

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 (fr.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):

μνημονεύει δ' αὐτῶν καὶ Σκυθίνος ὁ Τήιος ἐν τῇ ἐπιγραφομένῃ Ἱστορίῃ λέγων οὕτως· “Ἡρακλῆς λαβὼν Εὐρυτον καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔκτεινε φόρους πρήσσοντας παρ' Εὐβοέων. Κυλικρῆνας ἐξεπόρθησε ληζομένους καὶ αὐτόθι πόλιν ἐδείματο Ἡράκλειαν τὴν Τρηγινίαν καλεομένην.”

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):

Ἱερόνυμος δέ φησι καὶ Σκυθῖνον τὸν τῶν ἰάμβων 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*

¹ Cf. R. L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography* II (Oxford 2013) 732.

² T. Bergk, *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*⁴ II (Leipzig 1882) 508; H. Diels, *Poetarum Philosophorum Fragmenta* (Berlin 1901) 169; F. Jacoby, "Skythinos," *RE* 3A (1927) 696–697.

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

⁴ G. S. Kirk, *Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge 1954) 11.

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:⁶

ὑστερον μέντοι (Megarenses) πληκτρον ἀνέθηκαν τῷ θεῷ χρυ-
σοῦν, ἐπιστήσαντες ὡς ἔοικε Σκυθίνῳ λέγοντι περὶ τῆς λύρας,
ἣν ἀρμόζεται
Ζηνὸς εὐειδῆς Ἀπόλλων πᾶσαν, ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος
συλλαβῶν, ἔχει δὲ λαμπρὸν πληκτρον ἡλίου φάος.
2 πᾶσιν Diels 1903

However, the Megarians later dedicated a golden plectrum to the god, paying attention, as it seems, to Scythinus, who so speaks about the lyre:

... 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.⁷ In light of the Heraclitean content of Scythinus' work, it seems quite clear that Apollo, the solar god, stands here for fire.⁸ 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-

⁶ Plut. *De Pyth. or.* 16, 402A (III 42.11 Sieveking) = *SVFI* 502.

⁷ D. Weber, *Aviens Phaenomena, eine Arat-Bearbeitung aus der lateinischen Spätantike* (Vienna 1986) 161, and M. Fiedler, *Kommentar zu V. 367–746 von Aviens Neugestaltung der Phaenomena Arats* (Munich/Leipzig 2004) 218, point out a possible echo of this fragment in Avien. *Phaen.* 621–622: *hanc* (viz. the lyre) *ubi rursum / concentus superi complexit pulcher Apollo*.

⁸ Cf. Bergk, *Poetae Lyrici* 508: “Ἀπόλλων autem est *ignis*, conf. Clemens ad Gent. p. 42 [*Protr.* 5.64] Παρμενίδης δὲ ὁ Ἐλεάτης θεοῦς εἰσηγήσατο πῦρ καὶ γῆν, θάτερον δὲ αὐτοῖν μόνον τὸ πῦρ θεὸν ὑπειλήφατον Ἴππασός τε ὁ Μεταποντῆνος καὶ ὁ Ἐφέσιος Ἡράκλειτος. Et deinde τοῦτο τοι καὶ οἱ ἀμφὶ τὸν Ἡράκλειτον τὸ πῦρ ὡς ἀρχέγονον σέβοντες πεπόνθασιν.”

posites (fr.67): ὁ θεὸς ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη, χειμῶν θέρος, πόλεμος εἰρήνη, κόρος λιμός, ἀλλοιοῦται δὲ ὄκωσπερ <πῦρ>, ὅποταν συμμιγῆ θυώμασιν, ὀνομάζεται καθ' ἡδονὴν ἐκάστου. It is not surprising, therefore, that Apollo here tunes his lyre ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος / συλλαβῶν.

Another fragment of Heraclitus seems to be particularly relevant for the interpretation of these lines.⁹ Fr.51 presents the lyre and the bow,¹⁰ Apollo's traditional features, to describe the *coincidentia oppositorum* which is the foundation of the universe: οὐ ξυνιασιν ὄκως διαφερόμενον ἐωυτῶι συμφέρεται· παλίντονος ἀρμονίη ὄκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης.¹¹ 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 ἀρμονίη, 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.¹² The word ἀρμονίη 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.

¹¹ I prefer Zeller's συμφέρεται to Diels's ὁμολογέει and the variant παλίντονος to παλίντροπος. On these variants see the discussion of Kirk, *Heraclitus* 210–216, who argues for παλίντονος, and M. Marcovich, *Heraclitus: Greek Text with a Short Commentary* (Mérida 1967) 125–126. See also G. Vlastos, “On Heraclitus,” *AJP* 76 (1955) 337–368, at 348–350, who argues for παλίντροπος.

¹² Cf. O. Gigon, *Untersuchungen zu Heraklit* (Leipzig 1935) 23–24 on fr.51, who seems to think that Scythius 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, ἀρμονίη in musikalischem 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 ἀρμονίη (zunächst musikalisch, was im 4. Jhd. 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 ἄρμονίη would fit only the lyre, neglecting the other element of the comparison, the bow.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’ οὗτοι Κλεάνθην τὸν φιλόσοφον, ὃς ἀντικρυς πλῆκτρον τὸν ἥλιον καλεῖ· ἐν γὰρ ταῖς ἀνατολαῖς ἐρείδων τὰς ἀυγὰς, οἷον πλῆσσαν τὸν κόσμον, εἰς τὴν ἐναρμόνιον πορείαν τὸ φῶς ἄγει· ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου σημαίνει καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἄστρα.¹⁴ The light of the sun in Scythinus is

except perhaps, what is not surprising, that Scythinus misunderstood him by taking ἄρμονίη 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 / συλλαβῶν). 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.

¹³ These arguments and a brief history of the occurrences and the meanings of the word ἄρμονία up to Heraclitus’ time can be found in Kirk, *Heraclitus* 207–208.

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 Ἥλιος οἰονεῖ πλῆκτρον κατὰ στόμα ἐμπίπτων τῷ

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.¹⁵ According to Cleanthes, tension is the basis of everything and it is nothing but a *πληγή πυρός*, a “hit of fire.”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*.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.¹⁸ On the other hand, we cannot exclude that Cleanthes depended directly on Heraclitus, without relying on Scythinus’ paraphrase.¹⁹

Μέμνονι ἐκκαλεῖσθαι φωνὴν ἐκεῖθεν καὶ λαλοῦντι σοφίσματι παραμυθεῖσθαι τὴν Ἡμέραν. On the Colossi of Memnon see G. W. Bowersock, “The Miracle of Memnon,” *BASP* 21 (1984) 21–32.

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

¹⁶ See *SVFI* 497, 514, 537.6–7, 563.

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).

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

¹⁹ The purpose of Scythinus’ work might have been to provide a mnemonic help in the study of Heraclitean philosophy. Cf. P. Schuster, *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.²⁰

The second extant fragment of Scythinus is preserved by Stobaeus in a prose version that still presents traces of metre:²¹

ἐκ τοῦ Σκυθίνου Περὶ φύσεως. χρόνος ἐστὶν ὕστατον καὶ πρῶτον
πάντων καὶ ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῷ πάντα καὶ ἔστιν εἰς αἰὲ καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν,

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

²⁰ 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 Democr. fr.158 D.-K.: ὁ ἥλιος ἀνασχῶν ... συνώρμησε τῷ φωτὶ τὰς πράξεις καὶ τὰς νοήσεις τὰς ἀπάντων, ὡς φησι Δημόκριτος· νέα ἐφ’ ἡμέρη φρονέοντες ἄνθρωποι, τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὀρμῇ καθάπερ ἀρτήματι συντόνῳ σπασθέντες ἄλλος ἀλλαχόθεν ἐπὶ 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.

²¹ Stob. *Ecl.* 1.8.43 [I 108.6 Wachsmuth]; fr.2 West. Text (with the exception of the *cruces*) Diels, *Poetarum Philosophorum* 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)

ὁ παροϊχόμενος ἐκ τοῦ ἐόντος αὐτῷ ἐναντίην ὁδὸν ἴπαρεωνιατῶν.
τὸ γὰρ αὐριον ἴη μὲν τῷ ἔργῳ χθές ἔστιν, τὸ δὲ χθές αὐριον.

3 ἔστιν, παροϊχόμενος Wilamowitz | αὐτὸς τε <τὴν> ἐναντίην ὁδὸν
Diels 4 ἴπαρεωνιατῶν et ἴη μὲν locus corruptos iam viderunt multi,
cruces tandem posuit West παρεῶν ἑαυτῷ Diels ἡμῖν e cod. Vatic.
201 Heeren

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

πάντων χρόνος
ὔστατον καὶ πρῶτόν ἐστι, κὰν ἑαυτῷ πάντ' ἔχει
κᾶστιν εἷς κούκ ἔστιν. αἰεὶ δ' ἐξ ἐόντος οἴχεται
καὶ πάρεστιν αὐτὸς αὐτῷ τὴν ἐναντίην ὁδόν.
αὐριον γὰρ ἡμῖν ἔργῳ χθές, τὸ δὲ χθές αὐριον.

2 ὔστατον πρῶτόν τε πάντων ἐν θ' ἑαυτῷ πάντ' ἔχων West: ὔστατον
πρῶτον τε πάντων ἐστὶν <ἀνθρώποις> χρόνος Edmonds 3 εἷς αἰεὶ
κούκ <εἷς· πάλιν γὰρ> εἷσιν ὅς παροίχεται West: πάντ' ἔχων ἐν αὐτῷ,
κᾶστιν εἷς κούκ ἔστ' αἰεὶ Edmonds | ἐξ ἐόντος <αὐτὸς> αὐτῷ <τὴν>
ἐναντίην ὁδὸν West: καὶ παρωχῶκῶς <πάρεστι καὶ παρεῶν
παροίχεται> Edmonds 4 αὐτὶς αὐτὸς Wilamowitz | παρ' ἐνιαυτόν
... τὸ δ' αὐριον West: ἐκ <δ'> ἐνεόντος αὐτὸς αὐτῷ <νεῖτ'> ἐναντίην
ὁδόν Edmonds 5 ἡματι τρίτῳ χθές ἔστιν, <τοῦ>το δὲ χθές αὐριον
West: τῶριον γὰρ 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 is 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 Stobaeon prose belongs to the book by Scythinus (of whom we know no other work except the *History*).²² 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": αἰών πᾶς ἐστὶ παίζων, πεσσεύων· παιδὸς ἢ βασιληίῃ. It does not mean "time" in the absolute sense.²³ 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 Stobaeon 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 scazons, hexameters, iambic trimeters.²⁴ We owe to Wilamowitz the identification of the trochaic tetrameter as the metre underlying these lines.²⁵ It fits the metre of the other extant fragment of Scythinus and it seems respectful of the rhythm of the Stobaeon prose. Wilamowitz's reconstruction was almost com-

²² Two epigrams ascribed to Scythinus in *Anth. Gr.* 12 (22, 232) are spurious. See Bergk *Poetae Lyrici* 508; Diels, *Poetarum Philosophorum* 169; J. M. Edmonds, *Greek Elegy and Iambus* II (Cambridge [Mass.]/London 1931) 247; D. E. Gerber, *Greek Iambic Poetry* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1999) 521.

²³ Cf. E. Degani, *AIΩN da Omero ad Aristotele* (Padua 1961) 73–76, and *AIΩN* (Bologna 2001) 32–33. For a detailed history of the meaning of the word see H. M. Keizer, *Life, Time, Entirety. A Study of AIΩN in Greek Literature and Philosophy, the Septuagint and Philo* (Amsterdam 1999).

²⁴ A reconstruction in scazons, A. H. L. Heeren, *Ioannis Stobaei Eclogarum physicarum et ethicarum libri duo* IV (Göttingen 1801) 216–217, 242; a partial restoration in scazons, A. Meineke, *Ioannis Stobaei Eclogarum physicarum et ethicarum libri duo* II (Leipzig 1864) xliii; Schuster, *Heraklit* 354, proposes a reconstruction in hexameters; I. Bywater, *Heracliti Ephesii reliquiae* (Oxford 1877) 68, chooses the iambic trimeter. For the various attempts at reconstruction see the Appendix.

²⁵ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, "Coniectanea," in *Index scholarum publice et privatim in Academia Georgia Augusta per semestre aestivum ... habendarum* (Göttingen 1884) 3–18, at 18 [*Kleine Schriften* IV (Berlin 1962) 562–582].

pletely accepted by Diels, who only preferred αὐτὸς αὐτῷ over αὐτίς αὐτός in line 4.²⁶ There are two other reconstructions in tetrameters, by Edmonds and West, which I quote in the Appendix.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.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 Scythinus, 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 Stobaeian prose, which is our primary source, rather than on Wilamowitz's reconstruction. In both texts, however, the content is almost the same. According to Scythinus, 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 ὕστατον 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

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.

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.

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 εἷς ἀεί καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν. This seems to echo fr.10, συλλάψεις ὅλα καὶ οὐχ ὅλα, συμφερόμενον διαφερόμενον, συνᾶδον διᾶδον· 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” (συλλάψεις).³¹ These συλλάψεις are of course examples of the greatest σύλλαψις of all, i.e. the cosmos, which results from one

²⁹ On the primordial and comprehensive nature of Time, Gigon, *Untersuchungen* 74, argues for some similarities between Scythinus and Critias fr.18, 19, 25 D.-K. and concludes: “Kritias und Skythinos beweisen nicht viel mehr, als daß die Zeit in den Rahmen der kosmologischen Spekulation hineingehörte, mindestens in der 2. Hälfte des 5. Jhd., und wenn Skythinos wirklich Heraklit gelesen hat, so mag das auch für Heraklit gelten.” He also suggests that some traces of the Pythagorean doctrine on Time could be detected in Scythinus and Critias, but the obscurity of the passages does not allow any certainty: “In den mit Skythinos und Kritias berührten Komplex dürften wohl auch einige Nachrichten über die Pythagoreische Lehre von der Zeit gehören: sonderbar ist 45 B 30, klarer 33 und 34. Die Gedanken stimmen zum Teil auffallend überein: Bei Kritias umschlingt und umfließt die Zeit alles, hier ist sie versinnlicht, die umfassende Kugel, wie sie bei Skythinos alles enthält, und an allen drei Stellen ist die Identität des Früheren mit dem Späteren angedeutet. Was wirklich zugrunde liegt, kann hier nicht untersucht werden. Die Nachrichten sind auch allzu dürftig, um das Verhältnis völlig aufzuklären. Wenn uns nicht Diogenes mitteilte, daß Skythinos Heraklit bearbeitete, würden wir seine Verse schwerlich zu Heraklit stellen.”

³⁰ I prefer the variant συλλάψεις to συνάψεις (see the discussion in Marcovich, *Heraclitus* 105).

³¹ For the meaning of συλλάψεις 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 ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος / συλλαβόν.

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 συλλάψεις. The obscurity of both Heraclitus and Scythinus prevents us from interpreting the expression κάστιν εἷς κούκ ἔστιν 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 ὠυτή.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

ἐκεῖνός ἐστι στρογγύλος τὴν ὄψιν, ὧ πονηρέ,
 ἐντὸς δ' ἔχων περιέρχεται κύκλω τὰ πάντ' ἐν αὐτῷ,
 ἡμᾶς δὲ τίκτει περιτρέχων τὴν γῆν ἀπαξάπασαν·
 ὀνομάζεται δ' ἐνιαυτός, ὃν δὲ περιφερῆς τελευτήν

³² Cf. B. Snell, "Heraklits Fragment 10," *Hermes* 76 (1941) 84–87, at 87.

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, θάλασσης δὲ τὸ μὲν ἤμισυ γῆ, τὸ δὲ ἤμισυ πρηστήρ), 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 *Cratylus*, where the same etymology of ἐνιαυτός is provided (410D).

οὐδεμίαν οὐδ' ἀρχὴν ἔχει, κυκλῶν δ' ἀεὶ τὸ σῶμα
οὐ πύσεται δι' ἡμέρας ὀσημέραι τροχάζων.

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 (ταυτό γ' ἐνὶ ζῶν καὶ τεθνηκός καὶ τὸ ἐγγρηγορός καὶ τὸ καθεῦδον καὶ νέον καὶ γηραιόν· τάδε γὰρ μεταπεσόντα ἐκεῖνά ἐστι, κάκεῖνα 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 (fr.91 and 76) and states: φθείρεται μὲν ὁ ἀκμάζων γινομένου γέροντος, ἐφθάρη δ' ὁ νέος εἰς τὸν ἀκμάζοντα, καὶ ὁ παῖς εἰς τὸν νέον, εἰς δὲ τὸν παῖδα τὸ νήπιον· ὅ τ' ἐχθὲς εἰς τὸν σήμερον τέθηκεν, ὁ δὲ σήμερον εἰς τὸν αὔριον ἀποθήσκει. 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, *Eracito: 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 ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὀυτή 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, *Eracito* 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, Ὄρφευς τὴν πρώτην πάντων αἰτίαν Χρόνον καλεῖ ὁμωνύμωσ 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.³⁸ 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.³⁹ Chronology therefore allows the hypothesis that Orphic elements of Eastern origin were embraced by Heraclitus and then reached Scythinus.⁴⁰ As a matter of fact, scholars have often detected the presence of Orphic doctrines in Heraclitus' thought,⁴¹ without it being Orphic *tout court*. The ancients were

³⁸ Cf. West, *The Orphic Poems* 68 ff.

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, *AIΩN* 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.

⁴¹ See for instance W. Nestle, “Heraklit und die Orphiker,” *Philologus* 64 (1905) 367–384; V. Macchioro, *Eracrito: nuovi studi sull'orfismo* (Bari 1922).

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 Ἡράκλειτον 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.⁴²

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 scazon iambic trimeter in his edition of the Stobean anthology:⁴³

Χρόνος γὰρ ὕστατον καὶ πρῶτον πάντων γε,
ἔχει δ' ἐν αὐτῷ πάντα τ', ἔστιν δ' εἰς αἰεὶ.
Κοῦκ ἔστιν ὁ παροιχόμενος ἐκ τοῦ γ' ἐπιόντος
Αὐτῷ γ' ἐναντίην ὁδὸν παρ' ἐνιαυτῶν.
Ἡμῖν γὰρ αὔριον μὲν ἔργω χθὲς γ' ἔστιν
Τὸ δ' ἐχθὲς αὔριον — — —

Scazons were also the metre of Meineke's partial reconstruction, limited to the beginning of the preserved text:⁴⁴

χρόνος ἐστὶ πάντων ὕστατόν τε καὶ πρῶτον
ἔχει τ' ἐν αὐτῷ πάντα κήστιν εἰς αἰεὶ.

In 1873 Schuster proposed a restoration in hexameters:⁴⁵

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 ὕστατος ἀργικέραυνος.

⁴³ Heeren, *Ioannis Stobaei Eclogarum* IV 216–217, corrected for metrical reasons at 242. The last line as printed at 216–217 reads: Τὸ γὰρ αὔριον ἡμῖν μὲν ἔργω χθὲς γ' ἔστιν.

⁴⁴ Meineke, *Ioannis Stobaei Eclogarum* II xliii.

⁴⁵ Schuster, *Heraklit* 354.

— — — χρόνος ἐστὶν

ὑστατον ἠδὲ ὅλων⁴⁶ πρῶτον, ξυνέχει τ' ἐν ἑαυτῷ
 πάντα, καὶ ἐστὶν αἰεὶ εἷς, οὐδ' ἔτος ἄρτι παρελθὼν
 οἴχεται εἰς ἐτέρην ὁδὸν ἢ παρεῶν ἐνιαυτός.
 ὅτι γὰρ αὔριον ἄμμι, τόδ' ἔργω χθές, καὶ ὅ τι χθές,
 αὔριον.

In 1877 came Bywater's attempt in iambic trimeters:⁴⁷

Πάντων μὲν ὑστατόν τε καὶ πρῶτον χρόνος,
 ἔχει δ' ἐν ἑαυτῷ πάντα κάστιν εἷς αἰεὶ.
 κούκ εἶσιν οὐνιαυτός ὃς παρέρχεται
 ἐναντίην τῶν πρόσθεν ἐνιαυτῶν ὁδόν·
 τὸ γὰρ αὔριον μὲν χθές, τὸ δὲ χθές αὔριον.

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

πάντων χρόνος

ὑστατον καὶ πρῶτόν ἐστι, κὰν ἑαυτῷ πάντ' ἔχει
 κάστιν εἷς κούκ ἔστιν· αἰεὶ δ' ἐξ ἐόντος οἴχεται
 καὶ πάρεστιν αὐτίς αὐτός τὴν ἐναντίην ὁδόν.
 αὔριον γὰρ ἡμῖν ἔργω χθές, τὸ δὲ χθές αὔριον.

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

πάντων χρόνος

ὑστατον πρῶτον τε πάντων ἐστὶν <ἀνθρώποις> χρόνος,
 πάντ' ἔχων ἐν αὐτῷ, κάστιν εἷς κούκ ἔστ' αἰεὶ.
 καὶ παρῳκῶς <πάρεστι καὶ παρεῶν παροίχεται,>
 ἐκ <δ> ἐνεόντος αὐτὸς αὐτῷ <νεῖτ'> ἐναντίην ὁδόν.
 τῳριον γὰρ ἡμῖν ἔργω χθές, τὸ δὲ χθές αὔριον.

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

ὑστατον πρῶτόν τε πάντων ἐν θ' ἑαυτῷ πάντ' ἔχων,
 εἷς αἰεὶ κούχ <εἷς· πάλιν γὰρ> εἶσιν ὃς παροίχεται

⁴⁶ 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.”

⁴⁷ Bywater, *Heracliti Ephesii reliquiae* 68.

⁴⁸ Wilamowitz, *Kleine Schriften* IV 582.

⁴⁹ Edmonds, *Greek Elegy* II 246.

⁵⁰ West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* II 98.

ἔξ ἑόντος <αὐτός> αὐτῷ <τήν> ἐναντίην ὁδὸν
 παρ' ἐνιαυτόν ... τὸ δ' αὔριον
 ἡματι τρίτῳ χθὲς ἔστιν, <τοῦ>το δὲ χθὲς αὔριον.⁵¹

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

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