Myth and Philosophy in Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*

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CLEANTHES' *HYMN TO ZEUS* clearly contains Stoic doctrine. It also makes use of ordinary assumptions. How do these two kinds of belief fit with each other? In his recent edition and commentary, Johan Thom raises this question anew and recognizes a tension between a personal, transcendent Zeus and the immanent Zeus of Stoic philosophy. He also sees a tension between two views of the relationship between good and bad: a Heraclitean doctrine of a harmonious union of opposites, and the ability of Zeus to change bad into good. In Thom's view, what prevails is the view of a transcendent deity who is capable of bringing about a change from bad to good. This change, Thom proposes, lies in the future. As a deity who can bring order into a disorderly world, Thom suggests, Zeus has more in common with traditional Greek beliefs than with Stoic philosophy.[1]

In this paper, I shall argue that Cleanthes uses traditional beliefs to support a thoroughly philosophical view of Zeus. This deity, I argue, orders the world as an immanent force that both combines bad with good in a permanent union of opposites and enables humans to change from bad to good. This, I take it, is orthodox Stoic doctrine. I propose to test this interpre-

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[1] Thom presents his interpretation on pp.19–27, 109–112, and 142 of his text, translation, and commentary, *Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus* (Tübingen 2005). In Thom's words (22), Zeus "has in fact arranged things in such a way that the end result will be a universal rational order." K. Sier, "Zum Zeushymnos des Kleanthes," in P. Steinmetz (ed.), *Beiträge zur hellenistischen Literatur und ihrer Rezeption in Rom* (Stuttgart 1990) 93–108, comes close to Thom's position by proposing that Zeus brings about a change from bad to good by bringing bad humans to an understanding of the common *logos* (103–106). Unless otherwise noted, I use Thom's text.

tation by offering two distinct readings of Cleanthes' *Hymn*: one by a person who approaches the poem without knowing any Stoic doctrine; the other by a person who is familiar with Stoic doctrine.[2] By separating out these two strands of interpretation, I hope to highlight, in the first place, the tensions that exist in the poem, and to probe, in the second place, how they may be reconciled.

Before I start my comparisons, I would like to set out a somewhat different view of the structure of the poem from that of others. I agree with Thom on the general point that the poem focuses on the existence of evil.[3] As Thom points out (*Cleanthes' Hymn* 13–16), Cleanthes builds this focus into a traditional tripartite structure, consisting of invocation (1–6), predication (called "argument" by Thom; 7–31), and prayer (31–39). The general theme of the poem is Zeus' power. The invocation announces this theme by calling Zeus "all-powerful" (at the end of the first line) and proposing to sing of Zeus' "power" (6). The predication (which I shall simply call "development") introduces a problem, the activity of bad humans. This problem is resolved in the prayer. Within this general structure, there is a complex interplay of subdivisions. As I see it, the development has two main parts, which I call A and B. One part (A) asserts Zeus' power, as illustrated by his thunderbolt. The other part (B) is that bad humans act apart from Zeus. Part A presents a thesis; Part B introduces a complication. The poet, however, does not simply state all of one part, then all of the next. He anticipates B in a forcefully pointed sentence that divides the theme of Zeus' power into two parts. Instead of a simple AB progression, there is an alternation: ABAB, or, as I shall call it, A1B1 A2B2. A1 (extending from 9 to 14) elaborates one aspect of Zeus' power, his control of nature. B1 (15–17) asserts the separation of bad humans. A2 (18–21) responds to B1 by reasserting Zeus' power. B2 (22–31) elaborates the theme of human error in a run-on description of human excess, thus

[2] Thom, *Cleanthes' Hymn* 13, suggests that the poem was intended not just for Stoic philosophers, but also for a more general audience.

[3] "The Problem of Evil in Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus," *Acta Classica* 41 (1998) 45–58, at 45; and *Cleanthes' Hymn* 95.

setting up the prayer for divine aid and a final confirmation of divine power.

The poet intertwines the two parts in such a way as to jolt the listener into a sharp awareness of his own situation in the world. A1 ends climactically by bestowing on Zeus the title of supreme king everywhere. B1 first lulls the listener into continuing to think that Zeus' power extends everywhere, then suddenly forces upon him the recognition that this is not the case. The poet introduces the surprise by the emphatic monosyllable πλήν ("except") at the beginning of line 17. It was typical to celebrate a god by saying, without qualification, that nothing happens "without you."[4] Cleanthes puts this expectation to his own use. After stating that nothing happens on earth or in the sky or in the sea apart from Zeus, the sentence suddenly curtails Zeus' domain of power by separating "what the bad do by their own folly" from it. The poet delivers the shock in just one line, then responds by immediately reasserting the power of Zeus. Answering emphatic πλήν ("except") by equally hard-hitting ἀλλὰ σύ ("but you"), he reaffirms Zeus' power by pointing out that Zeus has harmonized everything so that there is just one *logos*.

Let us now take the non-Stoic. The invocation presents ideas with which he is very familiar from a non-philosophical point of view. Zeus is the greatest of the gods, all-powerful, ruler of nature, who has established a lawful order in the world. As is customary, the listener is called upon to join his voice to the singer's first-person "I," thus becoming part of a chorus of singers.

The first section of the development (7–14) is carefully constructed to focus on Zeus' lightning as the instrument of his power. The semantic center of gravity is the single verse (10) that describes the lightning by an accumulation of three attributes, following each other without binding particles, in a crescendo of clashing sounds and semantic complexity. The lightning is "two-edged, fiery, ever-living" (ἀμφήκη πυρόεντα ἀειζώοντα). Together with an increase in the number of

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[4] E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig 1913) 157. Citing Norden, Sier, in Steinmetz, *Beiträge* 100–101, draws attention to the unexpected πλήν clause.

syllables for each word, the cumulative force of the adjectives is enhanced by the rapid-fire clash of vowels in πυρόεντα ἀει-ζώοντα, creating a remarkable concentration of four vowel clashes in just eight syllables.

The attribute "two-edged" is especially noteworthy. Drawing attention to itself by its position at the beginning of the verse, as well as by its three long syllables, it portrays the lightning as a blade that is sharpened on both sides to cut with special power.[5] Zeus wields his lightning with "unconquered hands" just like a sword, cutting through all things with its double edge. The fourfold repetition of ὑπο in 8–11, picked up by ὕπατος in 14, raises Zeus to the height of a conqueror sub-jugating all of nature by the blows of his fiery weapon. Cryp-tically, Zeus is said to use it to "straighten" (κατευθύνεις, 12) the "common *logos*," which pervades everything. The non-Stoic has no clear idea of this *logos*. What he does recognize, on the other hand, is that Zeus has the power to subdue anything at all in the world.

Responding to the impact of πλήν, the non-Stoic is stirred into a vivid recollection of something that he is very familiar with. He recalls the beginning of Homer's *Odyssey* (1.32–43), where Zeus observes that, although humans blame the gods for the evils that come to them, they go wrong through their own folly, thus bringing evil upon themselves. Citing Aigisthus, Zeus points out that he sent Hermes to warn Aigisthus, but Hermes failed to persuade him. Aigisthus is to blame, not just for doing wrong, but for setting himself in deliberate opposition to the will of Zeus. Guided by Homer, the non-Stoic is ready to make room for human folly in a universe ruled by Zeus.

At the same time, the non-Stoic is troubled by the sudden reference to human evil. By focusing on the lightning, the poet highlights the terror that Zeus' power traditionally holds for humans. In the words of Hesiod, "Zeus, thunderer on high, easily sets straight (ἰθύνει) the crooked and blasts the haughty" (*Op.* 7–8). Echoing ἰθύνει, Cleanthes' term κατευθύνεις in 12

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[5] This is how the thunderbolt was commonly portrayed. See H. Usener, "Keraunos," *RhM* 60 (1905) 1–30, at 19–20 (repr. *Kleine Schriften* IV [Leipzig 1913] 471–497).

not only signifies straight steering, but also suggests correction through punishment. The strong emphasis on the sharp-edged power of the lightning bolt strengthens this suggestion. Subjugating all of nature by its blows, what prevents the lightning bolt from striking humans by its blows? When the non-Stoic hears that there are bad people who act apart from Zeus, what is more likely to be on his mind than the thought that Zeus might use the terrible power of his lightning bolt to punish him, along with anyone else who is bad?

The poet does nothing to allay this fear in the next lines. Instead, he offers a riddle. In the usual manner of riddles, it consists of a juxtaposition of opposites: Zeus knows how to make odd even, disorder orderly, what is not dear dear, and to fit all into one and fit good with bad, so that there is a single *logos* for all. To "even out" (ἄρτια θεῖναι, 18) what is odd suggests the power to set straight the crooked. For the non-Stoic, there is perhaps a glimmer of hope in the claim that "what is not dear is dear"; but it is shrouded in obscurity. When the non-Stoic hears subsequently that evil men are "doomed" (δύσμοροι, placed emphatically in enjambment at the beginning of 23), what could be more pressing for him to pray for than that Zeus should not blast him with his lightning, especially since the poet preempts the usual kind of prayer by denouncing the evil quest for reputation, wealth, and pleasure?[6]

The emphatic ἀλλά that introduces the prayer reasserts the power of Zeus. In addition, it brings a surprise. Instead of praying that Zeus should avert his anger, the poet prays that he should bestow the gift of understanding. This is a new aspect of Zeus' power. Continuing to display his own powers of rhetorical brinkmanship, the poet now balances his own purpose on a double-edged blade by invoking Zeus as "all-giving, black-clouded, ruler of the lightning" (πάνδωρε κελαινεφὲς ἀρχικέραυνε, 32). "All-giving" may hint at kindliness, but does not rule out a host of troubles. Dark clouds portend the blast of the

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[6] The adjective δύσμοροι echoes the repeated phrase "above their fated allotment" (ὑπὲρ μόρον) in Zeus' speech at the beginning of the *Odyssey* (1.34 and 35); cf. G. Zuntz, "Zum Kleanthes-Hymnus," *HSCP* 63 (1958) 289–308, at 297.

lightning, which appears at the climax of this crescendo of progressively longer epithets. Fanning the fear he has stirred up, the poet joins the prayer for salvation with a reference to ignorance that is "baneful" (λυγρῆς, 33). He begins to put his fellow choristers at ease by addressing Zeus as "father," then using the word "scatter," which suggests a brightening of the day. Finally, the worshipper is admitted to a vision of salvation. Endowed with understanding by Zeus, humans sing with new fervor, reciprocating honor with honor in a chorus joined by gods.

At the end, the non-Stoic sees himself lifted to the exalted status of a hero who enjoys not just ordinary honors from Zeus, but the supreme honor of being initiated into a life of enlightenment. Homer tells of an exchange of honors between Zeus and humans as well as gods. In Cleanthes' poem, the chorus leader prays to Zeus to grant honor to humans, so that they may bestow honor in return. From being cowed by Zeus' lightning, the chorus is led to envisage a condition of reciprocity with Zeus. As was traditional, honor (τιμή) is joined by privilege (γέρας, 38).[7] As the poet reveals in the last line, this is the privilege of hymning the lawful order of Zeus for all time in a condition of justice. The privilege thus transforms the singers into a chorus of initiates. As initiates, they are joined by gods in a celebration of mysteries that have been revealed.[8] For the non-Stoic, the riddle posed in the central section of the poem is now solved. Along with the power to straighten humans by punishment, Zeus has the power to set them straight through knowledge. What is not dear is dear, the non-Stoic supposes, because Zeus has the kindness to enlighten wrong-doers. Zeus reconciles good with bad by granting bad humans to become good.

Let us now take the Stoic. I do not mean the Stoic wise person, but simply a person who is familiar with Stoic doctrines

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[7] See, for example, Homer *Il.* 1.505–508 and Hesiod *Theog.* 393–396.

[8] Initiates are presented as a chorus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, as well as in Plato's philosophical adaptation of initiation ritual at *Phaedrus* 250B–C. They viewed themselves as joined by gods in the final stage of the initiation. See W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1987) 91–98.

and is ready to learn more. He knows that Zeus is all-powerful, pervading all things as a rational force. Zeus is "greatest of the immortals" because all the other gods are parts of himself in the created world and he alone continues to exist when the world has been destroyed. Cleanthes offered his own elaboration of these doctrines, which is reflected in the poem. In particular, Cleanthes argued that Zeus pervades the world as an ever-creative fire.[9] The "blow of fire" (πληγὴ πυρός), he proposed, constitutes tension (τόνος) (*SVF* I 563). This tension pervades and holds together the entire world from the time it is created out of fire to the time it is destroyed into fire (497). When this tension "becomes sufficient in the soul to achieve what is appropriate," it constitutes the virtues (563). The heavenly bodies are gods, consisting of fire (510 and 504). The sun, Cleanthes held, is greatest among them and is the mind of Zeus (499). It absorbs the lesser stars into itself when the world is destroyed (510). Cleanthes called the sun the *plektrum* of the world. The term signifies not only that the sun strikes the world with the blows of its fire, but also that it makes music in harmony with the rest of the world (502–503). The world is a "sacred rite" (μυστήριον), the sun is a "torch-bearer," and those possessed by divinity are "initiates."[10]

The Stoic is impressed just as much as the non-Stoic by the poet's emphasis on Zeus' lightning. Following Cleanthes, he equates the lightning, in the first place, with the all-pervasive, ever-living fire of Zeus. This fire directs the rotation of the heavens, as well as all the creative processes of nature. Like a double-edged sword, it has the power to cut through all things, leaving nothing uncut. In the second place, the Stoic equates the lightning with both "common reason," *koinos logos*, and "common law," *koinos nomos*. *Logos* pervades all things as the rational force of fire. "Law" is *logos* viewed as an imperative force: it is reason that commands right action and prohibits wrong-doing.[11] To flee the "common *logos*" is not to recognize

[9] Cic. *Nat.D.* 2.23–28 (partly at *SVF* I 513) and 40–41 (504).

[10] *SVF* I 538, including: τὸν κόσμον μυστήριον καὶ τοὺς κατόχους τῶν θείων τελεστὰς ἔλεγε.

[11] This definition is well attested for the Stoics; see *SVF* II 1003 and III

the "common law." Last, the Stoic equates the lightning with "understanding," *gnôme*.[12] This is the understanding by which Zeus governs all things. Zeus has the power to grant it to humans. By attaining this understanding, humans come to share in the common *logos* and *nomos*.

For the Stoic, the image of the lightning unifies the entire poem by means of a conceptual progression that begins and ends with *nomos*. The semantic weight of the lightning bolt, concentrated in line 10, spreads out, so to speak, from the center to the periphery. The term *nomos* is first introduced in 2 as the culmination of a series of attributes of Zeus; and it closes the poem in the last line as the ultimate object of worship. Intervening is a reference to the failure of bad individuals to heed the common law. The three references mark a progression from the universality of Zeus' law to the failure of the bad to heed it to the final recognition of Zeus' law. The sequence makes clear that the subject of the poem is not Zeus' rule in general, but Zeus' command to humans to do what is right. It is plausible that the term *logos* was first introduced in line 4, since this is what distinguishes humans from all other animals; but the text is uncertain.[13] Having received a share of *logos* from

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323, 332, and 613–614.

[12] All three types of identification are strongly indebted to Heraclitus, as shown by A. A. Long, "Heraclitus and Stoicism," *Stoic Studies* (Berkeley 1996) 35–57, at 47–52 (originally pubished in *Philosophia* 5/6 [1975/6] 132–153).

[13] Against Meineke's emendation of MS. ηχου το λόγου, U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos* II (Berlin 1924) 259, objected that humans have received *logos*, not just an imitation of it. All humans have, however, received an imitation of divine *logos*. This imitation consists of a capacity that can attain the perfection of knowing how Zeus governs all things (35). I am therefore inclined to emend line 4 as follows, substituting τοῦ for initial MS. ἐκ: τοῦ σοῦ γὰρ γενόμεσθα λόγου μίμημα λαχόντες ("We are born having as our allotment an imitation of your *logos*"). It is worth pointing out that the generally accepted emendation of πάντεσσι for MS. πασι in line 3 is not at all unproblematic. It is not the case that "all mortals" should address Zeus; for, as the poet tells us just two lines further on (5), humans are just one kind of mortal being. (The other uses of "mortal" at 22 and 37 are consistent with this wide sense.) There is no obvious emendation. Perhaps an original βασιλῆα might have become

Zeus, it makes sense for humans to exercise this capacity by singing hymns in praise of Zeus.[14] The philosophical scope of *logos* is revealed in the claim that Zeus sets straight the common *logos*. *Logos* is not just a gift to humans; it pervades the whole world as a single force that unites good with bad. When enlightened, human *logos* unites in harmony with the common *logos* in a continuous celebration of Zeus' law.

When the Stoic learns abruptly in verse 17 that nothing happens without Zeus except the deeds of bad humans, he, too, is jolted, but recognizes the exception as a basic claim of Stoic ethics. In the language of the Stoics, wrong-doers are exiles from the rule of Zeus.[15] The Stoic views this exile as part of the order established by an all-powerful Zeus. Unlike the non-Stoic, the Stoic does not fear future punishment. His punishment is here and now: the separation from god is itself a punishment. As Cicero explains, the person who flees the law of Zeus flees himself, that is, his human nature, and thus suffers the greatest punishments.[16] The Stoic, too, puts to use the image of the double-edged lightning bolt. Instead of fearing the lightning bolt as an impending external instrument of punishment, however, he experiences it as a present, inner punishment, inflicting the inner agony of being cut off from Zeus and his own human nature. This agony is entirely right: the lightning bolt keeps straight the rational order of the world by cutting off bad humans from those who are obedient to Zeus' commands.

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partly obliterated, leaving -ασι- to be filled out by πασι. In that case, the verse would have read: χαῖρε· σὲ γὰρ βασιλῆα θέμις θνητοῖσι προσαυδᾶν ("Hail; for it is right for mortals to address you as king"). The next two verses then specify that, among mortal beings, humans should address Zeus, since they alone have the gift of *logos*.

[14] In *Diss.* 1.16.18–21, Epictetus explains that it is his function, as someone *logikos*, to sing a hymn to god. Berating most of his audience for being blind, he proposes to sing on behalf of all, while inviting his audience to join in. It looks to me that Epictetus has modeled his role as chorus leader on Cleanthes' *Hymn*.

[15] *SVF* III 328 and 679–680.

[16] *Rep.* 3.33, cited by M. Pohlenz, "Kleanthes' Zeushymnus," *Hermes* 75 (1940) 117–123, at 121; cf. *Leg.* 1.40.

The Stoic thus admits a union of opposites: the good coexist with the bad in a single rational order. This coexistence lasts for as long as human beings exist. For humans cannot help but be bad until they have perfected their god-given *logos* so as to attain virtue; and there is no badness other than the moral badness of human beings.[17] Badness begins with the creation of humans in the world and ends with the destruction of all created things in the final conflagration. Born with the gift of rationality, humans first develop their rationality to the point of becoming mature human beings, then necessarily misuse their rationality until they have attained virtue. Cleanthes charted this progress with the help of an analogy. Bad humans, he said, are like half iambic verses. Being incomplete, they are bad. When humans, like verses, have reached completion, they are good (*SVF* I 566). Importantly, god has given humans a start: the incomplete rationality that all humans acquire is the beginning of virtue. It is half, even though this half is far from the whole; it is, in fact, cut away from the whole, as though by poetic caesura. The image reflects Cleanthes' view of cosmic and human goodness as a harmony. There is nothing out of tune, he said, in the world: all the parts are in harmony with one another, as though preserving rhythmic measures (503). Similarly, we may add, the human being who has attained goodness preserves perfectly concordant rhythms, just like a complete verse.[18] This rhythm is in perfect attunement with the rhythm of the world as a whole.

[17] As A. A. Long points out, "The Stoic Concept of Evil," *PhilosQ* 18 (1968) 329–343, at 333, there is no "cosmic evil" apart from moral evil. *Contra* G. B. Kerferd, "The Origin of Evil in Stoic Thought," *BRL* 60 (1977/8) 482–494, at 493–494, and K. Algra, "Stoic Theology," in B. Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge 2003) 153–178, at 171, natural disasters, illness, etc., are not "evils," even if they are called so by humans.

[18] As A. A. Long points out, "The Harmonics of Stoic Virtue," in *Stoic Studies* 202–223, at 215 (originally published in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* Suppl. 1991, 97–112), Aristides Quintilianus (1.22) held that the hexameter verse exemplifies rhythmic perfection, since it contains the perfect number of measures. Long rightly connects the Stoic definition of virtue, or virtuous action, as "having all the numbers" with rhythmic or musical perfection.

The Stoics are notorious for holding that it is possible that no human being has ever yet attained virtue. They did, however, insist that it is possible for humans to attain virtue, even if this is very rare. In another poem, Cleanthes remarks that "few" humans are virtuous (*SVF* I 559). In common with other Stoics, Cleanthes held that the virtue of humans and god is the same (564). Taking Zeno's definition of the human goal as "living in agreement" (ὁμολογουμένως ζῆν), he noted that this is to live in agreement with "common nature." Chrysippus subsequently made an addition: it is to live in agreement with both common and human nature (*SVF* III 4). The basic doctrine is the same. But Cleanthes takes the point of view that human rationality must be attuned to the world rather than their own inner potential. From receiving the capacity of a fully perfected *logos* from the divine ruler of the world, humans come to share a fully perfected *logos* with him. This achievement eliminates badness in an individual; it does not, however, prevent the existence of badness in the vast majority of humans who remain ignorant.

If one considers the cycle from conflagration to the creation of the world and back to conflagration, there is a progression from just one thing to all things and back again to one thing. Verse 21 may be taken to refer to this cycle. This does not, however, exhaust the meaning. Along with the single *logos* that enfolds successive worlds, there is a single *logos* that pervades all the things that are continually being created and destroyed in this world; and this includes both good and bad. Zeus "has fitted together" (συνήρμοκας) all the things in this world so as to form a single *logos* (20–21). Paradoxically, this *logos* both "is forever" (αἰὲν ἐόντα) and "comes into being" (γίγνεσθαι). The present infinitive γίγνεσθαι does not point to a future event, as Thom proposes.[19] It signifies continual coming-into-being. The *logos* is unalterably made up of the coming-into-being of all

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[19] Thom, *Acta Classica* 41 (1998) 56, and *Cleanthes' Hymn* 110–111, where he takes γίγνεσθαι to signify that "god's plan is put into effect in time," that is, in a future that has not yet been realized. The present tense, however, does not imply a future completion. To express a future sense, the future infinitive γενήσεσθαι would normally be used.

things, as it proceeds in a single, perfectly arranged harmony. Being, in short, is process. The Stoics resolve the Platonic opposition between being and coming-into-being by identifying being with the continuous operation of perfect rationality.

We have not yet, however, unraveled the full meaning of Zeus' harmony. This harmony not only includes both good and bad; it also includes the possibility of a change from bad to good in the life of an individual human being. Humans have been created in such a way as to have a capacity for the perfection of reason. In each human life, therefore, there is the possibility that the individual will change from bad to good. As noted above, Cleanthes held that virtue consists in the strengthening of the "blow of fire," or tension, in the soul: "If [this tension] becomes sufficient in the soul to achieve what is appropriate (τὰ ἐπιβάλλοντα), it is called strength (ἰσχύς) and power (κράτος)." This becomes "self-mastery" (ἐγκράτεια) in the case of things to be endured, "courage" in the case of things to be undergone, "justice" in the case of worth, and "temperance" in the case of choice and avoidance (*SVF* I 563). This is a list of virtues; and they consist in the strengthening of the creative fire in the human soul. The creative fire in the soul is the *logos* that has been given by Zeus to all humans. When it is sufficiently strong, it attains the same perfection as governs the world as a whole.

Along with recognizing the harmonious coexistence of good and bad in the world, then, the Stoic is receptive to the idea that Zeus can change bad to good in the life of an individual. This would not eradicate all badness by any means; it is merely the fulfillment of a potential in the case of a particular human being. It is also entirely consistent with the idea that everything is fated. Like the non-Stoic, the Stoic may see a hint of this potential in the claim that "what is not dear is dear"; but it remains for the poet to unpack this sense.

The poet embarks on this task by describing the disorderly conduct of bad humans. The frenzy of wrong-doers is in sharp contrast with the visible orderliness of the world as illustrated by the revolutions of the heavenly bodies. Bad humans rush toward a variety of things—honor, wealth, pleasure—pursuing different goals at different times. Their chaotic haste reflects the excess of the passions that motivate these pursuits. Continuing

to choose his words carefully, Cleanthes describes these pur-
suits as being "without the fine" (26).[20] In particular, some
engage in a "bad ambition" for reputation, while others pursue
gain "with no orderliness." In Stoic ethics, it is not wrong for
humans to seek advantages such as reputation or wealth.[21]
What is wrong is the manner in which all except the wise do so.
The expressions "without the fine," "having bad ambition,"
and "with no order" are adverbial qualifiers, specifying the
manner that makes human pursuits wrong. If humans were to
pursue their goals in an orderly way, they would no longer be
rushing off in various directions at various times. Instead, they
would subordinate all other goals to a single goal, virtue.

Punished by their own ignorance, wrong-doers nonetheless
yearn to escape their wretchedness. "Yearning for the acqui-
sition of goods" (23), wrong-doers are torn between the foolish
pursuit of false goods and the vague recognition that what they
really want is the acquisition of true goods. How can they es-
cape their punishment? The only way is to lay aside their folly.

For the Stoic, the prayer for understanding follows directly
upon what has preceded. The singer prays that Zeus grant
humans "to attain understanding … so that, honored (τιμηθέν-
τες), we may honor you in exchange" (34–36). The conversion
from folly to understanding happens at the point at which
humans suddenly receive honor from Zeus, as expressed by the
aorist participle τιμηθέντες. At the same time as they receive
honor from Zeus, humans begin the process of reciprocating
the honor by singing a song that continually praises the works
of Zeus. As we saw earlier, Cleanthes alludes to the heroic
theme of a reciprocal exchange of honors between gods and
humans. Using the heroic language of honor and privilege, the
Stoics defined "honor" (τιμή) as being considered worthy of
"privilege" (γέρας). As they held, only the good have honor; the
bad are without honor (*SVF* I 563). In agreement with Stoic

[20] I accept the emendation of κακοῦ to καλοῦ in 26.

[21] Cleanthes took a negative view of pleasure: instead of being an ad-
vantage, it has no value (*SVF* I 574). The lacuna at line 30 most likely needs
to be filled in with a whole line (or several lines) plus half a line, in order to
permit the inclusion of a participle as well as a main clause.

doctrine, we must not suppose that Zeus first gives honor and then humans reciprocate. The exchange of honors happens at the same instant, although it continues over time. There is no temporal gap between the getting of honor and the return of honor; for to be honored by Zeus is precisely to receive the understanding to honor Zeus. The only temporal difference is between the sudden conversion and the continuity of the hymn by which humans honor Zeus.

Although there is no temporal gap, Cleanthes assigns logical, or rather causal, priority to the honor given by Zeus; and this deserves notice. Calling on Zeus to grant understanding to humans, Cleanthes views the power of Zeus as the cause of human understanding. In effect, Cleanthes subordinates human endeavor to the power of god. Other Stoics stressed the need for an effort on the part of humans to become good. Cleanthes focuses on the need for divine help.[22] This focus goes along with his definition of the human goal as living in agreement with common nature. The two views are compatible, for humans exercise a capacity that has been given by god. By bestowing the capacity for virtue, god guides humans to virtue, even though humans fail to heed this guidance. Cleanthes chooses to contrast human failure, for which he holds humans responsible, with the perfection that Zeus can bestow. One might equally appeal to humans to realize their full capacity. In doing so, however, one appeals to a divine force that extends beyond humans to the entire world. By invoking this cosmic force, Cleanthes both shows humans the full measure of their separation from god and encourages them by the prospect of help.

Cleanthes continues to underscore the subordination of humans by reminding the enlightened individual of his status as a mortal being (θνητόν, 38). On the other hand, the gift of understanding transports the enlightened mortal into the company of gods. Putting the epic formula "neither for mortals nor

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[22] As Algra (in Inwood, *Cambridge Companion* 175) shows, Marcus Aurelius picks up this theme by suggesting that humans should try out the power of prayer (*Med.* 9.40). Marcus is indebted to Epictetus, who stresses the power of our inner god to protect and guide us (see esp. *Diss.* 1.14.11–14).

for gods" to his own use, the poet offers a final surprise in the last line of the poem. Placed in an emphatic position at the beginning of the verse, οὔτε θεοῖς brings the poem to a fitting close by showing a new kind of union: gods are now joined to humans to form a single chorus of just individuals. The verse provides evidence that, well before Chrysippus, the Stoics already posited a community of gods and humans, governed by law.[23] Cleanthes depicts this community as a two-part chorus, one mortal, the other immortal, all singing the praise of the common law in full agreement with it.[24] The poet prepared us for the participation of the gods in the chorus by his previous reference to the large and the small lights. The sun, as the supreme musician, joins with the stars and the other divinities that make up nature; and mortals sing along. What unites the chorus is that all have *logos*—not mere words, but the full *logos* of justice. Instead of using the medium of words, Aristotle's medium of poetry, the choristers now praise Zeus "in justice" (ἐν δίκῃ), a medium that consists in the rational condition of just obedience to Zeus' law.

Cleanthes, as we saw, called the world a "sacred rite," and those "possessed by divinity" "initiates." His *Hymn* culminates in a depiction of this mystery: gods join with mortal initiates in a chorus that celebrates the harmony of the world by an enactment of this harmony. The sun, representing the understanding of Zeus, joins with all who have the same understanding in a chorus of initiates who have looked upon the mysteries of Zeus' rule. The sun acts as a "torch-bearer" at this initiation. Just as in traditional portrayals of initiation, this is a scene of ineffable brightness. The chorus, with which the poem began, has reached its goal. From embracing all to whom Zeus has given the capacity to sing, it has been transformed into a chorus of those whose capacity has reached its fulfillment. In

[23] M. Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City* (Cambridge 1991) 102, holds that Chrysippus changed Zeno's community of wise humans into a community of gods and humans. In my view, Zeno's *Republic* does not show that Zeno did not already propose a community of gods and humans.

[24] According to the Stoics, particular gods (other than the supreme deity Zeus) are destructible (φθαρτοί) but not mortal (θνητοί) (*SVF* II 1049).

the final outburst of praise, the perfect harmony of the singers is in perfect attunement with the universal order of things.

The *Hymn* as a whole presents, in poetic form, the most basic truths of Cleanthes' own philosophical commitments. As Philodemus tells us, Cleanthes held that "although philosophical discourse can report divine and human affairs adequately, plain prose does not have diction that is proper to divine greatness; meters, melodies, and rhythms come as close as possible to the truth of the contemplation of divinity."[25] His *Hymn to Zeus* is an attempt to capture the truth about god by rhythms that reflect the harmony of the cosmic order.

It is time to bring together the responses of the non-Stoic and the Stoic. The image that dominates the poem is the lightning bolt. The non-Stoic sees the lightning as the symbol of Zeus' power and his subjection to Zeus. He hopes to be saved from Zeus' power of punishment by receiving honor like a hero. The same image acts just as forcefully on the Stoic. For him, however, it represents the harmony that unites all things. He understands the lightning as the all-pervasive fire, *logos*, and *nomos* of god. This unifying force not only cuts him off from the good, if he is bad, but can unite him with the good by converting him from bad to good. Both the non-Stoic and the Stoic see Zeus as having power over themselves, although they see it differently. The non-Stoic sees Zeus as a power who acts upon him from outside; the Stoic understands that Zeus acts both within himself and in the universe as a whole. Both envisage the future salvation of individual wrong-doers. The difference is that the non-Stoic sees it as an act of grace by an external deity, whereas the Stoic recognizes that god has so ordered the world that he has endowed all humans with the capacity to become good. There is no incompatibility between the surface message and the deeper understanding that Cleanthes attempts to teach. For Cleanthes has designed his entire

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[25] Philodemus *On Music* 4.17 (col. 28.5–14): τοῦ [λόγ]ου τοῦ τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἱκανῶς μὲν ἐξαγ[γ]έλλειν δυναμένου τὰ θεῖα καὶ ἀ[ν]θ[ρ]ώ[πινα], μὴ ἔχοντος δὲ ψειλοῦ τῶν θείων μεγεθῶν λέξεις οἰκείας, τὰ μέτρα καὶ τὰ μέλη καὶ τοὺς ῥυθμοὺς ὡς μάλιστα προσικνεῖσθαι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῆς τῶν θείων θ[ε]ωρίας.

poem to show the non-Stoic, along with the Stoic, that god's power reaches within each individual.

In conclusion, I suggest that there is no conflict between a Heraclitean union of opposites and the power of Zeus to change bad to good. For both the existence of what is bad and the power to eliminate it coexist at all times as necessary elements in the order of things. Further, there is no conflict between myth and philosophy. Cleanthes puts the traditional figure of Zeus with his thunderbolt to philosophical use by transforming what one might call a first-order myth into a second-order myth. Dominating the whole poem, the image of the fiery, two-edged lightning has an impact on the philosophical message. Just as the non-Stoic learns something about Stoic philosophy, so the Stoic cannot escape his own cultural assumptions. In the second-order myth, the cutting force of Zeus' fire serves both as an instrument of punishment and as a means of salvation. The double edge of the lightning bolt consists, ultimately, in this double power.[26]

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