Heraclitus in Verse: The Poetic Fragments of Scythinus of Teos

Francesco Sironi

Among the many losses of ancient literature, Heraclitus’ book On Nature has a preeminent place. It survives only in fragments, but we can be quite sure that, if it had survived completely, it would have changed in a considerable way the course of western philosophy. Among the main features of his thought, is the idea of fire as the ἀρχή of all things, allowing them to subsist (frr.30, 31, 90 D.-K.); insomuch as fire is the changing element par excellence, the world undergoes perpetual change. Such a cosmic mutability is summarised in the famous Heraclitean motto πάντα ῥεῖ, which, however, does not occur in the extant fragments. The ever-changing nature of things, for Heraclitus, results in the transformation of things into their opposites. These, in brief, are the main traits of Heraclitean thought, as we can know it through the remains of his work. Where we lack the original text, we must rely on secondary sources to clarify those aspects of Heraclitean thought which cannot be discerned through the extant fragments.

Among these secondary sources, the iambic poet Scythinus of Teos has not received sufficient attention, in part because almost nothing is known of his life and work. Even his date is controversial. In his only prose fragment, belonging to a lost mythographic work called the History, he mentions the city of Heraclea Trachinia, founded by the Spartans in 426 B.C. (FGrHist 13 F 1 = Ath. 461F):

"Ἡρακλῆς λαβὼν Εὔρυτον καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἠκτέινε φόρους πρήσσοντας παρ’ Εὐβοέων. Κυλικρῆς ἐξεπόρθησε ληζομένους καὶ αὐτόθι πόλιν ἐδεί̇ματο Ἡράκλειαν τὴν Τρηχινίαν καλεομένην.”

Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 59 (2019) 551–567
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Thus 426 B.C. is a *terminus post quem*.¹ The only other source about Scythinus is a passage of Diogenes Laertius, who informs us that the Peripatetic philosopher Hieronymus of Rhodes stated that Scythinus transposed the book of Heraclitus into verse (9.16):

\[ \text{Ἱερώνυμος δὲ φησι καὶ Σκυθῖνον τὸν τῶν Ῥιάμβων ποιητὴν ἐπιβαλέσθαι τὸν ἐκείνου (sc. Ἡρακλείτου) λόγον διὰ μέτρου ἐκβάλλειν.} \]

Since Hieronymus died around 230 B.C., we have a *terminus ante quem* for our poet. It is hard to locate Scythinus within such a wide timeframe. Most scholars tend to date him to the fourth century,² but he could have lived even earlier, at the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries.³ Some have proposed dating him to the third century, making him a contemporary to Hieronymus and the Stoics,⁴ but I consider this to be less probable.⁵ The fourth century seems to me to be a reasonable dating, although absolute certainty is impossible.

Thanks to Diogenes, we know that Scythinus of Teos put Heraclitus’ *On Nature* into verse. The purpose of this article is to analyse the two extant fragments of this work. We will be able to see how they appear Heraclitean in content and style and to shed a little light upon a particularly obscure aspect of Heraclitus’ philosophy.

We begin with fr.1 West. It is preserved in Plutarch’s *On the

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³ Jacoby ad *FGHist* 13 (p.489); M. L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (Berlin/New York 1974) 177.


⁵ Cf. West, *Studies* 177: “When Hieronymus wrote that Scythinus the iambographer endeavoured to express Heraclitus’ discourse in verse, he was surely not pronouncing upon the intentions of a contemporary, but of one who was already a poet of the past and therefore of interest to studious persons.”
Pythian Oracles. At a certain point, the participants in the discussion run through many votive offerings to Apollo at Delphi. Among these, wise Teon recalls that the Megarians, after a military success against the Athenians, once offered the god a statue of him holding a spear. Such an ex-voto was in fact not consonant with the benign nature of the god, so they later changed their mind. They consecrated to the god a golden plectrum, paying attention, as it seems, to Scythinus:

"...which well-shaped Apollo, Zeus’ son, fits together as a whole, taking together beginning and end; and he holds the sun’s light as a gleaming plectrum."

The fragment presents to us Apollo preparing his lyre. In light of the Heraclitean content of Scythinus’ work, it seems quite clear that Apollo, the solar god, stands here for fire. According to Heraclitus, fire is the ἀρχή of all things and has a divine nature. Such a divine principle also includes the unity of op-

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posites (fr.67): ὁ θεὸς ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη, χειμῶν θέρος, πόλεμος εἰρήνη, κόρος λιμός, ἀλλοιοῦται δε ὁκωσπερ <πῦρ>, ὡπόταν συμμετη τυχόμασιν, ὄνομάζεται καθ' ἡδονήν ἐκάστου. It is not surprising, therefore, that Apollo here tunes his lyre ὀρχὴν καὶ τέλος / συλλαβῶν.

Another fragment of Heraclitus seems to be particularly relevant for the interpretation of these lines. Fr.51 presents the lyre and the bow, Apollo’s traditional features, to describe the coincidentia oppositorum which is the foundation of the universe: οὐ ἔσυνισιν ὁκός διαφερόμενον ἐσωτέρι συμφέρεται παλίντονος ἄρμονίη ὁκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης. The “harmony” of the universe is like that of the strings of the bow and the lyre, which both contain a tension between the opposite sides of the instrument: it is a παλίντονος ἄρμονίη, an expression we should translate as “a connexion working in both directions,” following Kirk’s translation.

We must be careful not to understand such a harmony in a musical sense. The word ἄρμονίη derives from the root αρ-,

9 Cf. Diels, Poetarum Philosophorum 170.

10 The bow is also mentioned in fr.48, where its nature is depicted as paradoxical: τῷ οὖν τόξῳ ὄνομα βίος, ἔργον δὲ θάνατος.


12 Cf. O. Gigon, Untersuchungen zu Heraklit (Leipzig 1935) 23–24 on fr.51, who seems to think that Scythinus himself, though expressing the cosmological value of the image, mistook Heraclitean harmony for a musical one: “Zu beachten ist ferner, daß wir nicht das Recht haben, ἄρμονίη in musikalischen Sinne zu verstehen … Auch in den anderen Frgg. wo das Wort steht, ist von Musik nichts zu finden (Frg. 8, 54) … Wichtig sind noch einige Verse der Skythinos, die, wie wir Diogenes 12 A 1 § 16 wohl glauben müssen, von Heraklit d. h. von unserer Stelle angeregt sind (12 C 3 Frg. 1). In der poetischen Erweiterung wird deutlich, daß die ἄρμονίη (zunächst musikalisch, was im 4. Jahd. natürlich, aber für uns unmaßgeblich ist) als Weltharmonie verstanden wurde.” See also Kirk, Heraclitus 218: “But if so (and it is no more than a possibility) it tells us absolutely nothing new about Heraclitus.
‘fix’ or ‘join’. Furthermore, a musical ἁρμονία would fit only the lyre, neglecting the other element of the comparison, the bow.\textsuperscript{13} In Scythinus, Apollo himself provides such a tension, which allows things to exist. He tunes (ἀρμόζεται, “tunes” but also “fits together putting in a state of harmony”) the lyre, taking together the beginning and the end, a pair of opposites which plays a prominent role in the extant fragments of Heraclitus. In fr.103 the beginning and the end are opposites coexisting in the same context, namely a circle: ξυνὸν γὰρ ἀρχὴ καὶ πέρας ἐπὶ κύκλου περιφερείας.

The lyre of the Scythinus fragment is then vivified by the light of the sun, the golden plectrum. We know that the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes, whose date in relation to Scythinus is uncertain, called the light of the sun “plectrum,” which leads the universe to its “harmonious course”: οὐκ ἀνέγνωσαν δ’ οὖτοι Κλεάνθην τὸν φιλόσοφον, ὡς ἀντικρυς πληκτρον τὸν ἡλίον καλεί· ἐν γὰρ ταῖς ἀνατολαῖς ἐρείδων τὰς αὐγὰς, οἶνον πλῆσσόν τὸν κόσμον, εἰς τὴν ἐναρμόνιον πορείαν τὸ φῶς ἀγεί· ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου σημαίνει καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἀστρα.\textsuperscript{14} The light of the sun in Scythinus is except perhaps, what is not surprising, that Scythinus misunderstood him by taking ἁρμονία in a musical sense.” I do not agree with this reading, since the image of the lyre, as we have seen, was already used by Heraclitus (fr.51), along with that of the bow. Therefore, it is not surprising to find it in Scythinus, with no need to add any musical sense to the fragment, where, moreover, Apollo does not play the instrument, but simply applies the Heraclitean coincidentia oppositorum (ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος / συλλαβοὺς). I suspect that in some lost passage of his work Scythinus also expanded the image of the bow, probably in relation to Apollo, whose traditional features are in fact the bow and the lyre.

\textsuperscript{13} These arguments and a brief history of the occurrences and the meanings of the word ἁρμονία up to Heraclitus’ time can be found in Kirk, Heraclitus 207–208.

\textsuperscript{14} Clem. Al. Strom. 5.8.48 = SVF I 502. The image of the sunlight as plectrum occurs later, although not in a philosophical context, in Philostr. Imag. 1.7, where Philostratus deals with the transformation of Memnon into a statue and then describes the so-called Colossi of Memnon, one of which produced mysterious sounds at dawn, interpreted as Memnon’s greeting to his mother: δοκεῖ γὰρ ὁ Ἡλιος οἶονει πληκτρον κατὰ στόμα ἐμπίπτων τῷ

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then, once again, a metaphor for fire, the principle which allows the world to exist. As for Cleanthes, it is worth considering how the so-called ‘theory of tension’ (τόνος) played a role in his philosophy.\textsuperscript{15} According to Cleanthes, tension is the basis of everything and it is nothing but a πληγὴ πυρὸς, a “hit of fire.”\textsuperscript{16} In other words, fire is for him the Stoic logos which rationally and providentially vivifies the world through the light of the sun.

As we can see, there are some interesting similarities between Cleanthes’ thought and Scythinus’ lines. We might suspect that one author influenced the other. Since we know Scythinus as a Heraclitean poet, and not as a Stoic, and considering that, to some extent, the Stoics, especially Cleanthes, drew inspiration from Heraclitean philosophy, I tend to think that Scythinus influenced Cleanthes, as the probable, although not certain, dating of the first confirms. Cleanthes (or some of his disciples) perhaps quoted these lines in order to defend his own theories, maybe in some book of his lost Ἡρακλείτου ἐξηγήσεις.\textsuperscript{17} Through this Stoic intermediary, these lines by Scythinus might have survived until Plutarch’s time, allowing him to read and quote them. In fact, Plutarch usually depends on Stoic sources when it comes to Heraclitean quotations.\textsuperscript{18} On the other hand, we cannot exclude that Cleanthes depended directly on Heraclitus, without relying on Scythinus’ paraphrase.\textsuperscript{19}

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\textsuperscript{15} Cf. M. Pohlenz, Die Stoa. Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung\textsuperscript{2} (Göttingen 1959) 74–75.

\textsuperscript{16} See SIV I 497, 514, 537.6–7, 563.

\textsuperscript{17} We know thanks to Diogenes Laertius (7.174) that he wrote several works, among which are the four books of Ἡρακλείτου ἐξηγήσεις. His disciple Sphaerus of Borysthenes wrote five books Περὶ Ἡρακλείτου (Diog. Laert. 7.177).

\textsuperscript{18} A. Fairbanks, “On Plutarch’s Quotations from Early Greek Philosophers,” TAPA 28 (1897) 75–87, at 81.

\textsuperscript{19} The purpose of Scythinus’ work might have been to provide a mnemonic help in the study of Heraclitean philosophy. Cf. P. Schuster, \textit{Heraklit von...}
In light of this brief Quellenforschung, it seems quite easy to read the allegorical meaning of the scene described by Scythinus. Fire (Apollo and his solar plectrum) regulates the world (the lyre) by establishing a fundamental tension between the opposites which constitute the universe, just as he joined the strings of the lyre to the instrument. Scythinus has concentrated the cornerstones of Heraclitean philosophy in a vivid and concise image.  

The second extant fragment of Scythinus is preserved by Stobaeus in a prose version that still presents traces of metre:

ἐκ τοῦ Σκυθίνου Περὶ φύσεως, χρόνος ἐστὶν ὑστατὸν καὶ πρῶτον πάντων καὶ ἔχει ἐν ἐαυτῷ πάντα καὶ ἔστιν εἰς ἅνει καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν,

Epheus: ein Versuch dessen Fragmente in ihrer ursprünglichen Ordnung wiederherzustellen (Leipzig 1873) 355.

Citing Hymn.Orph. 34.15–23, where Apollo, “master of the beginning and the end” (15), plays the lyre causing the year to be divided into three seasons (winter, summer, spring), M. L. West, The Orphic Poems (Oxford 1983) 30, has suggested that the strings of the lyre in Scythinus’ fragment might be the seasons of the year. This is quite tempting, especially in light of the possible traces of Orphism in Scythinus (see infra), but we must consider that in our fragment Apollo simply tunes the lyre connecting the opposites. He does not play it, so that it seems difficult to detect an analogy with the seasons. Scythinus’ fragment appears to be nothing more than a poetic expansion or paraphrase of some surviving Heraclitean passages. As for these lines by Scythinus, R. Mondolfo and L. Tarán, Eraclito: testimonianze e frammenti (Florence 1972) 274, cited Democrit. fr.158 D.–K.: ὁ ἥλιος ἀνασχὼν … συνόρησε τῷ φωτὶ τὰς πράξεις καὶ τὰς νοήσεις τῶν ἄπαντων, ὡς φησὶ Δημόκριτος· νέα ἔρι ἱμέρη φρονέωντες ἀνθρώπου, τῇ πρὸς ἄλληλους ὁμή καθαπέρι ἀρτήματι συντόνος σπασθέντες ἄλλος ἄλλαξόθεν ἔστι τὰς πράξεις ἀνίστανται. Mondolfo points out that the image of men awakened to action as if they were pulled by a syntonos rope is substantially based on the Heraclitean interpretation of Hom. Il. 8.18 ff., where Zeus threatens to suspend the gods by a golden rope (namely the sun, for the Heraclitean; cf. Pl. Tht. 153C–D). This seems to confirm again the Heraclitean content of Scythinus’ fragment, underlining the importance of the sun in Heraclitus’ philosophy.

Stob. Ecl. 1.8.43 [I 108.6 Wachsmuth]; fr.2 West. Text (with the exception of the cruces) Diels, Poetarum Philosopherum 170. The Latin introducing the metrical reconstruction is mine. The various attempts to restore the verses are described in the Appendix below. Unlike fr.1, this fragment is not included in the latest edition of the early Greek philosophers: A. Laks and G. W. Most, Early Greek Philosophy III (Cambridge [Mass.] 2016)
From Scythinus' *On Nature*. Time is the last and first of all things and it contains everything and it is always one and it is not one, since he proceeds from what is now, being present for itself in the opposite direction. For us, in fact, tomorrow is yesterday and yesterday tomorrow.

Post alios, qui vel hexametros vel iambos subesse coniecerant, tetrametros agnovit Wilamowitz, quos Diels, illum uti solet secutus, sic restituit:

\[
\text{πάντων χρόνος,}
\]
\[
\text{ὕστατον καὶ πρῶτόν ἐστιν, καὶ ἔστιν ἕως πάντων ἐστιν, καὶ ἔστιν ἕως καὶ ἐκ πρώτου μὲν τῶν ἐργῶν ἕστιν, τὸ δὲ χθές αὖριον.}
\]
\[
	ext{αὖριον γὰρ ἐναντίων ὁδόν, τὸ δὲ χθές αὐτοῦ.}
\]

2 Ὑστάτῳ πρῶτῳ τοῦ πάντων ἐν τῷ χθείῳ πάντων ἐστὶν: ὑστάτῳ πρῶτῳ τοῦ πάντων ἐστὶν χρόνος Edmonds 3 εἰς αὐτόν καὶ καὶ παραξενοινός Edmonds 4 αὐτός ὁδόν Edmonds 5 ἡμικρὸν καὶ τρίτων ἐστὶν, τὸ δὲ χθές αὐτοῦ: αὐτός ἐκ τῆς ἐναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 6 τῷ τῷ αὐτοῦ αὐτῷ ἐν ἐναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 7 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 8 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 9 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 10 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 11 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 12 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 13 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 14 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 15 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 16 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 17 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 18 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 19 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds 20 ἑναντίων ὁδόν Edmonds

Of all things time is the last and the first, and it contains everything in itself, and it is one and it is not one; it always proceeds from the present moment being present at itself in the opposite direction.

For us, in fact, tomorrow is yesterday and yesterday tomorrow.

As one can see, this text deserves a place among the most obscure passages in Greek poetry. Things are made more difficult by the fact that the prose in Stobaeus is corrupt in some places. The lemma informs us that the fragment comes from a work called *Περὶ φύσεως*. Since this was also the title of the book written by Heraclitus, we can be quite sure that the content of
the Stobaean prose belongs to the book by Scythinus (of whom we know no other work except the *History*). It provides a unique and otherwise unattested definition of χρόνος (time). The word does not occur in Heraclitus’ extant fragments. The word αἰών, which we find in fr.52, is to be understood as “time of human life”: αἰὼν παῖς ἐστὶ παίζων, πεσσεύων· παιδὸς ἡ βασιληή. It does not mean “time” in the absolute sense. Since we know that Scythinus merely transposed Heraclitus’ book into verse, we can conclude with a fair degree of certainty that we are dealing with the Heraclitean definition of time.

After accepting a few necessary emendations to the Stobaean prose, cited in the apparatus and followed in my translation, a problem arises: how to restore the original metrical form of this passage. Many attempts have been made, among which we can find scasons, hexameters, iambic trimeters. We owe to Wilamowitz the identification of the trochaic tetrameter as the metre underlying these lines. It fits the metre of the other extant fragment of Scythinus and it seems respectful of the rhythm of the Stobaean prose. Wilamowitz’s reconstruction was almost com-

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pletely accepted by Diels, who only preferred αὐτὸς αὐτῷ over αὐτὶς αὐτὸς in line 4.\textsuperscript{26} There are two other reconstructions in tetrameters, by Edmonds and West, which I quote in the Appendix.\textsuperscript{27} Wilamowitz’s proposal, however, seems the most consistent and philologically reliable. Edmonds’ attempt is vitiated by unjustified conjectures which are not supported by the prose.\textsuperscript{28} On the other hand, the reconstruction by West is not complete, since especially line 4 presents a conjectural lacuna. This does not seem to respect the principle of economy, and the word χρόνος, the object of the definition, is missing. Furthermore, the last verse in West’s reconstruction seems to contradict the rest of the fragment. These lines describe time as a circular entity, as we shall see, and it would be strange if Scytthinus, after presenting such a circularity, ended by describing the result as the linear sequence of the days (yesterday, today, tomorrow).

To comment on the text, it is prudent to rely on the Stobaean prose, which is our primary source, rather than on Wilamowitz’s reconstruction. In both texts, however, the content is almost the same. According to Scytthinus, time is the first and last of all things. It sounds paradoxical, but, as we have seen, such a definition seems to agree with what we know about Heraclitean thought. Furthermore, it is underlined by a strong _hysteron proteron_ in the words ὑστατὸν καὶ πρῶτον, “the last and first thing,” the superlative forms of the comparatives _hysteron_ and _proteron_ which give the rhetorical device its name. We could say that we are

\textsuperscript{26} I also opt for αὐτὸς αὐτῷ, since I accept Diels’s παρεὼν ἑαυτῷ for the corrupt ἡπαρεωνιατῶν. I consider it to be closer to the prose than Wilamowitz’s παρεὼν αὐτός, which remains a very good conjecture.

\textsuperscript{27} Edmonds, _Greek Elegy_ II 246; M. L. West, _Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati_ II (Oxford 1972; 1992) 98, whose text is unchanged in the second edition.

\textsuperscript{28} This shows once again Edmonds’s mastery of Greek, in spite of his scarcely philological attitude towards the textual evidence. Such a creative approach was harshly criticised by Edgar Lobel in a review of Edmonds’s _Lyra Graeca_, which he eloquently renamed _Dyra Graeca_. Lobel claimed with biting humour that the dialect of Sappho and Alcaeus in Edmonds’s edition was not Lesbian at all but “Triballian”: _CR_ 36 (1922) 120–121.
dealing with the ultimate *hysteron proteron*, in both form and content. As the first and last of all things, time contains everything, ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῷ πάντα.29

After this statement, we immediately face another paradoxical feature of time: it is and is not always one, ἔστιν ἕς ἀεί καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν. This seems to echo fr.10, συλλάψιες ὅλα καὶ οὐχ ὅλα, συμφερόμενον διαφερόμενον, συνῄδουν διὰδον· καὶ ἐκ πάντων ἐν καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντα.30 From a single thing there generates a plurality of things and vice versa. Such a process seems to be a result of “acts of taking together” or “things taken together” (συλλάψιες).31 These συλλάψιες are of course examples of the greatest σύλλαψις of all, i.e. the cosmos, which results from one

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30 I prefer the variant συλλάψιες to συνάψιες (see the discussion in Markovich, Heracleitus 105).

31 For the meaning of συλλάψιες in this Heraclitean fragment see C. Diano and G. Serra, Eraclito, I frammenti e le testimonianze (Milan 1980) 126: “σύλλαψις dunque significa il modo in cui più ‘elementi’ sono ‘presi insieme’ e tra di loro ‘connessi’ e, se si vuole, anche quegli stessi elementi presi insieme o connessi in questo o quel modo.” Cf. Scythinus fr.1.2–3 ἄρχην καὶ τέλος / συλλαβών.
and many.\(^{32}\) Since time contains everything, it is one and it is not, appearing to be itself the supreme cosmic σύλλαψις, the very container of all the others συλλάψιες. The obscurity of both Heraclitus and Scythinus prevents us from interpreting the expression κάστιν εἶς κοῦκ ἕστιν with absolute certainty, but I find it definitely tempting to read it this way and, for now, I consider it to be the only possible solution to the problem.

Time is here described as a circle, since it moves from now to find itself in the opposite direction.\(^{33}\) The identity of opposite ways was already expressed by Heraclitus in what is now fr.60: ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὁμότη.\(^{34}\) At the same time, the idea that time is a circle is quite a commonplace in Greek literature, especially in the archaic and classical age. In a fragment of the comedian Hermippus, we find a definition of ἐνιαυτός (the year) which sounds similar to that of time given in our fragment (fr.73 K.-A.).\(^{35}\)

\[\text{ἐκεῖνὸς ἐστὶ στρογγύλος τὴν ὅψιν, ὤ πωκαρε, ἐντὸς δ’ ἔχουν περιέρχεται κύκλῳ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ, ἡμᾶς δὲ τίκτει περιτρέχον τὴν γῆν ἀπαξάπασαν· ὄνομάζεται δ’ ἐνιαυτός, ὃν δὲ περιφερής τελευτῆν}\]


\(^{33}\) As we can see, we are presented with a conflation of chronological and spatial conceptions.

\(^{34}\) On this fragment, there are two main interpretations among others. The first reads it as a further expression of the Heraclitean coincidentia oppositorum. The other is due to Theophrastus (Diog. Laert. 9. 8–9), according to whom these words are a metaphor for fr.31 (πυρὸς τροπαὶ πρῶτον θάλασσα, θαλάσσης δὲ τὸ μὲν ἡμῖν γῆ, τὸ δὲ ἡμῖν πρήστηρ), so that the upward and downward path would be a symbol of the mutual interchange of fire, earth, and water. If we read an echo of fr.60 in Scythinus, this second interpretation seems to be excluded. On this issue see Kirk, Heraclitus 106 ff., and Marcovich, Heraclitus 171–172, who both reject Theophrastus’ interpretation.

\(^{35}\) The parallel is suggested by West, Studies 176–177 (following Kirk, Heraclitus 298). The Heraclitean philosophers were very fond of etymologies. Note especially Plato’s Cratilus, where the same etymology of ἐνιαυτός is provided (410D).
These lines are a pastiche of Heraclitean elements. Line 2, in particular, seems to be quite close to Scythinus’ fragment, which however gives a definition of χρόνος, not of ἐνιαυτός.

As a result of this circular and paradoxical nature of time, tomorrow is for us yesterday and yesterday tomorrow. Once again, we have a hysteron proteron in both form and content, since tomorrow and yesterday are actually inverted, not only at a rhetorical level, but also at a chronological one.36 The fragment ends with this γνώμη, which “resembles what passed for Heraclitean style in the fourth century B.C. cf de victu I passim.”37 To sum up, Heraclitus presumably conceived time as a supreme

36 Commenting on Heraclitus fr.88 (ταῦτο γ’ ἔνι ξὸν καὶ τεθνηκὸς καὶ τὸ ἑρημοφόρος καὶ τὸ καθεύδον καὶ νέον καὶ γηραιόν τάδε γὰρ μεταπεσόντα ἐκείνα ἐστι, κάκεινα πάλιν μεταπεσόντα ταῦτα), Gigon, Untersuchungen 93, cites a passage of Plutarch (392C–D), where Ammonius, Plutarch’s teacher, speaking of the mutability of the sensible world, quotes Heraclitus (frs.91 and 76) and states: θείεται μὲν ὁ ἀκμάζων γινομένου γέροντος, ἐφθάρη δ’ ὁ νέος εἰς τὸν ἀκμάζοντα, καὶ ὁ παῖς εἰς τὸν νέον, εἰς δὲ τὸν παῖδα τὸ νήπιον ἀποθνήσκει. According to Gigon, it is possible to detect an analogy between this passage and the end of Scythinus’ fragment, which looks like a ‘reduction’ of the last couple of opposites in fr.88. Gigon then wonders whether Heraclitus had selected the opposites in “immer kleineren Zeitabschnitten” to demonstrate the tirelessness of change, but concludes that nothing is certain, especially because of Scythinus’ obscurity. I tend to think that the relation between Plutarch’s passage and Scythinus is not so strong. In Plutarch, in fact, we see a linear conception of time, which implies the sequence yesterday-today-tomorrow, without mentioning any inversion. R. Walzer, Eraclei: raccolta dei frammenti e traduzione italiana (Florence 1939) 124, also cites the Plutarch passage and fr.88 in relation to Scythinus.

37 Kirk, Heraclitus 298. The Corpus Hippocraticum, especially in the De victu and the De nutrimento, presents more or less explicit echoes of Heraclitean thought. This is true in particular for the identity of opposite ways. The expression ὁδὸς ἀνω κάτω μία καὶ οὔτῃ is often echoed and, sometimes, even literally quoted. For a complete and commented collection of the Heraclitean passages in the Corpus Hippocraticum see Mondolfo and Tarán, Eraclito 220 ff.
entity, the last and first of all, containing everything, characterised by unity and plurality at the same time and circular in his course.

It is worth considering some analogies between such a conception of time and some Orphic doctrines. Many Orphic cosmogonies present Time as the primigenial being from which everything originates; see, for example, fr.109F Bernabè, Ὄρφεὺς τὴν πρώτην πάντων αἰτίαν Χρόνον καλεῖ ὁμονύμως σχεδὸν τῷ Κρόνῳ. This is the case in the so-called Protogonos Theogony, according to which, in the beginning, was unaging Time. The so-called Rhapsodic Theogony, too, has Time as the first primordial being, origin of all. Such a mythology presenting Time as the first original being, dating back to the sixth century, probably has oriental roots. It emerges also in Pherecydes of Syros. Chronology therefore allows the hypothesis that Orphic elements of Eastern origin were embraced by Heraclitus and then reached Scythinus. As a matter of fact, scholars have often detected the presence of Orphic doctrines in Heraclitus’ thought, without it being Orphic tout court. The ancients were

39 In particular, the Zoroastrian cosmogony presents Zurvan (unlimited Time) as the origin of all. Cf. M. L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford 1971) 30 ff.
40 For the relations between Heraclitean thought and Persian religion see West, *Early Greek Philosophy* 165–202. West claims with some conviction that elements of Eastern religion were not unfamiliar to Heraclitus: “The connections between Heraclitus’ thought and Persian religion (as we know it from the literature of Zoroastrian orthodoxy) are proportionately strong” (202). Degani, *ΑΙΩΝ* 113–114, claims that χρόνος, not αἰών, was the word that Heraclitus would have used to express the Iranian conception of “unlimited Time” (zervan akarana). χρόνος does not occur in the extant fragments of Heraclitus, but we find it in Scythinus, who presents some Orphic and Oriental traits. In light of this, we may conclude without fear of excessive boldness that the word χρόνος must have occurred in some lost Heraclitean fragment, later paraphrased by Scythinus, and there it described a conception quite close to the Orphic and Oriental one.
sometimes even more willing to individuate such influences, thus Clement of Alexandria, who was persuaded that Heraclitus almost completely depended on Orphism (Strom. 6.27.1): σιωπῶ δὲ Ἦρακλεῖτον τὸν Ἐφέσιον, ὃς παρ’ Ὀρφέως τὰ πλεῖστα εἴληφεν.

The extant fragments of Scythinus, although cryptic, might therefore be a further element in favour of the presence of Orphic doctrines in Heraclitean thought.  

APPENDIX

To illustrate an episode in the history of classical scholarship, I collect here the attempted reconstructions of the χρόνος fragment that have been proposed over the last centuries. It should be noted that the prose on which they base their metrical restoration sometimes differs, though not drastically.

The first to attempt to recover the original metrical form was Heeren, who chose the scason iambic trimeter in his edition of the Stobean anthology:  

Χρόνος γὰρ ὑστατὸν καὶ πρῶτον πάντων γε,
"Εχει δ’ ἐν αὐτῷ πάντα τ’, ἔστιν δ’ εἰς αἰεί.
Κοῦκ ἔστιν ὁ παροιχόμενος ἐκ τοῦ γ’ ἐπιόντος
Αὐτῷ γ’ ἐναυτὴν ὄδὸν παρ’ ἐνιαυτῶν.
’Ημὶν γὰρ σὺριον μὲν ἐγραφ’ χθές γ’ ἔστιν
Τὸ δ’ ἐχθές ἁυριον – – –

Scazons were also the metre of Meineke’s partial reconstruction, limited to the beginning of the preserved text:  

χρόνος ἔστι πάντων ὑστατόν τε καὶ πρῶτον
ἔχει τ’ ἐν αὐτῷ πάντα κῆστιν εἰς αἰεί.

In 1873 Schuster proposed a restoration in hexameters:  

42 Another instance of similarity can be detected in fr.31F Bernabè, where Zeus is described as first and last, just as time is in Scythinus: Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένετο, Ζεὺς ὑστατος ἀργικέραυνος.


44 Meineke, Ioannis Stobaei Eclogarum II xliii.

45 Schuster, Heraklit 354.
In 1877 came Bywater’s attempt in iambic trimeters:47

In 1884 Wilamowitz was the first to see trochaic tetrameters beneath the Stobaean prose:48

After Wilamowitz, only attempts in trochaic tetrameters were made, thus Edmonds in 1931:49

The most recent proposal is that of West in 1972:50

On ὅλων Schuster writes: “τὸ ὅλον, ὅλα statt τὸ πᾶν, πάντα kommt oft bei den Stoikern vor (vergl. Zeller III, 1 S. 174); ebenso gebrauchte es auch schon Heraklit, wenn er auch nicht, wie Schleiermacher meinte, es stehend statt πάντα anwendete.”

Bywater, *Heracliti Ephesii reliquiae* 68.

Wilamowitz, *Kleine Schriften* IV 582.

Edmonds, *Greek Elegy* II 246.

West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* II 98.
ἐξ ἐόντος <αὐτοῦ> αὐτῷ <τῆν> ἑναντίην όδὸν
παρ’ ἑναντίον … τὸ δ’ αὐριον
ἡματι τρίτῳ χθές ἐστιν, <τοῦ> το δὲ χθές αὐριον.\(^{51}\)

June, 2019

Università degli Studi di Milano
francesco.sironi@unimi.it

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\(^{51}\) The long elaboration of this article has benefited from the generous advice of many people over the years. I wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Luigi Lehnus, Prof. Giuseppe Lozza, Prof. Giovanni Benedetto, and Prof. André Lardinois. I am also grateful to Dr. Hans Hansen for carefully proofreading my English and to the anonymous referees for their valuable suggestions. A preliminary version of this paper was read in 2017 at the University of Edinburgh as part of the Classics Postgraduate Seminars. I am solely responsible for any remaining mistakes or inaccuracies.

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Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 59 (2019) 551–567