Diogenes' *Thyestes*

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At the end of the biographical section devoted to Diogenes of Sinope, Diogenes Laertius mentions two lists of works attributed to the Cynic philosopher.[1] The two lists differ regarding important details. The first, with no attribution of author and probably the older of the two (earlier than the second century BCE), ascribes to Diogenes seven tragedies, together with thirteen dialogues and a collection of letters. The tragedies are given the following titles: *Helen*, *Thyestes*, *Heracles*, *Achilles*, *Medea*, *Chrysippus*, and *Oedipus*.[2] The second list, explicitly attributed to Sotion of Alexandria (beginning of the second century BCE), omits the tragedies. From the third century BCE on, these have been held by some authors to be spurious and have been attributed to disciples of Diogenes, especially to Philiscus of Aegina.[3] However, in Stoic circles of the Hellenistic

[1] Cf. Diog. Laert. 6.80 (= *SSR* II V.B 117.17–24).

[2] Snell-Kannicht, *TrGF*[2] I (Göttingen 1986) 253–258; M. J. Cropp, *Minor Greek Tragedians* II (Liverpool 2021) 203–229. Recent states of the art: Cropp 203–219; J. L. López Cruces, "Diógenes y sus tragedias a la luz de la comedia," *Ítaca* 19 (2003) 47–69; M. Noussia, "Fragments of Cynic 'Tragedy'," in M. A. Harder at al. (eds.), *Beyond the Canon* (Leuven 2006) 229–247; M. Wright, *The Lost Plays of Greek Tragedy* I (London 2016) 153–163.

[3] Sosicrates of Rhodes and Satyrus of Callatis denied the authenticity, while Sotion did not include them in his catalogue of Diogenes' works: Diog. Laert. 6.80 (*SSR* II V.B 117.25–42). Concerning the reasons supporting atethesis and the issue of authenticity see G. Giannantoni, *SSR* IV 476–479; S. Schorn, *Satyros aus Kallatis: Sammlung der Fragmente mit Kommentar* (Basel 2004) 152–161; S. Husson, *La République de Diogène: une cité en quête de la nature* (Paris 2011) 185–189.

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period they were held to be authentic plays by the Cynic, and the antiquity and authority of Cleanthes' and Chrysippus' testimony for authenticity makes the attribution plausible.[4]

Of Diogenes' tragedies, a single, safely assigned fragment is preserved in Clement of Alexandria, which contains three iambic trimeters (the last of them incomplete) from a longer passage inveighing against people given over to pleasure, which, Clement says, could be read "in a tragedy" (ἔν τινι τραγῳδίᾳ).[5] Given this, the necessarily speculative reconstructions of the tragedies have usually been based on three elements: first, the information that the ancient authors provide about them; second, the consistency of details in the myth with Diogenes' philosophy; and third, the suggestion of an anti-Platonic stance in the plot.[6]

Of these three elements, the second requires some clarification, because, although the tragedies—like the dialogues—served Diogenes as vehicles through which to expound his

[4] Cf. Phld. *De Stoicis* 6, cols. xv.12–xvii.10 Dorandi (*SSR* II V.B 126).

[5] Clem. Al. *Strom.* 2.20.119.5–6 (*SSR* II V.B 135 = *TrGF* 88 F 1h). Clement must have read the passage in an intermediate source. The content is so general that it could have appeared in any of the seven tragedies.

[6] For a list of proposals of reconstruction during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries see Giannantoni, *SSR* IV 479–484. Recent studies on individual plays: *Heracles*: Noussia, in *Beyond the Canon* 237–242; J. L. López Cruces, "Une tragédie perdue: l'*Heraclès* de Diogène le cynique," *LEC* 78 (2010) 3–24; *Oedipus*: J. L. López Cruces and J. Campos Daroca, "Physiologie, langage, éthique. Une reconstruction de l'*Œdipe* de Diogène de Sinope," *Ítaca* 14–15 (1998–1999) 43–65; J. L. López Cruces, "Sófocles, Diógenes y Cércidas," in A. Pérez Jiménez et al. (eds.), *Sófocles el hombre, Sófocles el poeta* (Malaga 2004) 245–257, at 245–252; G. Ventrella, "L'*Edipo* di Diogene e l'utopia cinica nel teatro greco: a proposito di Dione Crisostomo, or. X 29–32," *AntCl* 80 (2011) 53–71; *Achilles*: J. L. López Cruces, "El *Aquiles* de Diógenes o la negación de la bella muerte," in J. V. Bañuls et al. (eds.), *Teatro y sociedad: Las relaciones de poder en época de crisis* (Bari 2008) 189–217; *Chrysippus*: F. J. Campos Daroca and J. L. López Cruces, "Did Diogenes the Cynic Advocate Enforced Sex?" *Eirene* 53 (2017) 273–296, at 288–292. See also J. L. López Cruces, "Une *Antiope* cynique?" *Prometheus* 29 (2003) 17–36, on a hypothetical *Antiope*, whence *TrGF* 88 FF 6–7 might derive.

doctrines,[7] the presence of philosophical ideas in them, as in any work of fiction, may have taken various forms. The basic one is that their appearance is determined by the dramatic situation itself. There is a structural part of the tragedy that is particularly suitable for mobilising ideas: the *agon* or confrontation of discourses, which allows ideas to be embodied in the reasons put forward by the characters, without the characters constantly assuming a specific philosophical position.[8]

In addition to the *agon*, there is another ideal moment for doctrinal exposition: the denouement. As opposed to the solution—which we can consider Platonic—of finding a moral teaching in the characters' fate, a form of poetic justice that is fulfilled when reprehensible actions are followed by an ending that can be interpreted as a punishment,[9] we know that Diogenes reinterpreted the misfortunes of tragedy in a positive manner: as we shall see, even though he personally suffered from such, he considered himself happier than any king. It may therefore be assumed that the Cynic did not alter the received myths in his tragedies, but reinterpreted them in an original and unusual way.

And this brings us to the third form of the presence of Cynic ideas in tragedy. Since Diogenes put his philosophy into practice

[7] The philosophical nature of Diogenes' tragedies is generally taken for granted; see e.g. A. Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*[2] (Leipzig 1889) 808: "facile apparet Diogenem Cratetem alios, sicubi tragoedias scriberent, non tam poetas egisse quam philosophos, qui placita sua versibus decantata exponerent et in utramque partem disputando confirmare studerent."

[8] This possibility was developed especially by Euripides, to whom also was attributed the ability to pursue both a theatrical and a philosophical agenda by hiding or disguising his ideas—taken, it was said, from Anaxagoras—in the form of a tragic speech by a mythical figure. Cf. [Dion. Hal.] *Rhet.* 8.10 and 9.11 (309.3–18 and 345.21–346.22 Usener-Radermacher), where *Melanippa Wise* (*TrGF* V F 384) and *Aeolus* (T v) are discussed in this regard. See L. Miletti, "Eurípides *physiologos*," in J. Campos Daroca et al. (eds.), *Las personas de Eurípides* (Amsterdam 2007) 191–218.

[9] An anecdote attributes such an idea to Euripides, and Plutarch's ideas on the educational possibilities of poetry (*De aud. poet.* 19E = Eur. *Ixion* T iii) can also be seen as an elaboration of this interpretation.

through his own body and actions, we can posit what could be called the 'mouthpiece hypothesis', whereby the Cynic may have chosen a particular character in each tragedy to express his own convictions. We know that this approach of identifying one of the characters as an author surrogate was used in Antiquity to interpret Plato's dialogues, enabling his authorial voice to be recognised in them.[10] In the extreme form of this mode, the author presents himself as a participant in the dialogue, a practice attributed to Aristotle, among other authors of philosophical dialogues.[11] However, it does not seem reasonable to transfer this possibility to the tragedies without further ado; for Diogenes, it would be easier to persuade the reader of his ideas if he did not destroy the scenic illusion by presenting himself debating with mythical characters. We assume, then, the possibility that the Cynic projected himself onto certain characters in the scene whose μῦθοι could be reinterpreted in the Cynic style. An ancient example of this appropriation manoeuvre is Medea, who according to Diogenes prefigured him by advocating physical exercise and encouraging men to shun the easy life;[12] it is easy to imagine, then, that in the Diogenic tragedy that bears her name, she would end up transformed from a sorceress into a

[10] As Diog. Laert. 3.52 makes clear, a canon of characters from the Platonic dialogues through which Plato expressed his opinions was already in force in Roman times.

[11] Cic. *Att.* 13.19.3–4 and *Qfr.* 3.5.1 (= Arist. test. 14–15 Ross). See R. Laurenti, *Aristotele,* I *frammenti dei dialoghi* I (Naples 1987) 61–73; M. Zanatta, *Aristotele* I *dialoghi* (Milan 2008) 13–26. As M.-O. Goulet-Cazé pointed out, the *Pordalos*, where Diogenes admits that he falsified currency (cf. Diog. Laert. 6.20 = *SSR* II V.B 2), belongs to this group: see Campos Daroca and López Cruces, *Eirene* 53 (2017) 276 n.13.

[12] Stob. *Flor.* 3.29.92 (*SSR* II V.B 340): Ὁ Διογένης ἔλεγε τὴν Μήδειαν σοφήν, ἀλλ' οὐ φαρμακίδα γενέσθαι· λαμβάνουσαν γὰρ μαλακοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ τὰ σώματα διεφθαρμένους ὑπὸ τρυφῆς ἐν τοῖς γυμνασίοις καὶ τοῖς πυριατηρίοις διαπονεῖν καὶ ἰσχυροὺς ποιεῖν σφριγῶντας· ὅθεν περὶ αὐτῆς ῥυῆναι τὴν δόξαν, ὅτι τὰ κρέα ἔψουσα νέους ἐποίει. See Wright, *The Lost Plays of Greek Tragedy* I 160–161, who has observed that the passage is consistent with Palaephatus' rationalisation of the Medea myth in *On Incredible Stories* 43.

Cynic sage.[13]

In what follows, a reconstruction of the *Thyestes* will be proposed, based on three elements: first, an example of Cynic behaviour *avant la lettre* will be identified in one of the play's characters; then, the core of the myth will be related to Diogenes' precept of anthropophagy as put forward in his *Republic*; and finally, an anti-Platonic stance will be proposed in the plot.[14]

1. *Thyestes as Diogenes' forerunner*

We know that in Diogenes' *Thyestes*, someone explained that, contrary to what one might think, the consumption of human flesh is not a sacrilegious act:

> μηδέν τε ἄτοπον εἶναι ἐξ ἱεροῦ τι λαβεῖν ἢ τῶν ζῴων τινὸς γεύσασθαι· μηδ' ἀνόσιον εἶναι τὸ καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπείων κρεῶν ἅψασθαι, ὡς δῆλον ἐκ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἐθῶν· καὶ τῷ ὀρθῷ λόγῳ πάντ' ἐν πᾶσι καὶ διὰ πάντων εἶναι λέγων. καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ ἄρτῳ κρέως εἶναι καὶ ἐν τῷ λαχάνῳ ἄρτου, καὶ τῶν σωμάτων τῶν λοιπῶν ἐν πᾶσι διά τινων ἀδήλων πόρων καὶ ὄγκων εἰσκρινομένων καὶ συνατμιζομένων, ὡς δῆλον ἐν τῷ Θυέστῃ ποιεῖ.
>
> He (sc. Diogenes) declared that there was nothing wrong with taking something from a temple or tasting the flesh of any animal; nor was it even offensive to the gods to consume human flesh, as was clear from other people's customs. He held that according to right reason, all things contain and are permeated by all things. For meat is found in bread, and bread in vegetables; and all forms of matter, through unseen passages and particles, penetrate and

[13] See K. Döring, "'Spielereien, mit verdecktem Ernst vermischt'. Unterhaltsame Formen literarischer Wissensvermittlung bei Diogenes von Sinope und den frühen Kynikern," in W. Kullmann et al. (eds.), *Vermittlung und Tradierung des Wissens in der griechischen Kultur* (Tübingen 1993) 337–352, at 338.

[14] In Pl. *Leg.* 838A5–D2 the Athenian explains that it is an unwritten law not to have sexual relations with daughters, mothers, or sisters, acts that "are by no means holy, but hated of God and most shameful"; and that this is universally accepted, even among the authors of comedies and tragedies: "when there is brought on to the stage a Thyestes or an Oedipus, or a Macareus having secret intercourse with a sister, […] all these are seen inflicting death upon themselves willingly as a punishment for their sins" (transl. R. G. Bury). As we shall see, Diogenes must have been the exception to this unwritten law.

unite with all other matter in vaporous form, as he makes clear in his *Thyestes*.[15]

Later we shall discuss the content of this passage, which, being far removed from a recognisable metrical form, cannot have come from a direct reading of *Thyestes*, but from a summary of the argument that had been read in an intermediate, perhaps Stoic, source.[16] For the time being, we are interested in one particular aspect: which character advocated anthropophagy and which condemned it? The fact that the tragedy Diogenes Laertius knows as *Thyestes* is called *Atreus* by Philodemus[17] lends weight to the supposition that the characters in the debate on anthropophagy are these two sons of Pelops, who must have been speaking after the fateful feast in which Atreus, having killed the sons of Thyestes, has offered them to his brother to eat. The argument may have formed part of an attempt to console Thyestes after the feast and reconcile him to his appalling ex-

[15] Diog. Laert. 6.73 (*SSR* II V.B 132 = *TrGF* F 1d); transl. P. Mensch. For the defence of the most authoritative Laertian manuscripts adopted by Dorandi in his edition, the text of which we reproduce, see G. Basta Donzelli, "Del *Tieste* di Diogene di Sinope in Diog. Lae. VI, 73," *StIt* 36 (1965) 241–258; Giannantoni, *SSR* IV 480–481; and M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, *Les Kynika du stoïcisme* (Stuttgart 2003) 34 n.92; cf. W. Lapini, "Note Laerziane (D. L. 1.86, 3.102, 4.51, 6.73)," *Sileno* 35 (2009) 227–234, at 231–233.

[16] Cf. Giannantoni, *SSR* IV 480 n.68, who adduces, for the Stoic doctrine of the κράσις δι' ὅλων, *SVF* Zeno fr.102 and Chrys. fr.471. See also E. Weber, "De Dione Chrysostomo Cynicorum sectatore," *LeipzStudClasPhil* 10 (1887) 77–268, at 146, who had already connected the tragedy with [Diog.] *Ep.* 21 (*SSR* II V.B 551) γονεῦσι χάριτας οὐχ ἑκτέον οὔτε τοῦ γενέσθαι ἐπεὶ φύσει γέγονε τὰ ὄντα, οὔτε τῆς ποιότητος· ἡ γὰρ τῶν στοιχείων σύγκρασις αἰτία ταύτης.

[17] Since Th. Gomperz, "Eine verschollene Schrift des Stoikers Kleanthes, der 'Staat', und die sieben Tragodien des Cynikers Diogenes," *ZÖstGymn* 29 (1878) 252–256, at 255, it has been accepted that Philodemus' reference to *Thyestes* as *Atreus* is simply the result of a memory lapse; see Giannantoni, *SSR* IV 479. A similar mistake is in Epict. *Diss*. 1.28.32 on Euripides' *Thyestes* (*TrGF* V 438): καὶ ποία τραγῳδία ἄλλην ἀρχὴν ἔχει; Ἀτρεὺς Εὐριπίδου τί ἐστιν; τὸ φαινόμενον. According to S. Radt, *TrGF* IV^2 (Göttingen 1999) 162, it may be that the only extant passage from Sophocles' Ἀτρεὺς ἢ Μυκηναῖαι actually derives from a Θυέστης ἢ Μυκηναῖαι.

perience through a correct understanding of anthropophagy as intrinsically natural; one might think of Atreus as the mouthpiece for the Cynic's ideas, or better, for a third, unidentified character.[18] But perhaps—as suggested by an analysis of the episode in the broad context of the myth of the Pelopids[19]—cannibalism was vindicated by Thyestes himself, who before and after the episode seems to act according to the precepts of Diogenes' *Republic*. Let us review his actions.

(i) Before the *Thyestean feast*, the hero commits two acts that Seneca's Atreus concisely summarises as follows: "He stole my wife by adultery and my kingdom by theft" (222–223).[20] Thyestes stole a golden lamb from the royal flocks, which had been

[18] See Cropp, *Minor Greek Tragedians* II 224, who has considered the identification of Diogenes with Atreus implausible. It had been previously assumed by López Cruces, *Ítaca* 19 (2003) 64, and by Wright, *The Lost Plays of Greek Tragedy* I 156–157.

[19] The testimonies of this myth have been collected by M. R. Ruiz de Elvira y Serra, "Los Pelópidas en la literatura clásica (estudio de un mito de infanticidio)," *CFC* 7 (1974) 249–302; T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* II (Baltimore 1993) 545–556; and A. Bonandini, "Tieste e Atreo prima di Seneca," *I Quaderni del Ramo d'Oro on-line*, special number (2019) 129–151. Notable among the versions prior to that of Diogenes are those of Sophocles and Euripides. The former composed an Ἀτρεὺς ἢ Μυκηναῖαι (FF 140–141), a Θυέστης Σικυώνιος, and one more tragedy—or perhaps two—simply called Θυέστης (FF 247–269). Euripides devoted three dramas to the myth of the Pelopids, Κρῆσσαι (FF 460–470a), Πλεισθένης (FF 625–633), and Θυέστης (FF 391–397b). Although we do not know which of these was the model for Seneca's *Thyestes*, the only surviving tragic version of the myth (see J. Dangel, *Accius. Œuvres* [Paris 1995] 276, with a list of possibilities), what is important is that this play contains a sequence of events that had by then become traditional: as W. Burkert, *Homo Necans*[2] (Berkeley 1983) 104, has noted, "The essential part of the 'act' is the same in all versions; variations occurs only in the preceding sections and in the motivation." See also C. Monteleone, *Il "Thyestes" di Seneca. Sentieri ermeneutici* (Fasano 1991) 43–44, 179. This established framework must also have been present in Diogenes' *Thyestes*, with the feast at its core, the changing of the sun's course, and probable allusions to the origin of the brothers' enmity.

[20] All passages from Seneca's *Thyestes* are quoted from the Loeb translation by J. G. Fitch.

sent by Hermes so that its fleece could be used to provide the gold that adorned the sceptre of the kings of the Tantalid dynasty. "Risking a flagrant crime," he adds, "and taking the partner of my bed as accomplice, that betrayer carried him off" (234–235).[21] Thus, the two affronts are connected: the theft of the lamb endangered Atreus' royal power, while the adultery defiled his bed.

Given the traditional cause-effect relationship of these *scelera* and the *feast*, it is plausible that they were also mentioned in Diogenes' *Thyestes*. With regard to the theft, Gabriele Giannantoni[22] suspected an allusion to this tragedy in Libanius' mention of Thyestes in his *Apology of Socrates* as one of the examples of persons who presume to deceive friends and relatives (*Decl.* 1.107). In support of this hypothesis is the fact that Diogenes, as we have seen, advocated appropriating the offerings deposited in temples, which implies a legitimisation of theft.[23] Since the golden lamb was a divine gift, Thyestes could even claim that his act was not theft, but rather an expression of the community of goods of wise men, the fruit of their proximity to the gods.[24] This opens up the possibility of a Cynic reinterpretation of the theft of a divine gift.

As for the adultery, the myth of the Pelopids is a prime example of the problems created by the non-existence of a community of women and children as advocated by Diogenes in

[21] Adultery had already surfaced in Aesch. *Ag.* 1191–1193, and theft in the epic *Alcmeonis* (fr.6 Bernabé); cf. Eur. *El.* 700–726, *Or.* 996–1010; Accius, frr.3 and 5 Dangel (= 6 and 8 Ribbeck[3]). See Ruiz de Elvira y Serra, *CFC* 7 (1974) 271–274.

[22] G. Giannantoni, *Socrate. Tutte le testimonianze*[2] (Rome 1986) 454 n.24.

[23] Diog. Laert. 6.72 (*SSR* II V.B 353), and also Muntaḫab Ṣiwān al-Ḥikma, in D. Gutas, *Greek Philosophers in the Arabic Tradition* (Abington 2016) II 490, fr.186.1, where the Cynic steals bread every day from a baker because every day he is hungry. See Goulet-Cazé, *Les Kynika du stoïcisme* 37–38, and S. Husson, "Le culte des dieux dans les trois *Républiques*," in *Les trois Républiques. Platon, Diogène de Sinope et Zénon de Citium* (Paris 2021) 165–188, at 174; also [Diog.] *Ep.* 10.2 (*SSR* II V.B 540).

[24] Diog. Laert. 6.37, 6.72; Plut. *Suav.viv.Epic.* 1102E–F (*SSR* II V.B 353).

the *Republic*.[25] Atreus did not forgive Thyestes and Aerope for having adulterous relations; instead, he banished the former and had the latter cast into the sea, where she drowned.[26] When Atreus married his sister-in-law Aerope, she had just been widowed, her husband and his brother, Pleisthenes, having died prematurely.[27] The fact that Seneca's Atreus is obsessed with the possibility that Agamemnon and Menelaus are not his sons but Thyestes'[28] suggests that the latter's relationship with Aerope was not a one-off event to ensure her collaboration in the theft of the lamb, but rather a long-standing one; it may even be that when Atreus married her she was already pregnant, not by Pleisthenes, but by Thyestes.[29] Three brothers, therefore, who have relations with the same woman, and two children of dubious paternity: this is something that Diogenes, defender of the community of women and children, could hardly fail to take advantage of.

(ii) Some time later, in an attempt to avenge Thyestes' affronts, Atreus—according to Seneca's version—tries to corrupt him: he

[25] Phld. *De Stoicis* 7 col. xviii.17–18 (*SSR* II V.B 126), Diog. Laert. 6.72 (*SSR* II V.B 353).

[26] Schol. Eur. *Or*. 812.

[27] Schol. Soph. *Aj.* 1297, Hes. fr.137 Most (= 194 Merkelbach-West), Apollod. 3.2.2.

[28] Sen. *Thyest.* 240, 327–330, 1098–1099, with R. J. Tarrant, *Seneca's Thyestes* (Atlanta 1985) 241; A. Schiesaro, *The Passions in Play. Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama* (Cambridge 2003) 102–105; A. Marchetta, *L'ambiguità dei ruoli nel Thyestes di Seneca* (Rome 2010) 133. Cf. Accius frr.4 and 7 Dangel (= 7 and 20 Ribbeck[3]).

[29] In Euripides' *Cretan Women*, Aerope was said to have had relations while still on Crete with a man described as ἐπακτὸς ἀνήρ by Teucer in Soph. *Aj.* 1296 and as a palace θεράπων in a scholium ad loc. If this lover assumed to be a slave was in fact Thyestes draped in rags (cf. schol. Ar. *Ach.* 438), Aerope might already have been pregnant by him when she married Pleisthenes; this may be what Teucer reproaches Agamemnon with in Soph. *Aj.* 1293–1297 and what is suggested by a fragment of Euripides' *Cretan Women* (F 460), in which it is recommended to conceal one's dishonour in order not to be the object of derision. On this tragedy see F. Jouan and H. van Looy, *Euripide, Tragédies* VIII.2 (Paris 2000) 289–296.

sends a messenger to ask "that he should leave a wandering exile's lodgings, trade his wretchedness for a throne, and rule Argos as co-ruler" (296–299). So Thyestes returns to Argos, torn between the harshness of life in exile, which he has of necessity learnt to value, and tyranny, which he remembers as being surrounded by peril and anxiety (447–454, 468–470):

> While I stood on high, I never ceased to feel terror, or to fear the very sword at my side. Oh, what a blessing it is to stand in no one's way, to take carefree meals lying on the ground! Crimes do not enter huts, and one takes a cup safely at a humble table: poison is drunk in gold. I speak from experience: one may legitimately prefer 'bad' fortune to 'good'. […] But I am not feared, my house is safe without weapons, and my small domain is supplied with great peace. It is a vast kingdom to be able to cope without a kingdom.

This paean to life in exile dovetails neatly with Diogenes' view of exile as a philosophical learning experience; despite living "without city, without home, robbed of his native land, / a wanderer begging for his daily bread" (i.e. the major curses of the tragedy), he felt happier than any king.[30] But there is something that distinguishes the hero from the philosopher: Seneca's Thyestes is tempted to return to the comforts of tyranny, a move he confirms by accepting the sumptuous clothing Atreus offers him with these words: "Off with these filthy clothes—have pity on our eyes—and accept finery equal to mine" (524–526). Once Thyestes accepts this offer, his behaviour shows that his positive

[30] Diog. Laert. 6.38 (transl. Mensch); also *Gnom.Vat.* 743, 201; Ael. *VH* 3.29 (*SSR* II V.B 263 = *TrGF* 88 dubia F 4); [Diog.] *Ep.* 34.3 (*SSR* II V.B 564). The biographical tradition pits Diogenes against numerous kings and generals: cf. *SSR* II V.B 27–52, 293–294, 534–535, 544–545, 553–554, 575, 582. The clash between philosopher and authority figure is a recurrent motif in the lives of the philosophers, see J. F. Kindstrand, *Anacharsis. The Legend and the Apophthegmata* (Uppsala 1981) 42; F. Decleva Caizzi, "The Porch and the Garden: Early Hellenistic Images of the Philosophical Life," in A. Bulloch et al. (eds.), *Images and Ideologies. Self-definition in the Hellenistic World* (Berkeley 1994) 303–329, at 317–320; S. Grau, "El enfrentamiento entre filósofos y tiranos, de la biografía helenística a la tardoantigua: evoluciones de un tópico biográfico," *Emerita* 87 (2020) 101–128.

vision of exile was mere window-dressing. After drinking heavily at the feast, he renounces a life that he now sees as full of anguish, worry, dread, and poverty (920–925).[31] He was not, therefore, a true sage, for if he had been, he would not have considered poverty evil, but instead indifferent, or even, with Diogenes, good.[32]

Why does Seneca characterise Thyestes as a failed sage? The simplest explanation is that he does so in order to contrast Thyestes with Diogenes, the true sage who did resist the seduction of power. Seneca knew of him through the anecdotal tradition,[33] prominent in which is Diogenes' famous meeting with Alexander the Great: the philosopher shows his independence by refusing the king's offer to grant him anything he wishes and merely asks him to step away so that he, Diogenes, can continue warming himself in the sun.[34] As many as four late authors report this generic offer using the same motif as in

[31] See Tarrant, *Seneca's Thyestes* 221.

[32] See e.g. P. J. Davis, *Seneca: Thyestes* (London 2003) 47, and Monteleone, *Il Thyestes di Seneca* 219–255. On Diogenes' opinion of poverty see *SSR* II V.B 220 ff.

[33] To Seneca's mind, Diogenes is a better model than the Cynic Demetrius, because this latter, as he recounts in *Ben.* 7.11.1–2, did not let himself be tempted by Caligula and spurned his offer, but admitted that if the emperor had tempted him by offering him the whole world, he might have thought about it; see F. R. Berno, "Fascination and Limits of Excess: Demetrius the Cynic in Seneca," in M.-O. Goulet-Cazé et al. (eds.), *Le cynisme dans le monde romain* (Paris, in press), and J. Pià-Comella, "Quand un milliardaire fait l'éloge de la pauvreté: les cynismes de Sénéque dans les *Lettres* a Lucilius," *RThPh* 151 (2019) 393–420, at 417–418. As I. Chouinard, "Sénéque et les cyniques: continuités et innovations dans la tradition stoïcienne," in *Le cynisme dans le monde romain*, has explained, Seneca only knew of the anecdotes and sayings about Diogenes, and therefore the thesis that his tragedies were among Seneca's models, as put forward by B. M. Marti, "The Prototypes of Seneca's Tragedies," *CP* 42 (1947) 1–16, is unlikely. An indirect influence must therefore be assumed, insofar as the encounter with Alexander the Great must have involved the reworking of motifs present in Diogenes' *Thyestes*.

[34] On this episode see Sen. *Ben.* 5.4.3 (*SSR* II V.B 258), 5.6.1 (*SSR* II V.B 41), and also *SSR* II V.B 32–33, 47.

Seneca's *Thyestes*, which must have entered Diogenes' biography at an early stage to judge by Plutarch's and Dio of Prusa's accounts of the contrast between the philosopher's rags and the king's robes.[35] Echoing Atreus' offer to Thyestes, Alexander attempts to place himself in a position of superiority by offering the Cynic sumptuous clothes, but, unlike Thyestes, Diogenes rejects them on various grounds: because the Cynic finds what he needs wherever he goes,[36] because sumptuous attire would make him look uglier than he already is,[37] because a self-sufficient person is inherently wealthy,[38] and because he prefers his humble sheepskin.[39] If Thyestes had functioned here as a mythical precursor of the Cynic, he would not have accepted the garments that Atreus offered him and would have preferred to keep his rags, which, according to Diogenes' *Republic*, are the most

[35] Eager to show Alexander in a favourable light in his encounter with the Cynic (see F. J. Campos Daroca, "El perro y el sabio: la recepción de Diógenes el Cínico en Plutarco," in J. F. Martos Montiel et al. [eds.], *Plutarco, entre dioses y astros. Homenaje al profesor Aurelio Pérez Jiménez* [Zaragoza 2019] 157–173), Plutarch recounts that the king not only "did not rank […] a crown and royal purple above the philosopher's wallet and threadbare gown" (*De Alex.fort.* 331F–332A = *SSR* II V.B 31, transl. F. C. Babbitt), but even envied them, "because Diogenes was invincible and secure against capture by means of these, not, as he was himself, by means of arms, horses, and pikes" (*Ad princ. ind.* 782A–B = SSR II V.B 31, transl. H. N. Fowler). Cf. Dio Chr. *Or.* 4.8; Niceph. Gregoras *Byz.Hist.* 16.3.4 (*SSR* II V.B 48) and *Laud.Demetr.* 56–61, p.84 Laourdas (not included in *SSR).* In Dio's recreation of the encounter between these two public figures, the philosopher exhorts the king first to get rid of everything he has and to wear a simple tunic (ἐξωμίδα, 4.66) and then to live garbed in an animal skin (διφθέραν, 4.70), like Archelaus, the king's shepherd forebear.

[36] Abu Sulayman (tenth cent.), in D. Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation* (New Haven 1975) 95. (The treatise erroneously attributes Diogenes' meeting with Alexander to Socrates.)

[37] Ibn Hindū (eleventh cent.), in Gutas, *Greek Philosophers* II 485, fr.35.2.

[38] *Chronicon Sancti Huberti Andaginensis* (twelfth cent.) 139.1–3 Hanquet.

[39] William of Doncaster (twelfth cent.) *Explicatio aphorismatum philosophicorum* 6.5 (ed. Weijers).

pleasing attire.[40]

(iii) Finally, after the *feast*, Thyestes went back into exile, during which time he met his daughter Pelopia and raped her.[41] Such an act could be considered to adhere to the precept in Diogenes' *Republic* of maintaining amorous relations within the family,[42] as opposed to the taboo on incest.

In sum, Thyestes is the ideal candidate to argue *Diogenico more*: his past deeds foreshadow the principles of the community of women and children—perhaps also of goods—while his exile status and ragged clothing could be wielded as proof of the exile's free, self-sufficient life as opposed to the insecurity of that of the tyrant, symbolised in Thyestes' rejection of the sumptuous attire that Atreus offers him, preferring to continue wearing his humble cloak.

Cannibalism and the changing of the sun's course

In the myth of Er at the end of Plato's *Republic*, it is difficult not to see Thyestes in the character who regrets having chosen supreme tyranny (τὴν μεγίστην τυραννίδα) without considering that this inevitably entails eating one's own children (παῖδας αὐτοῦ βρῶσεις).[43] Very much in contrast, Diogenes' Thyestes—if one agrees he is a precursor to the Cynic—would have shown no appreciation whatsoever for the tyrant's life, and above all, would not have regretted eating his children's flesh. Far from reacting as he does in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, where, having realised what he is eating, he screams, falls to the floor, vomits

[40] Phld. *De Stoicis* 7 col. xviii.10–11 (*SSR* II V.B 126), ἀρέ[σ]κ[ει] τοίνυν τοῖς παναγέσι … [διπ]λῆν ἐσθῆ[τα] με̣ι̣[τενδύειν].

[41] This was the central theme of Sophocles' *Thyestes in Sicyon*, the plot of which has been deduced from Hyg. *Fab.* 88; see Radt, *TrGF* IV 239.

[42] Phld. *De Stoicis* 7 col. xviii.20–23 (*SSR* II V.B 126), ἀδελφαῖς ἑαυτῶν καὶ μητρά[σι]ν̣ καὶ σ̣υγγ[ενέσι]ν συγγε[ίν]εσθ̣αι, καὶ [τ]ο̣[ῖς] ἀδ̣ελφο̣ῖς κ[αὶ] τοῖς υἱοῖς.

[43] Pl. *Resp.* 10.619B–C; cf. B. S. Hook, "Oedipus and Thyestes among the Philosophers: Incest and Cannibalism in Plato, Diogenes, and Zeno," *CP* 199 (2005) 17–40, at 19–26, on Thyestes and Oedipus as exponents of the tyrannical soul.

the slaughtered flesh, overturns the table, and curses the line of Pleisthenes (1596–1602), in Diogenes' tragedy he would have remained unmoved. As we have seen, the reason for this impassivity is the application of Anaxagoras' theory of *homoiomeries*:[44] given that everything is contained in everything, ultimately, we always eat the same thing, varying only the proportion of the elements in each foodstuff we consume. Consequently, there is no difference between eating vegetables and eating meat, but rather continuity, and there is even less difference between eating human flesh and eating any other kind of meat.

In order to reconstruct the rest of Thyestes' argument, we shall first examine what Diogenes said about anthropophagy in his *Republic*, because according to the information that the Epicurean Philodemus of Gadara transmitted in *On the Stoics* (mid-first cent. BCE), this dialogue contained the same shameful actions and impiety as the tragedy:

> αὐ]τὸς θ' ὁ Διογένης ἔν τε τῶι Ἀτρεῖ κα[ὶ] τῶι Οἰδίποδι [κα]ὶ τ[ῶι Φιλί]σκωι τὰ πλεῖστα τῶν κατὰ τ[ὴν] Πολιτείαν αἰσχρῶν καὶ ἀνοσίων ὡς ἀρέσκοντα καταχωρ[ί]ζει.
>
> In *Atreus*,[45] *Oedipus*, and *Philiscus*,[46] Diogenes registers as personal opinion many of the same vicious and unholy views promoted in his *Republic*.[47]

From Philodemus' report we know that this precept in Diogenes' *Republic* was mentioned by Chrysippus the Stoic in his work *On*

[44] Anaxag. 59 B 4, 6, 11 D.-K.; frr.D12, 15–16, 22–25 Laks-Most.

[45] On this title see n.17 above.

[46] This dialogue is listed in the catalogue of Diogenic works by Sotion in Diog. Laert. 6.80 (*SSR* II V.B 117); see T. Dorandi, "Filodemo, *Gli Stoici* (PHerc 155 e 339)," *CronErcol* 12 (1982) 91–133, at 122–123; Goulet-Cazé, *Les Kynika du stoïcisme* 12–13; Schorn, *Satyros aus Kallatis* 158–161.

[47] Phld. *De Stoicis* 6 cols. xvi.29–xvii.4 (*SSR* II V.B 126). Although Philodemus is a self-serving informant who distorts information to his own advantage (see Goulet-Cazé, *Les Kynika du stoïcisme* 61–68, and T. Dorandi, "Le *Repubbliche* di Diogene cinico e di Zenone stoico nella testimonianza del *De Stoicis* di Filodemo," *CronErcol* 50 [2020] 51–62, at 58), it is nevertheless certain that the *placita* must have been expressed, one way or another, in the Πολιτεῖαι by Diogenes and Zeno.

Justice.[48] Unfortunately, the part of the *placita* devoted to cannibalism in both Diogenes' and Zeno of Citium's Πολιτεῖαι is badly damaged;[49] after a lacuna, mention is made of "the dying" (τοὺς [τ]ελευ[τῶν]τας), a collective feast (συ̣νκατασιτεῖσθαι), and parricide ([δε]ῖν \π/ατροφονεῖν), from which may be inferred the precept of eating dying relatives at a feast.[50] Since women and children—and therefore also men—are held in common, these are feasts in which the entire Cynic community participates as a single family. Moreover, since no one dies a violent death at the hands of another—they neither covet anything nor have anything of their own to protect—and everyone is healthy thanks to continuous physical exercise, it is normal for people to die of old age.[51] That by "the dying," Diogenes was thinking in particular of parents near death is supported by the testimony of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch at the end of the second century, who in his *Apology to Autolycus* asks his addressee:

[48] Phld. *De Stoicis* 6 col. xvi.20–22 (*SSR* II V.B 126), κἀν τῶι [γ̄] Περὶ δ[ι]και[ο]σύνη[ς] τὸ περὶ τ̣ῆς ἀ̣νθρωποφαγ[ίας] δόγμα. See Goulet-Cazé, *Les Kynika du stoïcisme* 36.

[49] *De Stoicis* 7 cols. xix.23–xx.4 (*SSR* II V.B 126). Cf. [Diog.] *Ep.* 28.3 (*SSR* II V.B 558), πότερον οὖν ἐπιχειρητέον, ὦ κακαὶ κεφαλαί, παιδεῦσαι τούτους ἢ ἀποκτεῖναι; νεκρῶν μὲν γὰρ ἡμῖν οὐδεμία δήπου χρεία, εἰ μὴ ὥσπερ ἱερείων σάρκας ἐσθίειν μέλλομεν.

[50] See Dorandi, *CronErcol* 12 (1982) 125–126; M. Daraki, "Les fils de la mort: La nécrophagie cynique et stoïcienne," in G. Gnoli et al. (eds.), *La mort, les morts dans las sociétés anciennes* (Cambridge 1982) 155–176; Husson, *La République de Diogène* 138–145; also Goulet-Cazé, *Les Kynika du stoïcisme* 62–65, according to whom the normative language (δε]ῖν Crönert) is probably not Diogenic, but rather an intentional deformation by Philodemus, similar to Theophilus' exaggeration quoted below. Cf. Chrys. fr.752 *SVF* (= Sext. Emp. *Math.* 9.194), where the Stoic defends consumption of the deceased, who then becomes τροφή for the living.

[51] On the uselessness of weapons see Phld. *De Stoicis* 6 cols. xv.31–xvi.4 (*SSR* II V.B 126) and Husson, *La République de Diogène* 111–114; on Cynic asceticism, M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, *L'ascèse cynique: Un commentaire de Diogène Laërce VI 70–71*[2] (Paris 2001), and in particular [Crates] *Ep.* 20 (*SSR* II V.H. 107), where, following Crates' example, some young men apply themselves to physical exercise, thanks to which οὐκ ἐπινόσως διῆγον ὥσπερ πάλαι.

> Since, then, you have read much, what is your opinion of the precepts of Zeno, and Diogenes, and Cleanthes, which their books contain, inculcating the eating of human flesh: that fathers be cooked and eaten by their own children; and that if any one refuse or reject a part of this infamous food, he himself be devoured who will not eat? An utterance even more godless than these is found—that, namely, of Diogenes, who teaches children to bring their own parents in sacrifice, and devour them.[52]

Thus, when a Cynic can no longer guarantee his αὐτάρκεια through physical exercise, the community compensates for this loss of individual self-sufficiency by means of a civic ritual in which everyone feeds on his corpse, thus reinforcing community self-sufficiency.[53]

How might Diogenes have adapted this precept to the tragic stage? In the second half of the nineteenth century, Ernst Weber[54] adduced this passage to support the idea that Diogenes used the myth of Thyestes to justify parents devouring their children; in his view, this was something that the Cynic would have considered a natural practice. But according to Diogenes, what is natural is precisely the opposite ([δε]ῖν \π/ατροφονεῖν), because a father devouring the flesh of his healthy children, like

[52] Theoph. *Ad Autol.* 3.5 (*SSR* II V.B 134), transl. M. Dods. The judgement, which seems exaggerated (see n.50 above), may refer to either *Thyestes* or the *Republic*, or even to both at the same time; see Cropp, *Minor Greek Tragedians* II 213. R. Bees, *Zenons Politeia* (Leiden 2011) 187–194, lists numerous diverse anthropological parallels to the custom of πατροφαγία, which was also advocated by Zeno in his Πολιτεία.

[53] Cf. Husson, *La République de Diogène* 139, and also the problems raised by I. Chouinard, "Une tradition du suicide chez les cyniques," *PhilosAnt* 20 (2020) 141–164, at 160–161. See also Bees, *Zenons Politeia* 205, on this precept in Zeno: "Der Tod eines Menschen, insofern sein Körper den Überlebenden als Nahrung dient, ist mithin letzter Akt des Altruismus."

[54] E. Weber, *LeipzStudClasPhil* 10 (1887) 146: "Diogenem illa tragoedia docuisse verosimile fit fas esse etiam patres liberorum carne vesci […] e naturae iure fas esse humana carne vesci neque ullam condicionem aut legem inter parentes et liberos esse." See Daraki, in *La mort, les morts* 155.

Cronus, and becoming their tomb,[55] is far removed from the precepts in the *Republic*. It is therefore worth distinguishing two different aspects of Diogenes' cannibalism: it is one thing to accept it as natural, but quite another to extend it beyond the institutional form that, as we have seen, he argued was acceptable. In fact, Theophilus emphasises not the consumption of any relative, but specifically that of parents by their children, as well as the institutional nature of the practice: the bodies of the victims must be sacrificed and cooked.[56] Consequently, we consider it more plausible that despite arguing in the tragedy that eating human flesh was natural, Thyestes would have abided by the Diogenic precepts and shown Atreus that his feast had contravened the natural order: that if the sun's course had reversed, it was because the order of the sacrifice had also been reversed by inverting the roles of the officiant and the victim: it should not be the parents who devour their healthy children, but the children their moribund parents.

In the tragedy, the criterion for deciding who should live and who should die was probably again that of self-sufficiency. The sons of Thyestes, whose bodies were healthy because they had been exercised by adversity during their exile with their father, did not deserve to be the victims. In contrast, Atreus is hardly a model of self-sufficiency, as he corresponds to the typical characterisation of classical tyrants: he wants to have it all, he sees enemies and conspiracies all around him, and his dread of losing power makes him surround himself with many men to protect him.[57] The tyrant Atreus lives in fear and in need of others: his is not a self-sufficient life worth living.

In short, as opposed to the traditional view of the myth, which

[55] Cf. Accius *Atreus* fr.15 Dangel (= 14 Ribbeck[3]), *natis sepulchro ipse es parens*; Sen. *Thyest.* 1090–1092, *si natos pater / humare et igni tradere extremo volo / ego sum cremandus*, with commentary by Tarrant, *Seneca's Thyestes* 240.

[56] See Husson, *La République de Diogène* 138, and Daraki, in *La mort, les morts* 155–156.

[57] See D. Lanza, *Il tiranno e il suo pubblico* (Turin 1977) 33–64, and [Diog.] *Ep.* 29 *To Dionysius* (*SSR* II V.B 559).

blamed Thyestes for having eaten human flesh rather than Atreus for having cooked it,[58] the Cynic showed that the mistake had been Atreus', who had inverted the natural order, as evidenced by the change of the sun's course.

The myth of the Statesman: A Platonic Atreus?

Thus far, we believe that everything is reasonable: the myths traditionally linked to Thyestes allow us to identify him as a precursor to Diogenes as regards breaking the rules, and he must have been the character who advocated cannibalism, but not that version of cannibalism which involved the sacrifice of healthy, self-sufficient people. In order to advance in this reconstruction of Thyestes' argument beyond a comparison with Diogenes' *Republic*, we shall now do the same with a passage of the *Statesman* where Plato talks about Atreus and Thyestes (268D–277D), because the sharp contrast is illuminating. In it, the change of the sun's course forms an essential part of the construction of an elaborate myth (268E8–269A5):[59]

> STRANGER: There did really happen, and will again happen, like many other events of which ancient tradition has preserved the record, the portent which is traditionally said to have occurred in the quarrel of Atreus and Thyestes. You have heard no doubt, and remember what they say happened at that time?
> YOUNG SOCRATES: I suppose you to mean the token of the birth of the golden lamb.
> STRANGER: No, not that; but another part of the story, which tells how the sun and the stars once rose in the west, and set in the east, and that the god reversed their motion, and gave them that which they now have as a testimony to the right of Atreus. (transl. B. Jowett)

[58] See Burkert, *Homo Necans* 104: "Of the brothers, one was a killer, the other an eater, but the worse pollution belonged to the eater. After this meal […] Thyestes had to abandon the throne forever and flee from the land." See also Schiesaro, *The Passions in Play* 145.

[59] On this myth see M. Dixsaut et al., *Platon. Le Politique* (Paris 2018) 333–382, with bibliography.

This mythical element, together with the legend of those born from the Earth and life in the age of Cronos, allows the Stranger to postulate the eternal alternation of two movements of the Earth in opposite directions, which coincide with life in the age of Cronus and life in the present era. In one, the god rules the Earth and directs its circular revolution, while in the other, he leaves it free and it naturally turns in the opposite direction.[60] The abrupt change from one phase to the other, caused by the violent mixing of opposites, creates a period of cosmic upheaval. When the change leads to the age of Cronos (271D1 ff.), the life of humans also runs in the opposite direction to the present one, so that they gradually grow younger until they disappear completely. Since new life cannot spring from human procreation, humanity is reborn from those who were already dead, that is, from the children of the Earth, who now come back to life (270C11–271B2); because of this rebirth, humans have no memory of their previous existence. Meanwhile, the trees and other plants that grow spontaneously provide humans with their fruit, and as the lesser gods (δαίμονες) care for the different species, there are no wild beasts that devour other animals; nor are there wars or discord, political regimes, or possession of women and children (πολιτεῖαί τε οὐκ ἦσαν οὐδὲ κτήσεις γυναικῶν καὶ παίδων, 271E7–8), and since the seasons are mild, men live naked and almost always in the open air, sleeping on the soft grass. In contrast, when the gods abandon the Earth and it returns to the present age—in the sense that this is its inherent state—humans can no longer be born from the Earth, so the world begins to gestate, give birth, and nurture by its own means (274A3–B1). Lacking all protection, these new humans are decimated by wild animals until they receive Promethean fire

[60] Some have contended that there were three stages in the process rather than two, but most continue to identify the two ages described as those of Cronus and Zeus respectively; see C. Horn, "Why Two Epochs of Human History? On the Myth of the *Statesman*," in C. Collobert et al. (eds.), *Plato and Myth. Studies on the Use and Status of Platonic Myths* (Leiden 2012) 393–417; C. H. Kahn, *Plato and the Post-Socratic Dialogue. The Return to the Philosophy of Nature* (Cambridge 2013) 222; Dixsaut et al., *Platon. Le Politique* 350–379.

from the gods, the arts from Hephaestus and Athena, and seeds and plants from other gods.

If we compare the myth with what we know of Diogenes' *Republic* and his argument in defence of cannibalism, the divergences are significant:

(i) Plato conceives of an eternal alternation between two eras, separated by periods of chaos and destruction due to the violent mixing of opposites, whereas Diogenes applies Anaxagoras' cosmic doctrine to postulate a permanent and necessary mixture of the totality of the universe's constituent elements, which occur in varying proportions in the different beings. Consequently, rather than two eras devoid of mixing and separated in time, there is only one era in which opposites are mixed, an era—and this is important—in which it is still possible to live as people are said to have lived in the age of Cronos.[61]

(ii) The two ages of Platonic myth are distinguished by their modes of eating—strictly vegetarian in the age of Cronus, but combined with meat-eating in that of Zeus—whereas Diogenes' Thyestes contends not only that the extreme forms of vegetarianism and cannibalism, such as the Lotus-eaters and the Cyclops in Homer, have always coexisted,[62] but also that they are essentially identical, since every element is contained in every foodstuff. He thus demonstrates that the common idea associating the abandonment of ἀλληλοφαγία with the progress of civilisation was wrong.[63]

(iii) Finally, humans in the Platonic age of Cronos are born from

[61] It is not difficult to recognise elements of the Diogenic way of life in Plato's characterisation of the age of Cronos. Cf. Max. Tyr. *Diss.* 36.5 Trapp, ἴθι ἐπ' ἄνδρα (sc. Διογένη) οὐ κατὰ τὴν Κρόνου ἐκείνην ἀρχὴν βιοτεύσαντα, ἀλλ' ἐν μέσῳ τῷ σιδηρῷ τούτῳ γένει, ἐλευθερωθέντα ὑπὸ τοῦ Διὸς καὶ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, and [Diog.] *Ep.* 32.3 (*SSR* II V.B 562), with D. Dawson, *Cities of the Gods: Communist Utopias in Greek Thought* (New York 1992) 131–132.

[62] See P. Vidal-Naquet, "Plato's Myth of the *Statesman*, the Ambiguities of the Golden Age and of History," *The Black Hunter*, transl. A. Szegedy-Maszak (Baltimore 1986) 285–301, on this coexistence in thinkers contemporary with Diogenes and earlier, in the Homeric poems.

[63] On this idea of progress see Bees, *Zenons Politeia* 184–187.

the Earth without memory, whereas the Diogenic precept of sacrificing and consuming the bodies of dying relatives implies an alternative mode of generational succession that never involves the Earth; all are perpetuated in the bodies of their most recent descendants, who, in a sense, harbour the memory of the entire family.

Is it possible that in his *Thyestes*, Diogenes contrasted Anaxagoras' cosmic doctrine and Plato's myth, making Atreus speak of the change in the sun's course in terms that evoke the Platonic myth? This is what we think. Our reason for this is that both Sophocles and Euripides had presented the character as an astronomer *avant la lettre.* "By showing the contrary course of the stars," Euripides' Atreus says, "I saved my house and established myself as ruler"; according to Sophocles, "here also everyone bows down before him who reversed the circuit of the sun."[64] This inversion, an obligatory element in myth, occurred—or may have occurred—at two different times in the legend, as a sign either of approbation or of condemnation.[65] Thus, according to some authors, such as Sophocles and Euripides, it happened before the terrible feast, and Atreus interpreted it as a celestial sign in support of his right to the throne after the theft of the golden lamb; as we have seen, this is Plato's version in the *Statesman*. However, according to at least one of Sophocles' plays on Thyestes, it took place after the feast, as a sign of the upheaval caused in the cosmos by the consumption of human flesh;[66] this

[64] Ach. Tat. *Isag. in Arat.* 1 28.17 Maass: Σοφοκλῆς δὲ εἰς Ἀτρέα τὴν εὕρεσιν (sc. τῆς ἀστρολογίας) ἀναφέρει λέγων "κἀνταῦθα … πᾶς προσκυνεῖ δὲ τὸν στρέφοντα κύκλον ἡλίου" (*TrGF* IV F 738, transl. H. Lloyd-Jones). ὁ δ' Εὐριπίδης φησί· "δείξας γὰρ ἄστρων τὴν ἐναντίαν ὁδόν / δόμους τ' ἔσωσα καὶ τύραννος ἱζόμην" (*TrGF* V F 397b, transl. C. Collard and M. Cropp), τὰς τῶν πλανήτων ὁδοὺς ἐναντίας τοῖς λοιποῖς φερομένας ταὐτῷ πάλιν Ἀτρεῖ περιτιθείς. Cf. Polyb. 34.2.6 and Lucian *De astrol.* 12.

[65] The sources of the episode are described by Ruiz de Elvira y Serra, *CFC* 7 (1974) 276–285, 294–296. Cf. Hyg. *Fab.* 88; Sen. *Thyest.* 776–778, 784–788.

[66] See H. Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles. Fragments* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1996) 106. The idea of a reversal of the sun's course in the context of the Thyestean feast

is what is found in Seneca and in most Latin authors who refer to the feast, as well as in Plato's *Cratylus* (395B).

It is feasible that this was also the meaning of the phenomenon in Diogenes' *Thyestes*. The use of Anaxagoras' cosmic doctrine and the technical language of natural philosophy to defend cannibalism presupposes not only that Atreus has previously censured the consumption of human flesh—if Thyestes must argue that it is not impiety, it is probably because Atreus has previously condemned it in these terms—but also that, wielding his reputation as an interpreter of celestial phenomena, Atreus has connected his brother's supposedly impious act with the profound alteration of the cosmos, evident in the change in the sun's path; he may, for example, have equated Thyestes' crime with that of Cronus and interpreted it as a change that would inexorably lead from the present civilised world to the barbarity of primitive humanity. Through Anaxagorean argumentation, Thyestes would have shown Atreus that both his interpretation of the phenomenon and his Platonic view of the universe are wrong: the source of the horror was not the consumption of human flesh *per se*, but that the wrong kind of human flesh had been eaten—not least because if parents devour their children, humanity will become extinct, and will not be reborn from mother Earth, as the *Statesman* myth claims.

Our reconstruction of Thyestes' argument further assumes that this reasoning based on Anaxagorean doctrine was not an ingenious eccentricity on the part of Diogenes, disconnected from the plot, but on the contrary, served a dramatic function. It is true that neither this reasoning nor the use of the technical language of natural philosophy—a field far removed from Diogenes' ethical interests—seems consonant with the philosopher;[67] it is therefore often thought that he acquired his knowl-

is reinforced by its mention in *Anth.Pal.* 9.98, an epigram in praise of Sophocles (δείπνοις ἐλαθεὶς Ἀτρέος Ἥλιος); see F. Egli, *Euripides im Kontext zeitgenössischer intellektueller Strömungen* (Munich 2003) 53–55.

[67] Cf. Lib. *Prog.* 3.2.2 (*SSR* II V.B 388, pp.375.14–376.1), τὸ μὲν γὰρ οὐρανοῦ

edge of Anaxagoras' doctrine through a version popularised by the Sophists rather than from a direct reading.[68] However, in the acquisition of this knowledge, we should not rule out the probable mediation of the Euripidean tragedies, which contain many passages that echo Anaxagoras' ideas and vocabulary.[69] One example of this is a passage from Euripides' *Chrysippus*—the likely source of inspiration for Diogenes' piece of the same name[70]—in which the chorus explains the transformation of the universe as being the result of the separation and concentration of its constituent elements:

> Those things that were born from earth return to earth, and those that grew from aethereal seed go back to the heavenly region. None of these things that come into being perishes, but one is separated from another and exhibits a different form.[71]

Despite its language and content, the passage must have formed

τε καὶ γῆς μέτρα ἠλίου τε καὶ σελήνης διερευνήσασθαι δρόμους ἄλλοις ἀφῆκεν, αὐτὸς δὲ μετῆλθεν ἀρετὴν ἢ μάλιστα τοὺς ζῶντας ὀνήσειν ἔμελλε, and also Diog. Laert. 6.73 (*SSR* II V.B 370), 103 (V.B 368), 39 (V.B 371), [Diog.] *Ep.* 38.1 (V.B 568). On condemnation of ἀστρολόγοι, especially in the philosophical tradition, see J. F. Kindstrand, *Bion of Borysthenes* (Uppsala 1976) 192–193, and G. A. Gerhard, *Phonix von Kolophon* (Leipzig 1909) 135–136.

[68] On the popularised version of Anaxagoras' theories and the technical terminology employed in the Diogenic passage (πάντ ἐν πᾶσι καὶ διὰ πάντα, ὄγκος, πόρος) see D. R. Dudley, *A History of Cynicism* (London 1937) 30; R. Höistad, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King: Studies in the Cynic Conception of Man* (Lund 1948) 143–144; M. Gigante, "Su un insegnamento di Diogene di Sinope," *StIt* 34 (1965) 131–136, at 134–135; and R. Kannicht et al., *Musa Tragica. Die griechische Tragödie von Thespis bis Ezechiel* (Göttingen 1991) 294.

[69] See J. Assaël, *Euripide, philosophe et poète tragique* (Louvain 2001) 47–48; Egli, *Euripides im Kontext* 37–78; Miletti, in *Las personas de Eurípides* 191–218.

[70] See Campos Daroca and López Cruces, *Eirene* 53 (2017) 288–292.

[71] *TrGR* V 839.8–14, χωρεῖ δ' ὀπίσω / τὰ μὲν ἐκ γαίας φύντ' εἰς γαῖαν, / τὰ δ' ἀπ' αἰθερίου βλαστόντα γονῆς / εἰς οὐράνιον πάλιν ἦλθε πόλον· / θνήσκει δ' οὐδὲν τῶν γιγνομένων, / διακρινόμενον δ' ἄλλο πρὸς ἄλλου / μορφὴν ἑτέραν ἀπέδειξεν (transl. Collard and Cropp). Cf. Anaxag. 59 F 17 D.-K., οὐδὲν γὰρ χρῆμα γίνεται οὐδὲ ἀπόλλυται, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ ἐόντων χρημάτων συμμίσγεταί τε καὶ διακρίνεται, with Assaël, *Euripide, philosophe* 47–48.

an essential part of the plot; according to Collard and Cropp,[72] the doctrine that "nothing perishes" may have served as consolation to Pelops for the death of Chrysippus. Similarly, in Diogenes' tragedy, Thyestes would have responded to Atreus by refuting his grounds and demonstrating a better knowledge of the heavens and the universe.

The denouement

As Diego Lanza says, "there is no tyrant on the stage who does not end up defeated and convinced of his own defeat."[73] According to our proposal, Atreus would have come to understand that the cataclysm was not caused by Thyestes consuming human flesh, but by his own act of sacrificing those he should not have, thus inverting the natural order. If, moreover, he had practised the community of women and children, there would have been no need to condemn Aerope to certain death by casting her into the sea, to obsess over the paternity of Agamemnon and Menelaus, or to hold the feast in order to take revenge on his brother. He should have understood events according to right reason.

It may be, then, that in Diogenes' tragedy Atreus eventually realised his fatal mistake and came to view the community of women and children as positive. In fact, suitably reinterpreted, two later episodes in the myth could be understood as signs of the positive change in him following his brother's lessons: first, he marries Pelopia, Thyestes' daughter, after Thyestes has lain with her and conceived Aegisthus, whom the tyrant raises as his own son; and second, he will die years later at the latter's hands,[74] thus restoring the natural order advocated in Diogenes' *Republic*: it is the children who must sacrifice their parents. Moreover, such an admission of one's own mistakes is consistent with Homer, who implies that in the end, the brothers came to an agreement: on his deathbed, Atreus bequeaths the sceptre of

[72] *Euripides, Fragments* II (Cambridge [Mass.] 2008) 467 n.1.

[73] Lanza, *Il tiranno e il suo pubblico* 60 (our translation).

[74] See the testimonies on these events collected by Ruiz de Elvira y Serra, *CFC* 7 (1974) 288–292.

the Pelopid dynasty to Thyestes, who in turn leaves it to Agamemnon.[75] Perhaps Diogenes thought that Homer knew what subsequent poets denied: that Atreus accepted the community of women and children and eventually stopped caring whether Agamemnon and Menelaus were his own sons or not.[76]

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[75] *Il.* 2.106–108, Ἀτρεὺς δὲ θνήσκων ἔλιπεν πολύαρνι Θυέστῃ, / αὐτὰρ ὃ αὖτε Θυέστ' Ἀγαμέμνονι λεῖπε φορῆναι, / πολλῇσιν νήσοισι καὶ Ἄργεϊ παντὶ ἀνάσσειν.

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