwege*, 35.

[60] Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 38; *Holzwege*, 51.

[61] Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 26; *Holzwege*, 35.

[62] Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 24; *Holzwege*, 32. And elsewhere: "As the self-opening [Sichöffnende] [the world] will tolerate nothing closed [Verschlossenes]. As the sheltering and concealing […] [the] earth tends always to draw the world into itself and to keep it there" (*Off the Beaten Track*, 26; *Holzwege*, 35).

[63] Cf. Heraclitus's frag. B62, cited above. On Heraclitus's "chiasmatic" thought, see Wagner (*Coyote Anthropology*, 5).

also present in the *Beiträge*[64] in connection to the possibility of a post-nihilist "futurability," to borrow freely from Berardi.[65] But I have elaborated on this elsewhere.[66]

In any event, and leaving Heidegger momentarily aside (for his indebtedness to Hölderlin remains somewhat cryptic and, overall, unnoticed, except to a number of Heideggerian scholars),[67] it is clear that Hölderlin's *Vereinigungsphilosophie* ("philosophy of unification," of which the notion of *Innigkeit* thus constitutes the conceptual core) must be put in connection with the legacy of Hegel's thought, which it contributed to *shape*. But which legacy? Over the past thirty years, a new episode in the reception of Hegel's philosophy has been inaugurated. After its considerable discredit, until well into the last third of the 20th century,[68] as an "empire of reason"[69] which ought to be decisively and variously questioned, Hegel's philosophy, in particular his philosophy of the "Spirit" (*Geist*), encourages today new meditations on its divergent possibilities. Along *two* different lines of thinking, chiefly: around the idea of the Spirit's often-overlooked "plasticity," which provides an important motif for developing what I am willing to call a *philosophy of the possible*, on the one hand;[70] and, on the other hand, around the possibilities (and the prerogatives) of a new "functionalism" that envisages today's *intelligentsia* (i.e. today's production and circulation of knowledge, in both its form and content) not so much as the epistemic interface of a given (and growing) social-political community (today's globalised West) but as the ultimate *cum* triumphal expression of a universal *Geist*.[71] One need not have read Lyotard[72] to appreciate behind these two options traits of the (typical) French/Anglo-American philosophical (and, more broadly, cultural) divide, or,

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[64] Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 316, 325.

[65] Berardi, *Futurability*.

[66] Gevorkyan and Segovia, "Earth and World(s)."

[67] See e.g. Mattéi, *Heidegger et Hölderlin*; Gosetti-Ferencei, *Heidegger, Hölderlin, and the Subject of Poetic Language*.

[68] In spite of the work like those of Avineri (*Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*) and Taylor (*Hegel; Hegel and Modern Society*), which prove that it is possible to engage with Hegel's thought in yet new ways.

[69] Baugh, "Limiting Reason's Empire."

[70] Malabou, "*The Future of Hegel*. See especially her concluding remarks on her approach to the *Geist* as a "reservoir of energy" (p. 187) for future "event[s]" (p. 186).

[71] Negarestani, "*Intelligence and the Spirit*. The term "functionalism" is Negarestani's own (see p. 11, 18, 19, 50, 129, 135, 163).

[72] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 11-14.

what amounts to the same, a new instantiation of the dichotomy: (leftist) *critique* (read: "critical theory")[73] *vs* ("liberal")[74] "functionalism." In contrast to both, Hölderlin's *Vereinigungsphilosophie* – which, again, is the source of Hegel's dialectic (but then the latter may still have something to say despite its Marxist corruption into the unsolved tension between productive forces and relations of production throughout "human history!") – calls our attention to an *unsolved* issue that has as little to do with the *aleatory* (read: irresponsible) production of the new as it has with the *necessary* (read: nightmarish) extension of the given. How can we *regain* – if we still can, that is – what we have *lost*?

Heidegger's prolongation of Hölderlin's *Vereinigungsphilosophie* proves, I think, extremely insightful thereof if it is paired with structural anthropology, as indeed the underlying problem behind all this has to do with the *co-implication* of "earth" and "world[s]" (in the plural) and hence, arguably, with a question of cross-cultural *meaning* production, since *meaningfulness* – that is to say, the *varied* meaningfulness through which the earth can be acknowledged to *shine forth* – is the *conditio sine qua non* for the variant *making* of worlds.[75] Furthermore, Heidegger's criticism of the modern *Ge-stell* and of the "will to power" that dangerously crouches in it,[76] if paired with Severino's criticism of the subjection of being to time,[77] allows us to reread Hölderlin's *Innigkeit* in dialectic terms, that is, as a means to *overcome* ὕβρις's "position" (θέσις) as something more than an invitation to the "releasement" (*Gelassenheit*) of the will.[78] Which takes us back to κόσμος – before and, perhaps then too, *after* ὕβρις. For as "homeless wanderers" we are also "those who might at least have the possibility opened to pass beyond drifting and to build a home outside the scaffolding thrown up by [the] completed metaphysics"[79] we have established by attempting to place ourselves "after," "above," and "beyond" (= μετά-) φύσις. Back, eventually, to κόσμος rather than to the shores of today's much-celebrated – as the "philosophy of our time"[80] –

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[73] Surely there is no need to recall the reader that Malabou's book is forwarded by Derrida.

[74] Negarestani, *Intelligence and the Spirit*, 163, in allusion to Putnam.

[75] Gevorkyan and Segovia, "Earth and World(s)."

[76] In which see Gevorkyan and Segovia, "Post-Heideggerian Drifts."

[77] Severino, *The Essence of Nihilism*.

[78] Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*.

[79] Mugerauer, *Heidegger and Homecoming*, 169.

[80] Ferrando, Philosophical Posthumanism, 1.

generalised connectivity,[81] that cannot be deemed a true solution to the worldlessness to which our pretension to submit everything to our will has inevitably carried us.[82] It is this *worldlessness* we have come to call (among other names)[83] the "Anthropocene," which must be seen as the effect of our *decoded* "will to power",[84] that is to say, as the penultimate(?) manifestation of ὕβρις's "fire," as per Heyman's pioneer *cum* lucid diagnosis.[85]

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[81] Or, worse, to the dystopian acceptance of our worldlessness, on which see Morton (2016); Végsö (2020). On the notion of a generalised connectivity, see Coole and Frost (2010: 7–9). For a criticism of Object-Oriented Ontology in this very context, see Gevorkyan and Segovia, "Post-Heideggerian Drifts." See also Gevorkyan and Segovia, eds., *From Worlds of Possibles to Possible Worlds*.

[82] "Worldlessness" (*Weltlosigkeit*) is a notion used by Heidegger's 1967 letter to Medard Boss (reproduced in Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare*, 350-351) to describe the nature of that which is merely "present-at-hand" (vorhanden), and, elsewhere, to label the most immediate effect of the subsequent "objectivation" (Vergegenständlichung) of reality (Heidegger, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 105, 114-116, 127). Interestingly, despite their respective concepts of "world" being different from one another, one finds a similar idea in Deleuze, who says: "we've quite lost the world, it's been taken from us" ("Gilles Deleuze in Conversation with Toni Negri").

[83] Tsing ("Feral Geographies"):" Plantationocene"; Mendieta ("Edge City"):"Urbanocene"; Moore ("Anthropocene or Capitalocene?"), "Capitalocene"; Haraway (Staying with the Trouble), "Chthulucene." Mentz (Break Up the Anthropocene) thus speaks of "Neologismcene."

[84] Quinn, "On Nature and Liberation," 55-56.

[85] Heyman, "Signs of Hubris."

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