

Ponos and Aponia

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IN *GRBS* 23 (1982) 147–56, A. L. Boegehold presented an interesting argument that, in the years 424–421, a group of dissenters in Athens, led by Nikias, who favored making peace with Sparta, adopted as a slogan *πόνων πανσώμεθα*. This formulation transformed the connotation of *πόνος* from a traditionally patriotic expression of the hard work needed to achieve a noble goal to a more pessimistic term for the hardships and suffering of an unnecessarily protracted war. Boegehold adduced passages in Thucydides, Euripides, and Aristophanes to illustrate the extraordinary popularity and often highly charged rhetorical uses of *πόνος* in this period.

It may be relevant to introduce in this context a unique depiction, on an Athenian vase of the following decade, 420–410, of a woman labelled ΑΠΟΝΙΑ (PLATE 1).¹ There is no literary evidence for Aponia as the name of a divinity, mythological figure, or historical person, and it is clear from other figures on the same vase, to be discussed *infra*, that Aponia is meant here as a personified abstraction.

The word *ἀπονία* first occurs in extant Greek literature several decades after the date of this vase,² in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (2.2.25), where its connotation is clearly pejorative ('laziness'), and it is linked with *βλακεία* ('indolence', 'stupidity'). Aristotle once uses the word *ἀπονία* in this negative sense (*Rh.* 1370a14), but once also in a more positive, or at least neutral, sense ('freedom from toil', *Gen.An.* 775a37). These two different meanings are antitheses, respectively, of the two kinds of *πόνος* described by Boegehold, what might be called the Good Ponos and the Bad Ponos, on the analogy of Hesiod's Good and Bad Eris (*Op.* 11–24).

¹ Red-figured pyxis, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 09.221.40; Beazley, *ARV*² 1328.99 (Manner of the Meidias Painter); G. M. A. Richter and L. F. Hall, *Red-figured Athenian Vases in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New Haven 1936) no. 161. The initial *alpha* of ΑΠΟΝΙΑ does not appear in the drawing reproduced in Richter/Hall pl. 159, because, as Miss Richter explains (203 n.5), it was recognized only after the drawing was made. All the inscriptions on the vases are now extremely faded and cannot be made out in a photograph such as the one reproduced here. I am very grateful to Dietrich von Bothmer for kindly providing this photograph.

² The adverbial form *ἀπόνως*, cited by Boegehold (148), occurs in Thuc. 2.36.2.

It seems unlikely that a vase-painter could have personified Aponia for the first time, much less coined an entirely new word. If he was not inspired by a now lost literary work, at least the word ἀπονία must have been in the air in Athens, and the intense concern with πόνος in the 420's as illustrated by Boegehold suggests that this was a likely time for the creation of the new coinage ἀπονία.

The other figures on the vase in New York are Aphrodite and her retinue of female attendants, all given the names of personified abstractions: Eudaimonia,³ Eukleia, Hygieia, Paidia, and Peitho. Such groups of personifications occur on about fifteen other vases of this period, most of them by or related in style to the Meidias Painter, though Aponia occurs only this once.⁴ There are no overt political references in these vase scenes, which are often classed with the 'escapist' vase-painting of the Peloponnesian War years, idealized images of elegant women whose chief concerns are love and marriage, as suggested by the presence of Aphrodite. Some commentators have interpreted the scenes as quasi-allegories, in which the personifications embody the blessings of love.⁵ ἀπονία, one could say, was one of the perquisites of the free-born, happily married Athenian matron.

Recently, however, D. Metzler, in a study of these Meidian vases, has argued that not all the personifications have an obvious association with Aphrodite and that several seem rather to have a sociological or political meaning. Among the latter he singles out Eunomia, Eukleia, Paidia, and Aponia.⁶ Paidia ('playfulness') has been confused by Metzler with Paideia ('training'); it is the former who is depicted on five vases, including ours, where she is clearly a child in the company of women and plays a game of balancing a stick. She is in fact the only personification who is unmistakably portrayed in a manner appropriate to the meaning of her name. Eunomia and Eukleia do, on the other hand, have undeniable political significance.⁷ The former does not appear on the New York vase, though she

³ The inscription was originally read as ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ and so reproduced in Richter/Hall (*supra* n.1). Only later was the full name read: J. D. Beazley, "Some Inscriptions on Vases," *AJA* 54 (1950) 320.

⁴ For discussion of these personified figures and lists of representations see F. W. Hamdorf, *Griechische Kultpersonifikationen der vorhellenistischen Zeit* (Mainz 1964), and most recently J. Neils, "A Greek Nativity by the Meidias Painter," *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 70 (September 1983) 281-83.

⁵ E.g. T. B. L. Webster, *Potter and Patron in Classical Athens* (London 1972) 68.

⁶ D. Metzler, "Eunomia und Aphrodite," *Hephaistos* 2 (1980) 75.

⁷ For the fullest discussion see R. Hampe, "Eukleia und Eunomia," *RömMitt* 62 (1955) 107-123. Eunomia, but not Eukleia, is discussed by G. Grossmann, *Politische Schlagwörter aus der Zeit des peloponnesischen Krieges* (Zurich 1950) 30-89.

occurs on ten vases of this period, more often than any other personification.⁸

Furthermore, both Peitho and Aphrodite had a political aspect which is well attested in the fifth century, but in origin probably much older. In his ode in praise of Athens as the home of learning and the Muses, Euripides names Aphrodite as benefactress of the city (*Med.* 824–45).⁹ One of her cult places, on the southwest slope of the Akropolis, was the ancient sanctuary of Aphrodite Pandemos and Peitho.¹⁰ Two different explanations of the cult title Pandemos are given by ancient authors, both explicitly political. Apollodoros the historian states that all the *demos* used to gather in assembly by this sanctuary,¹¹ while according to Pausanias (1.22.3) the sanctuary was founded by Theseus when he united all the demes of Attika. Peitho, worshipped there in association with Aphrodite and depicted as serving the goddess on our pyxis, as on several other vases, probably took on an increasingly political character (as rhetorical persuasion) under the influence of the Sophistic movement.¹² In the Hellenistic period, Aphrodite was worshipped near the Agora under the cult name Ἡγεμόνη τοῦ Δήμου, together with the Charites.¹³ Thus what seems at first the purely private and domestic world of Aphrodite and her divine retinue on these vases would have carried at the same time, for the ancient viewer, an allusion to the public, political sphere.

The pairing of Aponia and Eukleia on the New York pyxis offers the best evidence both that the names are not randomly applied and that an allusion to contemporary events may be intended. εὐκλεία had long been a key word in Greek literature used to express the fame and glory resulting from military victory.¹⁴ Half a century before our vase was made, the Athenians had built a temple to Eukleia from the spoils taken at Marathon.¹⁵ By the late fifth century there was

⁸ See the list in Metzler (*supra* n.6) 74.

⁹ Cf. Soph. *OC* 691–93, where Aphrodite is again associated with the nourishing waters of the River Kephisos.

¹⁰ On the location of the sanctuary see L. Beschi, “Contributi di topografia ateniese,” *ASAtene* n.s. 29–30 (1967–68) 517–28.

¹¹ Harp. s.v. Πάνδημος Ἀφροδίτῃ (*FGrHist* 244F113.).

¹² On the political significance of the cult of Aphrodite Pandemos and Peitho see E. Simon, “Aphrodite Pandemos auf attischen Münzen,” *SNR* 49 (1970) 11–14, and, on the character and representations of Peitho, *EAA* 6 (1965) 5–8 s.v. “Peitho.”

¹³ *IG* II² 2798 (197/6 B.C.).

¹⁴ *E.g.* *Il.* 8.285, Soph. *Aj.* 465.

¹⁵ Paus. 1.14.5. The site of the temple is not known: see W. Gauer, *Weihgeschenke aus den Perserkriegen* (Tübingen 1968) 70. E. B. Harrison, “Alkamenes’ Sculptures for the Hephaisteion,” *AJA* 81 (1977) 139 n.14, suggests that the temple of Eukleia is the so-called Theseum, more often identified as the temple of Hephaistos.

probably a joint cult of Eukleia and Eunomia in Athens.¹⁶ Eukleia and Aponia stand together and exchange glances on the pyxis in New York. The juxtaposition calls to mind Euripides' genealogy making Ponos the father of Eukleia.¹⁷ To the playwright's conventional wisdom replies a vase-painter, perhaps a dissenter himself, that freedom from toil (*i.e.* peace) can bring good repute as well. Aphrodite nearby suggests that his message could have been one popular again in America in the 1960's: Make love not war.¹⁸

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 May, 1984

¹⁶ Hampe (*supra* n.7) 119; the possibility earlier discussed by M. Guarducci, "Eukleia," *SMSR* 14 (1938) 5, and A. Andrewes, "Eunomia," *CQ* 32 (1938) 102. Several vases show the two together, *e.g.* an oinochoe in Budapest, Beazley, *ARV*² 1324.41 *bis*; *Jdl* 52 (1937) 65.

¹⁷ Fr.474 N.² Similarly, Eudaimonia on our vase, not far from Aponia, may recall a Euripidean verse cited by Boegehold (152): *τοιγὰρ πονουῦσα πολλὰ πολλ' εὐδαιμονεῖ* (*Supp.* 577).

¹⁸ This paper was written in part during a stay in Rome made possible by the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung.



ATTIC PYXIS, NEW YORK 09.221.40
Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1909