Ephorus on the Founding of Delphi's Oracle

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T HE SCHEME of the thirty books of the Histories of Ephorus was an account of the world as a Greek of the fourth century knew it: it included the rise of the Greek states, their activities in the Mediterranean, and their relations with the neighbouring kingdoms. Ephorus laid down the principle that the myths of a remote past were outside his province, because their truth was not ascertainable. However, he chose to begin his work with what we call the Dorian Invasion, which was known to him by legend under the title "Return of the Heracleidae."[1] He recounts the mythical foundation of Delphi's oracle in the fourth book of his Histories (F 31). Strabo, introducing this passage of Ephorus, criticises the rationalized view employed by the historian in the myth of the founding of Delphi and attacks the half-hearted rationalization as merely a confusion of history with myth.[2]

The approach of Ephorus is considered rationalistic or euhemeristic.[3] For Jacoby (*ad* F 31) Ephorus treats two traditions as interwined: on the one hand he puts Themis and Apollo together, and on the other through the rationalization of Python includes the struggle for the site of Delphi.

[1] *FGrHist* 70 TT 8, 10 (Diod. 4.1.2, 16.76.5).

[2] Strab. 9.3.11–12; see also Ephorus' interest in the oracle of Delphi, FF 96, 150.

[3] On Euhemerus of Messene at the beginning of the Hellenistic age (*FGrHist* 63), associated with the historicizing interpretation of myth, see J. Fontenrose, *Python* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1959) 19ff; F. Graf, *Greek Mythology. An Introduction*, transl. Th. Marier (Baltimore 1996) 191–192.

The goal of this study is not to elaborate the principle of rationalism applied by Ephorus to his mythical accounts (*i.e.* how his version is the product of an implicit, rationalizing, euhemeristic reading of myth), but to show that it is structured by the political and social realities of the society for which Ephorus was writing. Myth criticism, as practiced in historiography, does not, however, necessarily entail a definite break with traditional religiosity. My purpose is, then, to show into what kind of traditional streams Ephorus' version flows and what influences are mirrored in his account. The analysis will focus on how this mythical treatment can be interpreted as history assimilated to myth and not as myth interpreted historically.[4] The prevailing element is the "historicization" of the version.

First, I will present Ephorus' version in relation to the others, so as to show the earlier "original" elements retained in it as well as the particular alterations that the myth has been subjected to in connection with political realities. In the second part I turn to Aeschylus' account of the founding of Delphi at the beginning of his tragedy *Eumenides*; comparison with Ephorus' version will support the argument that Ephorus followed Aeschylus in assimilating history to myth, while he strongly coloured the mythical content with morality and politicization under the influence of Isocrates' thought. Thus the character of the Ephoran Apollo as a founder of the oracle of Delphi—a portrayal of the ideals of the Athenian polis—was in the service of internal and external Athenian policy.[5]

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[4] According to P. Veyne's proposal on the problem of the relationship between myth and history, *Les Grecs ont-ils cru à leur mythes?* (Paris 1983). See C. Brillante, "History and the Historical Interpretation of Myth," in L. Edmunds, ed., *Approaches to Greek Myth* (Baltimore 1990) 93–138, and Graf (*supra* n.3) 121–141 ("Myth as History").

[5] A comprehensive and illustrative study with extensive bibliography about the gods of Delphi and the history of the sanctuary from its origins down to the fourth century B.C. is E. Suarez de la Torre, "Les dieux de Delphes et l'histoire du sanctuaire," *Kernos* Suppl. 8 (1998) 61–87.

1. The myth-making of Delphi's oracle

According to Ephorus, Apollo founded Delphi's oracle in co-operation with Themis in order to benefit the human race. Apollo, on his way from Athens to Delphi, came to Panopeus, where he killed the brigand Tityos. The Parnassians then came to him and told him of another brigand in the land, a man called Python or Drakon. Apollo killed him too, while the Parnassians cheered him with cries of *Hie Paian* and burned Python's tent—a deed that was commemorated in later Delphic rites.

Ephorus' account consists of the following main elements: (1) Foundation of Delphi's oracle by Apollo along with Themis; (2) Reason for the oracle's founding, Apollo's function as a founder; (3) Route of Apollo from Athens to Delphi; (4) Python's killing by Apollo and rites connected with this myth (paian, burning of Python's tent); (5) Tityos' killing by Apollo.

(1) All versions include Gaia or Themis, or both, as previous owners of the Delphic oracle,[6] but it is that of Apollodorus[7] which explicitly regards Themis as a predecessor of Apollo at Delphi: Ἀπόλλων δὲ τὴν μαντικὴν μαθὼν παρὰ Πανὸς τοῦ Διὸς καὶ Ὕβρεως ἧκεν εἰς Δελφούς, χρησμῳδούσης τότε Θέμιδος. In Euripides *Or.* 163–165 the Delphic tripod is referred to as "Themis' tripod"[8] and the oracle passes from Gaia to Themis to Apollo,[9] while the version in *IT* 1234–1282 is a blending of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* with Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, together with a profane aura typical of Euripides' view of the gods. Apollo takes over the oracle from Themis by violence in a context of a family intrigue. It is noteworthy, however, that the two earliest accounts of the early history of the oracle, the *Homeric*

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[6] On the myth see Ch. Sourvinou-Inwood, *'Reading' Greek Culture* (Oxford 1991) 217–243 ("Myth as History: The Previous Owners of the Delphic Oracle"), at 236 n.1. (= J. Bremmer, ed., *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* [Totowa 1987] 215–241).

[7] Apollod. 1.4.1; *cf.* Strab. 9.3.11, Paus. 10.5.6, Ov. *Met.* 1.321.

[8] *Cf.* Beazley, *ARV*[2] II 1269 no. 5; *Paralipomena* 471; *Addenda* 177.

[9] *Cf.* Σ Eur. *Or.* 164; Paus. 10.5.6; Aristonoos fr.1 b.17–24 Diehl (*FD* III.2 191); Photius *Lex. s.v.* θεμιστεύειν.

Hymn to Apollo and Alcaeus' *Hymn to Apollo,* contradict the previous-owners version and present Apollo as the founder and first owner of the Delphic oracle. Thus the previous-owners story was invented at a later stage. Apollo is the first owner also in Paus. 10.5.7–8, which gives two versions of Apollo's foundation of the oracle: (a) it was founded for Apollo by Hyperboreans, (b) shepherds discovered it—an alternative to Diod. 16.26 (chasm taken to be Gaia's oracle).

(2) In Alcaeus (fr.307.c) the god's purpose in founding the oracle is to proclaim δίκην καὶ θέμιν to the Greeks: ἐκεῖθεν προφητεύ(σ)οντα δίκην καὶ θέμιν τοῖς ʺΕλλησιν . . . ὁ δὲ [ʼΑπόλλων] ἔτος ὅλον παρὰ τοῖς ἐκεῖ θεμιστεύσας ἀνθρώποις.

(3) As to the route of Apollo to Delphi there are two versions: (a) by sea with Cretans who introduce the paian; Europe is connected with Crete, which is considered to be the origin of the paian;[10] (b) by way of the Hyperboreans.[11]

(4) We have five versions of Apollo's combat with a *drakon*.[12] The motif of killing the baneful *drakon* in Apollo's foundation of the oracle reflects the perception that Apollo's oracle has tamed the darker side of the cosmos.[13] Ephorus' version is consistent with the other four in the claim that Apollo's visit to Delphi was the first. Python in the other

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[10] *Hymn.Hom.Ap.* 388ff. A strong relation between Crete and Delphi has been noted by M. Leone, "Divinità preapollinee a Delfi," *Mythos* 5 (1993) 57–78, esp. 60ff.

[11] So Alcaeus; see K. Kerényi, *Die Mythologie der Griechen* (Zurich 1951) 135 and plates 31, 32; V. Lambrinudakis, "Apollon," *LIMC* II (1984) 304 (§§1003–1007), pl. 1005; L. Lacroix, "Pays légendaires et transferts miraculeux dans les traditions de la Grèce ancienne," *BAB* 69 (1983) 93.

[12] (1) *Hymn.Hom.Ap.* 300ff.; (2) Simon. 68 (*PMG*); Apollod. 1.4.1; Ael. *VH* 3.1; Ov. *Met.* 1.321; (3) Eur. *IT* 1244–1248; Clearchus fr.64 Wehrli; (4) Lucian *D.Mar.* 315.2; Hyg. *Fab.* 140; Luc. *BC* 5.79–81; (5) Ephorus F 31a; Paus. 10.6.5–6. On Apollo-Python see Lambrinudakis (*supra* n.11) 300–302 (§§986–1002) and pll. 995, 997, 1000, 1001.

[13] W. Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth,* transl. P. Bing (Berkeley 1983) 121; W. G. Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry* (Baltimore/London 1984) 72; Fontenrose (*supra* n.3) 13–22, 77–93.

versions is named as a *drakon*, a snake. [14] Pausanias' version is close to that of Ephorus, although his source is not Ephorus. Ephorus' version is reckoned euhemeristic because Python is a man. But among the existing differences between Ephorus and Pausanias is that Pausanias mentions an unnamed brigand. In Ephorus, too, the Parnassians met Apollo after he killed Tityos at Panopeus and told him about Python; according to Pausanias, Apollo was at his shrine at Delphi when the Delphians appealed to him, for it was the Pythia who answered them. When Apollo, in Ephorus, killed Python, the Delphians burned his tent, which represented Python's cave situated at Delphi. Krios' son, in Pausanias, did not live at Delphi, but probably in Euboea; he had once plundered Delphi and was on his way to do so again. The myth of Apollo versus Python served as *aition* for the Septerion and Pythian festivals. Plutarch (*Mor.* 293c, 417f–418b) in describing the Septerion recounts a version which scholars have considered rationalistic and close to Ephorus' version. But Plutarch's version does not show clearly whether Python was a brigand in human form. Plutarch agrees with Ephorus on the point of the burning of the tent, while the link of his Aix to Krios would establish a connection with Pausanias' account.

Halliday believes that the myth and the Septerion rituals were not associated until the fourth century, Ephorus' time, "when the rationalistic was applied for the purposes of explanation." [15] But Ephorus' version, whether "rationalistic" or

[14] The motif "god/hero kills a chthonic monster" is connected with foundation also in other myths: J. Trümpf, "Stadtgründung und Drachenkampf," *Hermes* 86 (1958) 129–157; F. Vian, *Les Origines de Thèbes. Cadmos et les Spartes* (Paris 1963) 94–113. It represents the establishment of order and the elimination of disorder and danger to humanity symbolized by a chthonic monster. Thus Apollo founded it in order to guide mankind, to give laws, and to establish order. This is the significance of the *drakon*-killing by Apollo in the Homeric Hymn.

[15] W. R. Halliday, *The Greek Questions of Plutarch* (Oxford 1928) 66–71. The beginning of Septerion festival is unknown; its earliest literary attestation is in the fourth century, Theopompos *FGrHist* 115 F 80 (Ael. *VH* 3.1). But an inscription from Phalanna (*IG* IX.2 1234) shows that the festival was already

not, was not the official Delphian version of the myth. The burning of Python's tent by the Delphians is mentioned only by Ephorus, who sees it as the mythical precedent for the rite. The burning of the hut, however, follows upon Apollo's combat and victory, which have no counterpart in the ritual. Apollo's κάθαρσις after Python's killing is mentioned by Plutarch and Aelian.[16] Paian in Ephorus is associated with the combat of Apollo against Python. Sakadas' *Pythios Nomos* also testified to the creation of the legend of Apollo's fight against Python.[17]

(5) A similarity or relationship between Python and Tityos has been briefly noted by W. Roscher and Th. Schreiber.[18]

2. Ephorus' version and Aeschylus *Eumenides* 1–14

(a) Aeschylus *Eum.* 2–4: ἐκ δὲ τῆς Θέμιν, Ι ἣ δὴ τὸ μητρὸς
δευτέρα τόδ' ἕζετο Ι μαντεῖον, ὡς λόγος τις.

Ephorus F 31b: κατασευάσαι τὸ μαντεῖον Ἀπόλλωνα
μετὰ Θέμιδος.

Our first evidence for Themis as an ancient oracular goddess dates to 458 B.C., Aeschylus' *Eumenides* 1–8. According to Aeschylus, Gaia gave the Delphic oracle to Themis, succeeded with her consent by Phoebe, not by force, who gave it to her grandson Apollo on his birth. The order Gaia-Themis-Apollo is first mentioned by Aristonoos of Corinth in his *Paean* to

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in existence in the fifth century. See B. Helly, "Le 'Dotion Pedion', Lakéreia et les origines de Larisa," *JSav* 1987, 139–142.

[16] The *Hom. Hymn to Apollo* does not refer to Apollo's κάθαρσις at Tempe. Plut. *Mor.* 293C follows this version, and Ael. *VH* 3.1. The significance of the element of κάθαρσις in the Delphic religion has been emphasized by K. Latte, "Orakel," *RE* 18 (1939) 842–844.

[17] Paus. 10.7.4; Strab. 9.3.10; Poll. 4.84. *Cf.* Pind. *Paean* 8, fr.52i; B. Snell, "Pindars 8. Paian: über die Tempel von Delphi," *Hermes* 90 (1962) 1–6. On the function of the rhythm of the paian in provoking a state of ecstatic enthusiasm see J. Defradas, *Les thèmes de la propagande delphique* (Paris 1954) 81, *cf.* B. L. Rainer, *Philodamus' Paean to Dionysus. A Literary Expression of Delphic Propaganda* (diss. U. Illinois 1975).

[18] W. Roscher, *Apollon und Mars* (Leipzig 1873) 41; Th. Schreiber, *Apollon Pythoktonos: Ein Beitrag zur griechischen Religions und Kunstgeschichte* (Leipzig 1879) 56.

Apollo.[19] This order was an artificial and not a historical element in the mythological structure of the oracle's founding.[20] Its invention in the fifth century was intended to replace Apollo's fight against Python: Aeschylus' version marks a reversal of the dominant tradition according to which Apollo took possession of Delphi by force from a chthonic deity. Its creation was possible at this time because the Hesiodic function of Gaia as prophetess had been taken over by Themis, as in Pindar:[21] the εὔβουλος Themis, she who gives good advice,[22] announces the πεπρωμένον, τὰ θέσφατα, in the quarrel between Zeus and Poseidon. In Aeschylus' *Prometheus* (209–211) Themis is identified with Gaia in so far as their oracular character is concerned.

There is no basis to think that Themis actually possessed an oracle at Delphi. She did not enjoy there an ancient cult, nor was a month named for her. But from the mythic construction described above, one might assume that it was Themis who delivered oracles in primordial time and not Apollo.[23]

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[19] *Supra* n.9.

[20] So Nilsson, *GGR* I³ 171–172; P. Amandry, *La mantique apollonienne à Delphi* (Paris 1950) 211–214; P. de la Coste-Messelière, "L'oracle de Delphes," *JSav* 1950, 157–159 H. Berve, *Gnomon* 24 (1952) 11. Defradas (*supra* n.17) 115 assumes that Gaia and Themis were ancient cultic deities at Delphi. According to Leone (*supra* n.10) 78, the pre-Apolline religious world at Delphi consisted of a triadic cult: the earth-mother Gaia, Kore, and Paredros. See Lambrinudakis (*supra* n.11) 1008 and pl. on Apollo's appointment in Delphi: the artistic representation of the sequence Gaia-Themis-Phoebe-Apollo on a red-figure crater, dated to the first quarter of the fourth century B.C.

[21] *Isthm.* 8.30–34, dated 478 B.C. Gaia and her function at Delphi: G. Roux, *Delphes: son oracle et ses dieux* (Paris 1976); B. C. Dietrich, "Reflections on the Origins of the Oracular Apollo," *BICS* 25 (1978) 1–18. *Guide de Delphes* (Paris 1991) 17. Gaia-Themis: archaeological evidence at Delphi, P. de la Coste-Messelière and R. Flacelière, "Une statue de la terre à Delphes," *BCH* 54 (1930) 283–295.

[22] *Cf.* Pind. *Hymn to Zeus*: fr. 30.1 εὔβουλον.

[23] On a vase-painting Themis gives an oracle to Aigeus, the mythical king: cylix from Vulci in Berlin, *cf.* L. Weniger, "Themis," in Roscher, *Lex.* V 579, and R. Hampe, *Die Gleichnisse Homers und die Bildkunst seiner Zeit* (Tübingen 1952) 39 Abb. 23.

Sourvinou-Inwood[24] argues that the succession of Themis by Apollo as a theme of the previous owners of the oracle cannot support the historicity of the myth: Themis became a previous owner in order to fill the space between Apollo-Gaia.

In Pindar (*Ol.* 9.40) Apollo took over the oracle peacably.[25] This is emphasized by Aeschylus (*Eum.* 5), Themis θελούσης οὐδὲ πρὸς βίαν τινός. The friendly transfer of the oracle from Themis to Apollo was rendered easier via Phoebe, who was sister of Themis and grandmother of Apollo.[26] According to Sourvinou-Inwood, the schema of the friendly-transfer variant contrasted with that of the violent transfer of a primordial deity by a younger god as in the *Theogony*'s succession myth: hence this version, so well adapted to *Eumenides*, was probably created by Aeschylus in the context of the reconciliation between the chthonic and Olympian powers. The Aeschylean myth is a "civilizing" version of the violent variants, ascribing a higher ethical tone to the oracle and its god. The replacement, by force, of a chthonic and negative deity by Apollo at Delphi[27] belongs to the mythological schema "divine succession," which is shaped by and articulates social, religious, and intellectual realities and collective representations.[28] Despite Aeschylus' friendly version, I think that he remained hesitant on this point, adopting a medium and not a radical version, in which there is

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[24] See Sourvinou-Inwood (*supra* n.6).

[25] See K. Latte, "Themis," *RE* 5 (1934) 1628.

[26] D. S. Robertson, "The Delphian Succession in the Opening of the *Eumenides*," *CR* 55 (1941) 69–70, suggests that Aeschylus introduced Themis into the Delphic succession "to equate the assumption of office by the first three holders of the Pythian oracle with these three great allotments" (of γέρα and τιμαί among the gods). Disputed by F. Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca 1949) 126 n.10: since Themis and Phoebe belong to the same generation of gods, Robertson's "equation" could scarcely be obvious to Aeschylus' audience. Wilamowitz identified Gaia with Themis: *Glaube der Hellenen* I (Berlin 1931) 203, *cf. Griechische Tragödien* II (Berlin 1929) 212–213. See also Defradas (*supra* n.17) 88 n.3 and Amandry (*supra* n.20) 201 n.2.

[27] *Hymn.Hom.Ap.* 300–374: a serpent; Pind. fr.55: Gaia; Eur. *IT* 1242–1282: Gaia, Themis.

[28] See J.-P. Vernant, *Religion grecque, religions antiques* (Paris 1976) 23.

the same basic structure as in the other versions, *i.e.* "succession," but coloured with the new accent on friendly transfer. Furthermore, H. Vos[29] argues that *Eum.* 4 ὡς λόγος τις indicates that Aeschylus' version about Themis as a second possessor of Delphi is not an old tradition or the tragedian's invention, but rather belongs to an emerging teaching among the Greeks that sprang from Delphi, namely Orphism.[30] One of the *Orphic Hymns* is addressed *To Themis* (79), as a daughter of Ouranos and Gaia; she delivered oracles to gods and men and taught Phoibos the art of prophecy. This aspect is an expansion of the Pindaric and Delphic Themis. She reveals the τελετὰς ἀγίας and she is νυκτιπόλευτος.

Ephorus has Apollo found the oracle along with Themis. Ephorus went further than Aeschylus, introducing in his version the unique element of the co-operation of Apollo with Themis in the oracle's foundation.

(b) Aeschylus *Eum.* 13–14: χθόνα ǀ ἀνήμερον τιθέντες ἡμερωμένην.

> Ephorus F 31b: καθ' ὃν χρόνον 'Απόλλωνα τὴν γῆν ἐπιόντα ἡμεροῦν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους δόσει τῶν ἡμέρων καρπῶν καὶ τῶν ⟨ἄλλων τῶν ὠφελούντων τὸν ἀνθρώπινον⟩ βίον.
> ὑπολαμβάνουσι κατασκευάσαι τὸ μαντεῖον 'Απόλλωνα μετὰ Θέμιδος ὠφελῆσαι βουλόμενον τὸ γένος ἡμῶν . . . εἰς ἡμερότητα προὐκαλεῖτο καὶ ἐσωφρόνιζε, τοῖς μὲν χρηστηριάζων καὶ τὰ μὲν προστάττων τὰ δ' ἀπαγορεύων, τοὺς δ' οὐδ' ὅλως προσιέμενος.

Aeschylus' verse[31] can be seen here to correspond, even in its

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[29] H. Vos, ΘΕΜΙΣ (Assen 1956) 63.

[30] See K. Ziegler, "Orphische Dichtung," *RE* 18 (1942) 1371.

[31] *Cf.* Σ *Eum.* 13: Θησεὺς τὴν ὁδὸν ἐκάθηρε τῶν λῃστῶν· καὶ ὅταν πέμπωσιν εἰς Δελφοὺς θεωρίδα, προέρχονταί τινες ἔχοντες πελέκεις ὡς διημερώσοντες τὴν γῆν. L. Radermacher, "Bemerkungen zu Äschylus' Eumeniden," *WS* 41 (1919) 108, emphasized the social and political dimension of Theseus' personality and its civilizing role as depicted by the scholiast; further, on the basis of Pherecydes, he urged that during the period 469–454 B.C. the cult of the hero at Athens likely reached its peak. So a chronological link is established between

terminology, to the first element of the account that Ephorus gives.[32]

ἡμερότης with the first appearance of Apollo on earth is connected with the gift of cultivated fruits to men and the other things useful to human life. The foundation of the oracle in Ephorus, however, is associated with the moral and ethical aspect of ἡμερότης, civilization. Sourvinou-Inwood regards Themis' ownership of the oracle as an elaboration of the formulation in Alcaeus' *Hymn to Apollo* προφητεύ⟨σ⟩οντα δίκην καὶ θέμιν, which describes Apollo's mission at Delphi. The Themis-Apollo relationship expresses the two deities as complementary. I would argue that it is Ephorus' version that is an explicit expansion of Alcaeus, although in Alcaeus Apollo is the only founder and the first owner of the Delphic oracle. I am inclined to this view because in Aeschylus Apollo's coming coincides with the advance of civilization, but, I believe, in a practical sense.[33] In Ephorus, by contrast, Apollo functions as a a guide for mankind (εἰς ἡμερότητα προὐκαλεῖτο κτλ.). Apollo's civilizing role as law-giver and orderer in Alcaeus is answered in Ephorus by προστάττων/ἀπαγορεύων, which cause ἡμερότης and σωφροσύνη in mankind.

Apollo is characterized by two features in the archaic period: (a) he proclaims what is right and law, and (b) the most important of his teachings is the warning against ὕβρις. ὕβρις

Theseus' cult and this version of the mythical account of the founding of Delphi's oracle.

[32] Radermacher (*supra* n.31) 105 pointed out that the Ephoran ἡμεροῦν and the Aeschylean ἡμερωμένην are connected. Plato stresses the significant role of the Delphic oracle in stabilizing his moral and religious laws: *Resp.* 427B: καὶ ἐγὼ εἶπον ὅτι 'Ἡμῖν μὲν οὐδέν, τῷ μέντοι 'Απόλλωνι τῷ ἐν Δελφοῖς τά τε μέγιστα καὶ κάλλιστα καὶ πρῶτα τῶν νομοθετημάτων. Τὰ ποῖα; ἦ δ' ὅς. 'Ιερῶν τε ἱδρύσεις καὶ θυσίαι καὶ ἄλλαι θεῶν τε καὶ δαιμόνων καὶ ἡρώων θεραπεῖαι . . . τὰ γὰρ δὴ τοιαῦτα οὔτ' ἐπιστάμεθα ἡμεῖς οἰκίζοντες. See W. Schadewaldt, *Der Gott von Delphi und die Humanitätsidee* (Frankfurt 1975).

[33] However, Apollo at *Eum.* 185–195 will claim to be the champion of civilization against the barbaric Erinyes: see R. Lattimore, *Aeschylus* I (Chicago 1953) 30: "Apollo stands for everything which the Furies are not: Hellenism, civilization, intellect, and enlightenment."

and θέμις are close to each other, for they are polarities.[34] The poetic θέμις means "order, law." Alcaeus also attributed this special aspect to Apollo's oracle at Delphi.[35] By its etymology (*θη-, *θε-, τίθημι),[36] it means "what is set and it is solid, firm, the firm order, right, the law."[37] Θέμις is a personification of this. So the connotation of θέμις is not primarily oracle but right, law, norm. θέμις and δίκη coincide in the *Iliad*: θέμις means the fundamental right on the basis of which the community's life becomes possible, and δίκη constitutes the opposite of βία. To live according to θέμις is the natural way of life. The "right" (θέμις) had obtained an extensive and ontic reality in early Greece; therefore θέμις and δίκη designated not only the order of right, but also the social order as well as the order of nature, *i.e.* the entire order of life. The oracle communicates justice and right. The verb θεμιστεύω designates the typical character of Apollo in the archaic period: he gives rules, law, order, right.[38]

(c) Aesch. *Eumenides* 9–13: (Apollo) λιπὼν δὲ λίμνην
Δηλίαν τε χοιράδα, | κέλσας ἐπ' ἀκτὰς ναυπόρους
τὰς Παλλάδος, | ἐς τήνδε γαῖαν ἦλθε Παρνησοῦ θ'

[34] *Hymn.Hom.Ap.* 541: ὕβρις θ', ἢ θέμις ἐστὶ καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων.

[35] Himerius' prose paraphrase of Alcaeus' *Hymn* to Apollo, *Or.* 14.10: εἰς Δελφοὺς πέμπει (*sc.* Zeus-Apollo) καὶ Κασταλίας νάματα, ἐκεῖθεν προφητεύοντα δίκην καὶ θέμιν τοῖς Ἕλλησι. D. Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus* (Oxford 1955) 244–247, thinks also that θεμιστεύειν means "delivering the law."

[36] E. Fraenkel, "Graeca-Latina: 1) Grammatische und syntaktische Bemerkungen zu griech. θέμις," *Glotta* 4 (1912) 22–31; H. Frisk, "Die Stammbildung von ΘΕΜΙΣ," *Eranos* 48 (1950) 1–13. A variant proposed by Wilamowitz, *Glaube* (*supra* n.26) is Θέμις (*θεμ- [θέμεθλον, θεμείλιον] + ἵστημι > θεμιστ-) as a personification of "Grundlegung," the "Grundlegerin." In Hes. *Theog.* 135 the logic of the word Θέμις is θέ- < τίθημι. See D. H. Roberts, *Apollo and his Oracle in the Oresteia* (Hypomnemata 78 [Göttingen 1984]) 22.

[37] Fraenkel (*supra* n.36): θέμις as neuter = θεμιτόν, πρέπον.

[38] *Hymn.Hom.Ap.* 252–253 = 292–293 τοῖσιν δέ τ' ἐγὼ νημερτέα βουλὴν | πᾶσι θεμιστεύοιμι χρέων ἐνὶ πίονι νηῷ: the verb θεμιστεύω does not mean "deliver an oracle." See also 393–395 Κρῆτες ἀπὸ Κνωσοῦ Μινωίου, οἵ ῥά τ' ἄνακτι | ἱερά τε ῥέζουσι καὶ ἀγγέλλουσι θέμιστας (= law, rules) | Φοίβου Ἀπόλλωνος χρυσαόρου. For θέμις as "oracle" and θεμιστεύειν as "giving an oracle" see *Od.* 16.403 Διὸς μεγάλοιο θέμιστες; Eur. *Ion* 371; Pind. *Pyth.* 4.54 Φοῖβος ἀμνάσει θέμισσιν; Harp. *s.v.* θεμιστεύειν = χρησμῳδεῖν. See Vos (*supra* n.29), esp.17–22, 62–65, for the oracular associations of θέμις.

ἕδρας. | πέμπουσι δ᾽ αὐτὸν καὶ σεβίζουσιν μέγα | κελευθοποιοὶ παῖδες Ἡφαίστου.

Ephorus F 31b: ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν δ᾽ ὁρμηθέντα ἐπὶ Δελφοὺς ταύτην ἰέναι τὴν ὁδόν, ᾗ νῦν Ἀθηναῖοι τὴν Πυθιάδα πέμπουσι.

Identical, more or less, in both versions is Apollo's route from Athens to Delphi. In Aeschylus, the Athenians believed that Apollo landed in Attica and travelled to Delphi with Athenians providing the god a welcoming escort to to his new home. Athens is an intermediate station of Apollo's travel to Delphi: Delos-Sounion-Athens-Delphi.

The more common tradition about Apollo's journey to Delphi had him land in Boeotia, either at Mount Messapium (*Hymn.Hom.Ap.* 233) or at Delium in the territory of Tanagra (Pind. fr.286). In Ephorus, Apollo travelled along the road by which the Athenians now sent their sacred embassy to the Pythian temple.[39] At any rate, in both versions Athen's role as starting point of the founder-civilizer of the oracle is greatly exalted.

3. The making of the Ephoran Apollo

The writing of universal history in fourth-century Greece, as undertaken by Ephorus (1069/8 [TT 8, 10] to 341/0), necessarily involved mythical accounts with political importance, like the myth of the Return of the Heracleidae. Universal history, by its nature, is equally interested in culture and human civilization.

Ephorus adapted a utilitarian view of history, that the first principle of historiography was the edification of the reader;

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[39] The *Pythaid*, the famous and impressive religious procession from Athens to Delphi. Depicted on an Attic krater in Ferrara: *ARV²* 1143 no. 1, 1684; *Paralip.* 455. K. Lehnstedt, *Prozessionsdarstellungen auf attischen Vasen* (Munich 1970) 122, and T. B. L. Webster, *Potter and Patron in Classical Athens* (London 1972) 141. A Pythaid between 330 and 325 B.C.: *FD* III.1 511 (*Syll.³* 296). A. Boëthius, *Die Pythais* (Uppsala 1918) 148–149; P. Amandry and T. Spyropoulos, *BCH* 98 (1974) 235–237 and figs. 48–49. See E. Voutiras, "A Dedication of the *Hedbomaistai* to the Pythian Apollo," *AJA* 86 (1982) 232.

this he intended to secure by exalting virtue and magnifying vice.[40] His view is reflected in the preface of Diodorus: "History must be regarded as the guardian of the virtues of famous men, as the witness to the wrongdoing of the wicked, and as the benefactress of the whole human race" (Diod. 1.2.2, transl. Barber).

Ephorus constructed the character of Apollo in the myth of the founding of Delphi on the basis of this axiom. The Ephoran Apollo is not only κτίστης, founder, of the Delphic oracle. His function as εὐεργέτης and guide echoes the spirit of Athenian panegyric tradition.[41] The historian borrowed the conception of his version from the earlier ones, of Alcaeus and in particular Aeschylus, but the idiosyncracy of the Ephoran Apollo is a developed figure of the Isocratean idealized mythical hero, such as Theseus.

What is the background of the Ephoran Apollo's creation, the reasons for his specific qualities, and the aim that the historian intended by this presentation? The causes should be sought in the socio-political situation at Athens at the time when the authors lived and wrote their works.

Fifth-century Athenian tragedy was always capable of alluding to and commenting upon specific events in the real world outside the theatre. And of all surviving tragedies, it is *Eumenides* that has the closest connections with the internal and external affairs of the Athenian people at the time when the play was written and produced.[42] In the spring of 458 B.C. Athens was at a crossroads of her history, from which she might go on to greatness or to ruin. Many of the anxieties of the day are reflected, in a general way, all through the *Oresteia*.

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[40]G. L. Barber, *The Historian Ephorus* (Cambridge 1935) 102–103.

[41]The Athenian panegyric tradition is seen in Ephorus' ἡμερούν (like Aeschylus' χθόνα ἀνήμερον τιθέντες ἡμερωμένην) and ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν, *i.e.* the route of the god and his function; this echoes an Attic and patriotic theme, Athens' humanity towards all mankind, as already expressed in Isocrates' *Panegyricus* (46). See Radermacher (*supra* n.31) 105 and n.1.

[42]For the bearing of this play on Athenian policy see Graf (*supra* n.3) 167 quoting W. Schmid: "*Agamemnon* and *Choephori* were composed for humanity, *Eumenides* for Athens in 458 B.C."

Civil strife is vehemently deprecated both by Athena (858–866) and by the Erinyes (976–987), who also both warn against the opposite evils of anarchy and despotism to which civil strife so often leads (526–528, 696–697). One passage (980–983) suggests that it is especially to be feared that στάσις may arise from political murders[43] leading to retaliation and counter-retaliation and ultimately to "the city's ruin." In the internal affairs of Athens, Aeschylus publicly espouses one principle only: the vital importance of avoiding anything that might lead to civil conflict.

In the light of these dangers, the concept of the Aeschylean Θέμις and Apollo could be understood as an antidote not only to Athenian perils abroad but mainly to those at home. Further, the role of Athens in the founding of Delphi by Apollo fulfills the Athenian hopes to win glory, as the public message of the play asked.

The Ephoran Apollo originated in the Alcaean and Aeschylean god, but he matured with the Isocratean conceptualization of myth and its use. Ephorus was certainly under the influence of the Isocratean school both in thought and style.[44] Ephorus was indebted to his master Isocrates for his conception of the scope and purpose of his work. His history was bound to emphasize the concept of the unity of the Greek world in its opposition to the barbarian. One further point that seems to unite both writers is their sympathy for Athens and their desire to secure her glory, even at the expense of truth. Orators and historians are not inspired by Muses in recounting myths, like the epic poets earlier, but are members of the polis appointed by her to accomplish an official and obligatory task through mythology. Myths are reduced to being a memorial to the polis. The mythical themes formed an official Athenian ideology, whose function was to promulgate pan-Athenian nationalism;

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[43]Such as that of Ephialtes? Antiphon 5.68; Arist. *Ath.Pol.* 25.4; Diod. 11.77.6; Plut. *Per.* 10.7.

[44]See Barber (*supra* n.41) 77–79, 82–83.

Athens, the chief polis, became the focus of all mythological accounts.

The function of the Ephoran Apollo as guide of men echoes the Isocratean *Panegyricus*;[45] the god is the personification of the Athenian polis. Moreover, he resembles the Isocratean Theseus, because of the civilizing role, the defence of justice, and the benefiting of the human race. Theseus overcame localism; he had been raised to a panhellenic level. The case of Theseus illustrates how myth was changed to meet the requirements of the day.[46] The orators extolled the virtues of the heroes, attributing to them a social importance. Isocrates intended to set before the people ideal heroic characters for imitation, turning to account the educational power of myth. Thus Theseus is praised for *sophrosyne*, which is the height of the hero's morality, and especially manifested in his deeds of a political character (Isoc. *Hel.* 31–37). The main feature of Apollo's character is also the political virtue of *sophrosyne*. The idealized mythical character of Theseus was used by Isocrates as a reaction against the socio-political situation of his time. Myth was used to express a remedy for contemporary social and moral ills. The general state of Greece was very pitiful: Isocrates evoked that state in terms such as νοσήματα, ἡ ταραχὴ ἡ παροῦσα, μανία ἡ ἐνεστῶσα, ἀνήκεστα κακά, etc.[47] The statement on that situation by Isocrates starts with his first Hellenic discourse, *Panegyricus* (380 B.C.), and extends as far as *Panathenaicus* (early 330s). Wars and internal strife were the two "evils" among the Greeks (*Paneg.* 168–170). The quarrels between the poleis and stasis within the polis constituted one of the "three special evils of the

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[45] Isoc. *Paneg.* 38–39, esp. πρώτη γὰρ καὶ νόμους ἔθετο καὶ πολιτείαν κατεστήσατο ("for Athens was first to establish laws and lay down a constitution").

[46] Isoc. *Hel.* 25, 29. Theseus as civilizing agent, Graf (*supra* n.3) 137; as political innovator, 139–140.

[47] *Paneg.* 6, 15, 133, 144, 167, 172–173; *Panath.* 14, 99, 258–259; *Antid.* 127; *Phil.* 149.

time."[48] Isocrates' reaction was to use the mythical hero as a means of advocating his policy, embellished with morality and virtue.

In particular, the period 459–447 B.C. was interesting and important, and, as the time of the unsuccessful attempt by Athens to create a land-empire, must have tempted Ephorus to indulge in what would appear to be his usual disregard for unpleasant facts. So the Ephoran Apollo functions like the Isocratean Theseus and fulfills the panhellenic point of view of the historian,[49] standing for humanity and virtue. Although secularization/politicization[50] is the main idiosyncracy of Ephorus' version of the founding of Delphi's oracle, the constant point of its relation with the ethical dimension of religion is the morality and virtue of its context. Even Python's presentation as a brigand and not a snake—the element which sums up the rationalistic character of Ephorus' account—and his killing by the god—a good chance to bring benefit to people —could be regarded as serving the morality of the myth.[51]

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