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Vergil's Empedoclean Universe

Abstract: The author revisits the problem of the role of the song of Iopas in *Aeneid* 1 in order to corroborate and extend the observations of Damien Nelis about the functional coherence of Empedoclean concord and discord in Vergil's epic narrative. The indirect nature of Vergil's allusions to Empedocles, the author argues, reflects the nature of the abstract, conceptual presence of Empedoclean philosophical principles in the world that the poem describes. The role of the Empedoclean backdrop in the *Aeneid* is found to be primarily *aesthetical*. The study of Vergil's Empedoclean allusions contributes not only to our understanding of the principles that animate the poet's *literary* universe, but also the principles that unite his entire poetic opus, in which Empedoclean principles play a recurring role.

Key Words: Vergil, *Aeneid*, Empedocles, allegorical reading of Homer, Servius, cosmogony, universal history.

1. The Song of Iopas

Cithara crinitus Iopas
personat aurata, docuit quem maximus Atlans.
hic canit errantem lunam solisque labores,
unde hominum genus et pecudes, unde imber et ignes,
Arcturum pluuiasque Hyadas geminosque Triones,
quid tantum Oceano properent se tinguere soles
hiberni uel quae tardis mora noctibus obstet.

Long-haired Iopas, the pupil of mighty Atlas, then filled the halls with the sound of his gilded lyre. He sang of the wanderings of the moon and the changes of the sun, the origin of humans and animals, the causes of rain and lightning, of Arcturus, of the Hyades that bring rain, and of the two Triones, why winter suns are in such a hurry to dive in the Ocean, and what it is that stands in the way of slow nights.[1] (Verg. *Aen*. 1.740–746)

Scholars in antiquity raised the question of why should Iopas sing about themes from natural philosophy and a survey of the answers could

[1] Translations from the *Aeneid* are by David A. West, somewhat modified.

easily fill several pages.[2] The "atmosphere of suspense and expectation"[3] felt at the end of book 1 — while a deception, fatally cruel to Dido, is in progress — has led many to seek additional explanations for the function of the song in this particular context. Especially puzzling to the modern reader is the sense that the song seems somehow to contribute to the intensity of Dido's feelings: it takes place exactly at the point when Vergil turns the happy festive drinking (734 ff.) into deep draughts of love taken in by the unhappy queen (749).[4]

In 1891, in his notes on *Aeneid* 1.742, Heinrich Georgii called the song boring,[5] and argued that the question of its appropriateness is a test of the acumen of ancient Vergilian criticism. A trace of a possible critical approach to the song, Georgii pointed out, seems to be preserved in Macr. *Sat*. 7.1.14:

> *nonne si quis aut inter Phaeacas aut apud Poenos sermones de sapientia erutos conuiualibus fabulis miscuisset, et gratiam illis coetibus aptam perderet et in se risum plane iustum moueret*?
>
> If among either the Phaeacians or the Carthaginians someone had mixed recherché discussions about wisdom with convivial stories, would he not have both spoiled the pleasant atmosphere suited to those gatherings and caused himself to be justly and frankly mocked?[6]

But the wider context of this remark, as Georgii also noticed, does not justify the application of the criticism to Vergil's song of Iopas. In the sentence that immediately precedes the remark, Macrobius' speaker, Eustathius, has just included the performance of Iopas in a series of examples illustrating the *appropriate* literary descriptions of banquets (7.1.13–14):

> *ita in omni uitae genere praecipueque in laetitia conuiuali omne quod uidetur absonum in unam concordiam soni salua innocentia redigendum est*. *sic*

[2] For older bibliography see Segal 1971 (to which add Eichholz 1968). More recent discussions can be found in Brown 1990; Clausen 1987, 29–31 (= 2002, 53–58); Garbarino 1994; Hardie 1986, 63–66; Kinsey 1979, 1984 and 1987; Little 1992; McKay 2004; Nelis 2001, 99–112; Putnam 1998, 47–53; Schönberger 1993; Segal 1981 and 1984; Soave 1987, 179–198.

[3] Segal 1971, 336.

[4] Segal 1971, 340.

[5] Georgii 1891, 99.

[6] Translations from Macrobius are Robert A. Kaster's, somewhat modified.

> *Agathonis conuiuium… sic ea cena quam Callias doctissimis dedit… at uero Alcinoi uel Didonis mensa quasi solis apta deliciis habuit haec Iopam illa Phemium*[7] *cithara canentes, nec deerant apud Alcinoum saltatores uiri, et apud Didonem Bitias sic hauriens merum ut se totum superflua eius effusione prolueret.*
>
> In every area of life, and especially in the jovial setting of a banquet, anything that seems out of tune should — provided proper means are used — be reduced to a single harmony. Examples can be found in Agathon's banquet … and the dinner of Callias… But certainly Alcinous' table and Dido's, being suited as it were only to amusement, had Iopas [in the latter case] and Phemius [in the former], singing to the lyre; nor did Alcinous lack for male dancers [*Od*. 8.370–80], while at Dido's banquet Bitias drank his unmixed wine so greedily that he drenched himself with the overflow [*Aen*. 1.738–739].

Before he speaks at a banquet, concludes Eustathius, a philosopher must first gauge his audience (*aestimare conuiuas*, 7.1.14).

The fact that Macrobius' character actually seems to speak in favor of Vergil's song does not eliminate the possibility raised by Georgii — namely that some ancient critics found the song less than attractive. The apologetic tone of the second remark adduced by Georgii makes the reality of such criticism more than likely. The remark is Servius' comment on the first line of the song of Iopas (*Aen*. 1.742):

> *bene philosophica introducitur cantilena in conuiuio reginae adhuc castae: contra inter nymphas, (ubi solae feminae erant — Servius Danielis) ait Vulcani Martisque dolos et dulcia furta* (i.e., *G*. 4.346).
>
> The philosophical song is introduced appropriately to the banquet of the queen as yet chaste: by contrast among the nymphs (where only women were present—*SD*) he [sc. Vergil] sings of the guile of Vulcan and Mars and of sweet deceit.

Servius' reference to book 4 of the *Georgics*, where Clymene sings *Vulcani Martisque dolos et dulcia furta*, creates an unexpected connection. Apparently the song of Iopas is an *appropriate* alternative to the song about the love affair between Mars and Venus. The latter is ultimately one of the songs sung by Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8. The narrative context

[7] As the context suggests, Macrobius meant Demodocus. The paradosis has *Polyphemum*, cautiously printed by Jan (1852). After all, the etymology of the name Πολύφημος (of many songs) is suggestive — in fact, the word is used as an adjective in Hom. *Od*. 22.376, describing a bard: πολύφημος ἀοιδός. Willis (1994), who wrote *Phemium* for *Polyphemum*, is now followed by Kaster (2011).

in fact supports Servius' connection: Vergil's scene at the court of Dido at the end of *Aeneid* 1 is modeled after Odysseus' visit to the court of Alcinous, described in book 8 of the *Odyssey*. In fact, it has been proposed that the song of Iopas is an alternative, or reincarnation, of the second song of Demodocus, the one which tells the story about Ares' adultery with Aphrodite.[8] Or, to be more precise, it has been proposed that the song of Iopas is an allegorical version of the Homeric song. According to the well-known allegorical reading, which was certainly known to Vergil, Demodocus' lascivious tale conveys the Empedoclean cosmological theory of Love and Strife.[9] But this indirect insight still leaves the *function* of the song in its immediate context unexplained, and the comment of Servius remains somewhat obscure. The criterion against which Servius judges the appropriateness of the philosophical song — the chastity of the queen — is purely moral decorum.[10] Decorum and propriety were among the main principles of the Hellenistic criticism and exegesis of Homer, and numerous instances show that Vergil's poetry was shaped considerably by these concerns.[11] But if this is our full answer to the question, Georgii is still right: the song is simply boring. Apart from the mere absence of immorality, what makes an Empedoclean substitute particularly appropriate at the moment when Dido is falling in love?

Georgii's opinion that the incompatibility between the song and its context is simply a failure of Vergil is less than convincing. The closing scene of the first book of the epic is not a place where one would expect the poet to nod. Predictably, the view caused disagreement. In 1950, Viktor Pöschl renewed the question by tracing correctly the Hellenistic artistry of the song back to the song of Orpheus in Apollonius Rhodius

[8] 8.266–366. See Knauer 1964, 168 n.2.

[9] The influence of the allegorical interpretation came through Apollonius Rhodius' song of Orpheus, which will be discussed below. See Nelis 1992, 156-159 and 2001, 108.

[10] Servius' remark about Vergil's description of Arethusa (one of the nymphs in Clymene's audience) confirms the high degree of importance that he gives to this detail. The nymph is described as *tandem positis… sagittis* (4.343), and Servius Danielis explains: *id est tandem uirginitate deposita*.

[11] See Schlunk 1974, 8–35. On the song of Iopas and Servius' comment on it see p. 33.

(1.496–511). Believing that the content of the song must be in harmony with the context of the narrative, Pöschl suggested against the "aberrations of Georgii" that the sun and the moon in the song appear as symbols of the lovers, Aeneas and Dido.[12] Even though this interpretation did not find favor with all subsequent scholars, it initiated a remarkably long (and sometimes heated) discussion. The discussion is underpinned by the correctly adduced but insufficiently explored fact that the song has attracted critical attention since antiquity.[13]

Before moving on to the two main types of explanation proposed by modern scholars, I would like to examine more carefully the relevant evidence from ancient (although nowhere near contemporary) critics and commentators — particularly the comments of Macrobius and Servius. Let us first return to Macrobius. The approval with which his speaker, Eustathius, mentioned the song of Iopas in the text quoted above, did not emphasize so much the philosophical content of Iopas' singing as the fact that the song was sung to the accompaniment of lyre — the fact that connects Vergil's bard with his Homeric counterpart. In Eustathius' remark, the singing of the two bards illustrates the traditional association between μουσική and pleasure, which makes music the most appropriate form of convivial entertainment.[14] Eustathius' example of an inappropriate banquet, on the other hand, is a hypothetical mixture of *sermones* about wisdom and convivial stories. The word *sermones* refers to language and style notably different from that of the *cantationes* of Iopas and the Homeric bard. Appearing shortly after the references to Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia* (7.1.13), Eustathius' *sermones* have an inevitable ring of *sermones Socratici*. These, few would refuse to agree, could be regarded as inappropriate among the Phaeacians or the Carthaginians.

This brings us to the content of the song. Eustathius' description *de sapientia* brings to mind the kind of knowledge that, so the ancients

[12] Pöschl 1950, 246–252 (= 1962, 150–154).

[13] Ancient criticism is commonly used as a starting point, and then dropped (e.g., Garbarino 1994, 193 n. 3; Hardie 1986, 64 and n. 75; Putnam 1998, 51; Schönberger 1993, 298–299 and 304; Segal 1971, 336 and 338).

[14] For further examples see La Cerda 1628, 137 (ad Verg. *Aen*. 740–751, n. 7).

thought, went back to the early beginnings of human civilization.[15] Following Greek authors, Romans saw the origins of *sapientia* (later philosophy or, according to the Stoic definition, *rerum diuinarum humanarumque scientia*) in music.[16] Quintilian, for example, describes ancient musicians as prophets and sages (*Inst*. 1.10.10), adducing the legendary Orpheus and Linus, and the civilizing effect of their music. This is how he continues:

> *itaque et Timagenes auctor est omnium in litteris studiorum antiquissimam musicen extitisse, et testimonio sunt clarissimi poetae, apud quos inter regalia conuiuia laudes heroum ac deorum ad citharam canebantur. Iopas uero ille Vergili nonne 'canit errantem lunam solisque labores' et cetera? quibus certe palam confirmat auctor eminentissimus musicen cum diuinarum etiam rerum cognitione esse coniunctam.*
>
> So too Timagenes declares that music is the oldest of all literary arts, and this is confirmed by the evidence of the most celebrated poets, in whom the praises of gods and heroes used to be sung to the lyre at royal banquets. And does not Vergil's Iopas, too, "sing of the wandering moon, and the sun's changes" and so on? The illustrious poet thus plainly asserted that music is united with the knowledge of things divine.[17]

Ancient ethnographic material corroborated this view. For example, in Caesar's *De bello Gallico* the Druids are said to have knowledge *de rebus diuinis*: *de sideribus atque eorum motu, de mundi ac terrarum magnitudine, de rerum natura, de deorum inmortalium ui ac potestate* (of things divine: of constellations and their movements, of the size of the world and lands, of the nature of things, of the power and dominions of immortal gods).[18] Strabo's more nuanced account of Celtic tribes mentions three classes that enjoy distinctive honor, the bards (βάρδοι, described as ὑμνηταὶ καὶ ποιηταί), the *uates* (οὐάτεις, described as ἱεροποιοὶ καὶ φυσιολόγοι), and the Druids (δρυΐδαι, who πρὸς τῇ φυσιολογίᾳ καὶ τὴν ἠθικὴν

[15] Cicero explains *sapientia* as an ancient thing both in substance and in name: *nam sapientiam quidem ipsam quis negare potest non modo re esse antiquam, uerum etiam nomine* (*Tusc*. 5.3.7).

[16] The Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* describes the first full-fledged song that Hermes sang on his newly invented lyre as a cosmogony and theogony (*Merc*. 426–432).

[17] The translation is Donald A. Russell's, somewhat modified.

[18] *Gall*. 6.13–14.

φιλοσοφίαν ἀσκοῦσιν);[19] Mela's description of the knowledge of the Druids resembles Caesar's: *hi terrae mundique magnitudinem et formam, motus caeli ac siderum, et quid dii uelint scire profitentur* (they profess to know the size of the world and the universe, the movements of the sky and constellations, and the will of gods).[20]

These references conjure the figure of Vergil's Iopas — an archetypal *uates*, an original, pre-Homeric bard, taught by mighty Atlas.[21] The original unity of music, poetry, and philosophy was in Greek myth embodied in the singing of Orpheus, whose song in book 1 of Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* is, as we now know, the most important Hellenistic model for the song of Iopas.[22] But Apollonius' Orpheus does not sing an archaic song. His scientific cosmogony (496–502) eliminates all fantastic and redundant traditional elements and describes the formation of our universe through the principle of strife, νεῖκος, in a way heavily influenced by the teaching of Empedocles.[23] Likewise, Orpheus' theogony (503–511), in which Ophion and Eurynome were the first gods to rule the Olympus, is influenced by Pherecydes, who taught that Ophioneus and Cronos were the first gods who fought a battle for supremacy in heaven.[24] In short, Apollonius' song of Orpheus is a philosophically informed poetic catalogue of natural-philosophical themes, merging together the material traditionally attributed to the mythical theologists, such as Orpheus, and the teachings of the physical or scientific theologists, above all by the Pre-Socratic philosopher-poet Empedocles. The unity and continuity of this type of poetry was recognized already by Aristotle.[25]

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[19] *Geogr*. 4.4.4.

[20] Mela 3.19.

[21] In *Tusc*. 5.8 Cicero says that Atlas was a wise man whose name was transferred to myth on account of his astronomical discoveries.

[22] Fränkel 1968 *ad loc*. Cf. Busch, 1993; Kyriakou 1994; Nelis 1992 and 2001, 96–112.

[23] That is, mediated through Aristotle's criticism of Empedocles' cosmogony, as shown by Kyriakou 1994, 309-313. Arist. *De cael*. 301a15 ff. (= 31 A 42 D.-K.), adduced by Busch 1993, 308, confirms the Empedoclean order in Apollonius' cosmology. Further evidence comes from Arist. *Metaph*. 1000a24 ff.

[24] Pherecydes B 4 D.-K.

[25] *Metaph*. 1000a9 ff. Cf. Hardie 1986, 11–17.

I should emphasize that the debt of Vergil's song of Iopas to Apollonius' song of Orpheus is primarily conceptual; its language mainly points to other sources.[26] Most important is the adaptation of one line, and *ad verbum* repetition of two lines from the opening of the well-known inverted priamel in *Georgics* 2, in which Vergil pays his compliments to an Empedoclean type of poet, an author of poetry *de rerum natura*. In other words, Iopas sings Vergil's poetry, bringing to mind the section of the *Georgics* that alludes not only to Empedocles, but also to Vergil's own *Eclogue* 4.[27] For our purpose it is also important to notice one of the two lines that are *not* borrowed from the *Georgics*, viz. line 743: *unde hominum genus et pecudes, unde imber et ignes*. It is this line, inserted in the quotation from the *Georgics*, that brings in the element of cosmogony and firmly connects the song with the first, Empedoclean part of the song of Orpheus.[28]

This may conclude the present inquiry into the literary lineage of the song of Iopas. To summarize: the context, the content, and the language of the song allude to three important passages — namely Demodocus' song about Ares and Aphrodite in *Odyssey* 8, the song of Orpheus in *Argonautica* 1, and the programmatic end of *Georgics* 2. The common denominator in these three passages is the figure of Empedocles, but this conclusion should not conceal the *indirect* nature of his presence; there is nothing in Vergil's song of Iopas that brings the philosopher to mind directly. At the level of language, the most conspicuous feature of the song of Iopas is the Vergilian duplication of the lines from *Georgics* 2. In a mirror scene, in which the poet depicts another poetic performance, the

[26] Lines 742–743 mention the moon and the sun (line 500 in Apollonius) — although not for the regularity of their movements, but for their wanderings and eclipses — and the origin of living beings (line 502 in Apollonius). Line 745 contains Apollonius' image of bodies diving into Ocean (line 506 in Apollonius), and Vergil's meteorological phenomena can perhaps be vaguely connected with Apollonius' Zeus. Cf. Hardie 1986, 63 n. 72 and Nelis 2001, 98–99.

[27] I.e., *Aen*. 1.742–743 is a reworking of *G*. 2.478–479 and *Aen*. 1.745–746 = *G*. 2.481–482. For the chain of allusions in this section of the *Georgics* see Nelis 2004.

[28] Nelis 2001, 108 points out that the phrase *unde imber et ignes* recalls *cui par imber et ignis* from a fragment of Ennius' *Annales* describing *Discordia* (221 Skutsch). For Aeneas' Odyssean narrative in book 2 of the *Aeneid* as a structural relacement of the missing mythological account see Hardie 1986, 64–66, and cf. Nelis 2001, 100 and ff.

repetition creates a peculiar effect.[29] By making Iopas sing his own lines, Vergil, in a manner typical for the entire *Aeneid*, lets the future unexpectedly penetrate the past.

2. A Hymn of the Universe

The guiding question of the function of the song of Iopas was suspended for a moment; it is time to return to Servius' comment about the particular appropriateness of the *philosophica cantilena* in the presence of "the queen as yet chaste." The statement is clearly a comment on Vergil's sensitivity to decorum, but what exactly is the connection between the queen's chastity and natural philosophy? How can this remark help us reconcile the song of Iopas thematically with the end of book 1 of the *Aeneid*? At the moment when the song occurs, the narrative is dominated by a very personal event that strikes modern readers as very different from the remote and impersonal realm of stars: under the influence of Amor, dispatched by Venus, the heart of Dido is overwhelmed by love. One group of modern scholars tried to solve the problem through a contrastive reading, which regards the theme of the song as a deliberate contrast to Dido's emotional state. In this interpretation, the meaning of the passage is controlled by the irreconcilable opposition between reason and emotions, philosophy and love.[30] Beneath a divinely ordered sky, Dido is wracked by her passion: the sky is a backdrop, a foil, associated with the plot through the principle of opposition. As one of the advocates of this reading remarked: "For impressive as it may be, it [sc. the song of Iopas] remains, in a practical sense, irrelevant."[31]

Another way of looking at the song does not separate the realm of natural science from the realm of human feelings so clearly. In the passage quoted above, Quintilian described the song as a hymn,[32] and early modern scholars understood its content in the same way: La Cerda also discussed it as a hymn, and Rudberg regarded it as an ἐγκώμιον

[29] Repetition of lines from the previous work(s) is a regular phenomenon in Vergil's poetry. I place on this particular repetition more weight than Sparrow 1931, 95.

[30] E.g., Brown 1990; Clausen 1987, 31 (= 2002, 57–58); Eichholz 1968, 108; Schönberger 1993; Soave 1987, 183–188.

[31] Brown 1990, 325.

[32] I.e., as an example of *laudes… deorum ad citharam* (*Inst*. 1.10.10).

τοῦ κόσμου.[33] Following the logic of this classification, one may recall that late Greek rhetorical theory classified poetry *de rerum natura* under the heading of hymn. In the first treatise of Menander Rhetor the poems of Parmenides and Empedocles are listed as οἱ φυσικοὶ ὕμνοι; the hymns attributed to Orpheus are also mentioned as an example of this category.[34] In the second treatise, in the section devoted to the composition of epithalamium, Menander advises the speaker to preface his encomium of the bride and the groom with the praise of love and marriage. Combining Hesiod's *Theogony* with Empedocles, Menander instructs the future encomiast to place the origin of Γάμος and his assistant Ἔρως (both apparently identified with Empedocles' Φιλότης) immediately after the primeval dissolution of Chaos, and to show how these two divine forces ordered the universe, created the gods, established the rule of Zeus, and created the demigods and humans and made them immortal through procreation — how they affected not only all things human, but also streams, rivers, and animals.[35] It is not difficult to see the relevance of this passage for Vergil's song of Iopas. At the end of *Aeneid* 1 the occasion of marriage is suggested by the presence of Amor, described as a cosmic power,[36] and, with a darker note, by Aeneas' gifts, the dress and veil that Helen wore when she sought Troy, *inconcessosque hymenaeos* (651).

Vergil's eerie description of the "marriage" between Aeneas and Dido in book 4 is perhaps a deliberate echo of the association between the union of cosmic elements and marriage in book 1.[37] In book 4, in a passage of heightened dramatic quality, Servius and other ancient grammarians saw the four Empedoclean elements operating behind the forces that contrive the "ceremony" (165–168):

> *speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem*
> *deueniunt, prima et* Tellus *et pronuba* Iuno
> *dant signum: fulsere* ignes *et conscius aether*
> *conubiis, summoque ululârunt vertice* nymphae.

[33] La Cerda 1628, 137 (ad Verg. *Aen*. 740–751, n. 9); Rudberg 1936, 80–81.

[34] Men. Rh. 333.12–18 Sp. and 336.24–337.32 Sp.

[35] Men. Rh. 400.31–402.20 Sp.

[36] See Nelis 2001, 102.

[37] Cf. Nelis 2001, 101 and 148.

> Dido and the leader of the Trojans took refuge together in the same cave. The sign was first given by *Earth* and by *Juno* as matron of honor. *Fires* flashed and the heavens were witness to the marriage while *nymphs* wailed on the mountain tops.

In this allegorical reading Juno represents air, according to the Greek etymological connection between Ἥρα and ἀήρ (mentioned by Servius Danielis *ad* 4.167). *Nymphae*, again *per* ἐτυμολογίαν, are interpreted as water (this element is also present in *amnes* in line 164).[38] It is worth noticing in connection with this passage that the only two Empedoclean elements explicitly mentioned in the song of Iopas, *imber* and *ignes* (line 743), have particular significance in Roman marriage ritual.[39] It is perhaps not surprising that the elements of water and fire are omitted from a variation of this verse in a different context (*Aen*. 6.728): *inde hominum pecudumque genus uitaeque uolantum.*

Augustan poetry can offer some additional evidence for the connection between cosmogony and marriage. In *Ars amatoria* 2, for example, Ovid advises that a quarrel of lovers should be immediately followed by make-up sex. He corroborates his precept with a brief cosmogony that describes how, after the world was created through separation of elements, the civilizing power of sex led man out of his nomadic and primitive life.[40] It seems to me that this passage and the above-mentioned place in Menander speak in favor of a non-contrastive reading of the song of Iopas in its immediate context, and make better sense of Servius' remark about its appropriateness. Instead of the rather Romantic contrast between "the remote starry backdrop and human emotions" [41] of the contrastive reading, the complementary reading associates the song of Iopas with the presence of Amor, the embodiment of the force of attraction.[42] The association renders more concrete the idea of

[38] For parallels see Pease 1935 ad loc.

[39] Servius ad *fulsere ignes* in 167: *Varro dicit aqua et igni mariti uxores accipiebant*.

[40] Lines 467–492, with Janka 1997 ad 467–488.

[41] Brown 1990, 316 n. 1. For a list of contrastive readings see Little 1992, 34 n. 53.

[42] Of course without denying the structural pattern to which that reading was attached, namely the fact that the indirect questions that in a typically didactic manner describe the content of the song of Iopas are mirrored in lines 1.751–752: *nunc, quibus Aurorae venisset filius armis,* | *nunc, quales Diomedis equi, nunc, quantus Achilles* (see

"general correspondences between events in the natural cosmos and events in the human, historical world", in which the advocates of complementary reading of the song have seen its significance.[43] It also gives tangible support to observations such as: "The cosmic power of Love which helped create the universe is also setting in motion the human love of the queen."[44] At the moment when the song occurs, the stage is dominated by Love; but a consistently Empedoclean reading will also account for the suppressed dark tones as signs of the future Strife (as for now, this force is pulsing beneath the surface). More will be said on this later.

The complementary reading, I believe, finds further support in the fact that it can (and should) be extended from the paramount relationship between Aeneas and Dido to the relationship between the Trojans and the Carthaginians.[45] In other words, the song of Iopas shares some of the power of the song of Orpheus, which calms a quarrel between the two Argonauts.[46] The song of Orpheus explicitly mentions only strife (echoing the strife between the two Argonauts), but love, still implied as the other half of the cycle,[47] is what comes out of it. The magical effect of the song and the resulting peace and harmony indicate that the discord of the Argonauts was replaced by a new unity (lines 512–515):

> ἦ, καὶ ὁ μὲν φόρμιγγα σὺν ἀμβροσίῃ σχέθεν αὐδῇ
> τοὶ δ' ἄμοτον λήξαντος ἔτι προύχοντο κάρηνα,
> πάντες ὁμῶς ὀρθοῖσιν ἐπ' οὔασιν ἠρεμέοντες
> κηληθμῷ τοῖόν σφιν ἐνέλλιπε θέλκτρον ἀοιδῆς.
>
> So he sang; he checked his lyre and his divine voice, but though he had finished, the others all still leaned forwards, ears straining under the

Clausen 1987, 31 [= 2002, 57]; cf. Soave 1987, 186–188; and the valuable analysis in Brown 1990, 316–322). In my opinion the pattern emphasizes the link between the song of Iopas and Aeneas' Odyssean narrative in *Aeneid* 2, as a continuation of the song in the form of a mythological account (see Hardie 1986, 64–66; cf. Nelis 2001, 100 ff.).

[43] Quoted from Hardie 1986, 63. Cf. Little 1992, 34 and n. 56; Nelis 2001, 105–112.

[44] Nelis 2001, 102.

[45] Cf. Cairns 1989, 106–107 on the association between marriage and political concord in Vergil.

[46] Brown 1990, 324–325. Cf. Segal 1971, 340.

[47] The participle συναρηρότα in line 497 alludes to it (see Kyriakou 1994, 309 n. 2).

> peaceful spell; such was the bewitching power of the music which lingered amongst them.

Their harmony restored, the Argonauts pour libations for Zeus (516–518):

> οὐδ' ἐπὶ δὴν μετέπειτα κερασσάμενοι Διὶ λοιβάς,
> ἦ θέμις, ἑστηῶτες ἐπὶ γλώσσῃσι χέοντο
> αἰθομέναις, ὕπνου δὲ διὰ κνέφας ἐμνώοντο.
>
> Not long afterwards they mixed libations to Zeus as ritual demanded, and as they stood they poured these over the burning tongues of the sacrifices; then their thoughts turned to sleep in the dark of night.

The effect of the song on the Argonauts in this scene brings to mind Empedocles' description of the effects of Love in the human realm: Love, called Γηθοσύνη (Joy) and Ἀφροδίτη, is the cause of friendly thoughts and human cooperation; by Love, inborn in human bodies, humans have loving thoughts and produce harmonious deeds.[48] In his commentary on the scene from *Argonautica*, Hermann Fränkel listed the magical music of Orpheus as one of the main reasons for the effect that the song produces on the Argonauts[49] — a well-known motif already in the fifth century BCE.[50] The music is here inseparable from the subject matter, which emphasizes the genealogical relationship between the poetry of Orpheus and the poetry of Empedocles. I should again emphasize the fact that the connection between the two figures is not just a product of Apollonius' imagination. Empedocles, regarded himself as a magician[51] and as the successor of Pythagoras; the character and teaching of Pythagoras were so similar to those of Orpheus that the works attributed to them were often confused in antiquity.[52]

The wider context of *Aeneid* 1 fully supports the suggestion that the song of Iopas also symbolically stands for the newly established harmony between the Carthaginians and the Trojans. The elaborate

[48] 17.22-24 D.-K.

[49] Fränkel 1968, 77–78. Cf. Busch 1993, 317–318; Kyriakou 1994, 313; Nelis 1992, 160–162.

[50] See West 1983, 4 n. 3.

[51] 111 D.-K. See discussion in Kingsley 1995, 217–232. For Empedocles' ability to calm anger by the magic of song see Kingsley 1995, 247–248.

[52] See West 1983, 7–15. For similarities between Orphic and Pythagorean cosmogonies see Burkert 1968.

narrative that follows the shipwreck of Aeneas and his men on the shores of Lybia is to a great extent controlled by the suspense typical for the *Odyssey* and Greco-Roman travel literature in general: What sort of people inhabit the land? Will they be friendly or hostile?[53] The suspense is dispelled gradually, and finally only in the closing scene of the book, which describes the peaceful and harmonious banquet in Dido's palace. Amor sits on Dido's knee and then roams freely through the halls while the queen pours a wine libation to Jupiter from a precious bowl, inherited from Belus (728-730), uttering a solemn prayer to the god to seal the friendship between the Trojans and the Tyrians, with the assistance of Bacchus and Juno (1.731-735):

> *"Iuppiter, hospitibus nam te dare iura locuntur,*
> *hunc laetum Tyriisque diem Troiaque profectis*
> *esse uelis nostrosque huius meminisse minores.*
> *adsit laetitiae Bacchus dator et bona Iuno;*
> *et uos o coetum, Tyrii, celebrate fauentes."*
>
> "Jupiter — they say that you ordain the laws of hospitality — make the day happy for Tyrians and for those who set out from Troy, and make it the day that our children will always remember! Bacchus, giver of joy, be among us, and you kindly Juno; Tyrians, celebrate this union with welcome in your hearts!"

The libation to Zeus alludes to the libation that followed the song of Orpheus in Apollonius' *Argonautica*, except that here it precedes the song. Servius Danielis comments on the remarkable *coetum* in line 735: *modo conuiuium; et bono uerbo ad dignitatem duorum in uno populorum usus est* (union: merely a banquet; he [sc. Vergil] used indeed the right word to emphasize the dignity of the union of two nations).

As the libation bowl is passed around for everyone to drink from, Iopas begins to sing his Empedoclean song. After the summary of the song Vergil draws our attention to the reaction of the audience (747):

> *ingeminant plausu Tyrii Troesque secuntur.*
>
> The Tyrians echoed[54] with applause, and the Trojans followed their lead.

In line 747, admittedly a reworking of *Odyssey* 8.367–369 (with the addition of typically Roman applause) rather than *Argonautica* 1.512–515,

[53] Cf. the concerns of Aeneas at *Aen*. 1.574.

[54] For *ingeminare* as one of Vergil's words that indicate echo, and discussion of its significance in this particular passage, see Desport 1952, 67–68 and 388–391.

the temporary unification of the two groups is emphasized by the alliterative juxtaposition of the words *Tyrii Troesque*.[55] This unity is not given stronger emphasis because it is subordinated to the extremely powerful effect of Amor on Dido, and because it is not meant to last. Nevertheless, at the moment when the song is performed, the atmosphere of harmony is pervasive. The previous marriage of the queen was brief and tragic and, instead of children, produced only her vow to remain chaste. As Servius implies, her incipient infatuation can be seen more appropriately as a beginning of a marriage (foreshadowing the events of book 4) than a furtive love affair.

3. Universal History as a Double Tale

Although the word marriage and the related vocabulary are fairly prominent in certain parts of the poem, in the *Aeneid* it is always imminent, but never materialized.[56] Aeneas's marriage to Dido was only illusory, while the marriage to Lavinia lies outside the scope of the poem and is never recounted. Despite this, the notion of marriage is constantly present at the abstract level, and the entire poem may be described as "an epic of two marriages."[57] Or, I might add, an epic of two marriages *and* two subsequent wars. The events in Carthage are a variation on the Homeric motif of a foreign bride and the following hostility between nations. As I pointed out above, Vergil deliberately evokes this pattern in the first four books of the *Aeneid*: in book 1 Aeneas presents to Dido Helen's cloak and veil;[58] in book 4, after Aeneas's "marriage" to Dido has been publicized by *Fama*, Iarbas describes the leader of the Trojans as the second Paris.[59] Although the war does not follow the love affair immediately, the curse that Dido utters before her death makes it clear

[55] Cf. Soave 1987, 183–184. Also, cf. the juxtaposition in Dido's generous offer to the Trojans to stay in Carthage and share a part of her *regnum*: *Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur* (*Aen*. 1.574).

[56] Words *coniugium*, *coniunx, hymenaei*, and *thalamus* appear most frequently in books 4 and 7. There was no real marriage between Aeneas and Dido (cf. Nelis 2001, 162–163 and n. 165).

[57] Nelis 2001, 386.

[58] Above, p. 9.

[59] *Aen*. 4.215. Cf. Stroppini 2003, 42–46.

that *this* will be its main outcome — not only for Aeneas, but for all future Romans.[60]

In book 6 the Cumaean Sybil prophesizes that another Trojan War will begin with the arrival of Aeneas to Latium and with his engagement to Lavinia: *causa mali tanti coniunx iterum hospita Teucris | externique iterum thalami* ("the cause of this great evil for the race of Teucer is again a bride from abroad, again a foreign marriage").[61] The second cycle, which begins properly in book 7, is prefaced by a philosophical counterpart of the song of Iopas, namely the speech of Anchises.[62] In book 6 Anchises is found in Elysium, among the souls of the priests, poets, and other experts.[63] The company of wise souls described there is remarkably Empedoclean (146.1–3 D.-K.):

> εἰς δὲ τέλος μάντεις τε καὶ ὑμνοπόλοι καὶ ἰητροί
> καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται,
> ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῆισι φέριστοι.
>
> And at the end they become prophets and poets and physicians, and the leaders of men who trod the earth, and from there they shoot up as gods with highest honors.

The speech of Anchises is usually explained as a fusion of Orphic-Pythagorean teaching with Stoicism.[64] But Vergil's *bricolage* also includes some central elements of the teaching of Empedocles. For example, the main principle introduced in the opening of Anchises's speech, namely the breath or mind that pervades the entire universe,[65] is already found in Empedocles (110.10 D.-K.):

> πάντα γὰρ ἴσθι φρόνησιν ἔχειν καὶ νώματος αἶσαν.
>
> Know that all things have thought and participate in understanding.

The eternal life of the soul and its purification from sins, explained in the following part of the speech of Anchises,[66] are both well-known and

[60] *Aen*. 4.612–629.

[61] *Aen*. 6.93–94.

[62] The connection is emphasized by the variation of line 1.743 at 6.728.

[63] *Aen*. 6.661–664.

[64] For the sources see Horsfall 2013, XVII–XXV.

[65] *Aen*. 6.724–727.

[66] *Aen*. 6. 735–751.

well-attested elements of Empedoclean eschatology, and does not require elaboration.[67]

The second part of the *Aeneid*, books 7–12, is also constructed through the sequence marriage–conflict. In book 7, at the beginning of the second Trojan War, Juno calls Aeneas the second Paris, promising to transform his marriage to Lavinia into a bloody war, and their wedding torches into a devastating conflagration.[68] The sequence thus occurs two times and connects two possible ways of dividing the poem: the first occurrence binds together books 1–4, i.e., the first segment of the threefold division of the poem;[69] and the second books 7–12, i.e., the second segment of its twofold division into the Odyssean and Iliadic part.[70] Both cycles begin similarly. Venus' order to Amor to breathe the fiery and poisonous love into the heart of Dido[71] has a vivid counterpart in the eerie scene in which Allecto, following the orders of Juno, breathes fiery and poisonous discord into the heart of Amata.[72]

Damien Nelis showed that the Empedoclean allusions of the Song of Iopas correspond to those of the song of Orpheus in the *Argonautica*, and that both authors attached great importance to the allegorical, Empedoclean reading of the shield of Achilles and Demodocus' song about Ares and Aphrodite.[73] In light of his discussion, the connection I am suggesting here — viz. the connection between the Homeric sequence marriage–conflict and the Empedoclean cycles of Love and Strife — does not look surprising. In fact, the following interpretation from the commentary of Eustathius shows that combining Empedoclean and traditional

[67] E.g., frr. 9, 115, 117 D.-K.

[68] *Aen*. 7.317–322. Cf. the words of Amata in 7.363–364, and Turnus at 9.136–139.

[69] Duckworth 1957.

[70] Duckworth 1954. The war begins only in book 9 and thus spans the last segment of the threefold division.

[71] *Aen*. 1.685–688. Cf. 717–722.

[72] *Aen*. 7.346 ff. Vergil's Allecto is modelled directly on Ennius' Discordia (see Nelis 2001, 347 and n. 80). For the connection between marriage and war see Nelis 2001, 289–290 and n. 101.

[73] Nelis 2001, 346–352.

poetic accounts of early history was a commonplace of Homeric criticism (*Ad Hom.* Il. 22.116, 4.587–588 Van der Valk):[74]

> Σημείωσαι δὲ ὡς, εἰ καὶ ἀρχὴ νείκεος ἡ Ἑλένη γενέσθαι λέγεται, ἀλλ' ἡ τοῦ Πάριδος κρίσις, ἧς ὡς μάχλου καὶ Ὅμηρος μέμνηται, ἄλλο τι δηλοῖ, λέγουσα τὴν μυθευομένην τοῦ Πάριδος κρίσιν ἡδονῆς πρὸς ἀρετὴν εἶναι σύγκρισιν, ἐν ᾗ προκριθείσης τῆς Ἀφροδίτης—αὕτη δ' ἐστί, φασίν, ἡδονή—πάντα συνεταράχθη. τῷ τοιούτῳ δὲ νοήματι συμβαίνει καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλέους τὸ "οὐδέ τις ἦν κείνοισιν Ἄρης θεὸς οὐδὲ Κυδοιμὸς οὐδὲ Ζεὺς βασιλεὺς οὐδὲ Ποσειδῶν, ἀλλὰ Κύπρις βασίλεια," δι' ἣν πολλὰ συνέβη κακὰ Τρωσὶ καὶ Ἀχαιοῖς, καὶ πολὺς μετάμελος.
>
> Notice that, even though Helen is said to have become the beginning of the discord, still the Judgment of Paris, which even Homer mentions as lustful, shows something else, meaning that the legendary Judgment of Paris was a decision between pleasure and virtue, in which, since Aphrodite had been chosen — and she herself is, they say, pleasure — everything was stirred up. The verses of Empedocles are in harmony with this understanding: "And they had no Ares nor Battle-Din, nor Zeus the king nor Cronos nor Poseidon, but Cypris the queen" (fr. 128.1–3 D.-K.); it is through her that many evils fell upon the Trojans and the Achaeans, and much repentance.

Empedocles's description of the early history of humanity is allegorically connected here with the Judgment of Paris, and the subsequent abduction of Helen. This pattern of presenting the first large scale historical event is traditional. Herodotus also begins from the abduction of foreign wives, and thus describes the origin of the conflict between the East and West in terms of the epic, Homeric framework.[75] All this suggests that Vergil deliberately used the pattern marriage–conflict to construct the narrative of the *Aeneid*. But the pattern did not only enable the author to organize his imaginative reconstruction of Roman history as an integral part of the universal history. It also allowed him to bind together the epic, philosophical, historical, tragic, and erotic elements of his literary universe.

4. The Eternal Return

The Orphic-Pythagorean and Empedoclean principle of reincarnation implicates the idea of poetic or literary succession, very important to

[74] The remark can also be found in Athenaeus, 510 cd.

[75] Her. 1.1–5.

Vergil, in the general cyclic movement of history.[76] The words, images, and stories of ancient poets reverberate through endless time and are subject to the laws that rule the entire universe. One of the important links between Homer, Apollonius, and Vergil lies in the fact that each of the three poets composed poetry that can be interpreted allegorically through the teaching of Empedocles.

While the aspiration to construct an all-inclusive, universal poem brings Vergil close to philosophical poets such as Empedocles and Lucretius, his product is in fact an inversion of the ratio between scientific and epic material found in philosophical poetry. An example from Lucretius can explain what I mean. The *Aeneid* can be seen as a blown up, expanded retelling of the narrative that appears in Lucretius only as an illustrative miniature (1.471–482):

> *denique materies si rerum nulla fuisset*
> *nec locus ac spatium, res in quo quaeque geruntur,*
> *numquam Tyndaridis forma conflatus amore*
> *ignis, Alexandri Phrygio sub pectore gliscens,*
> *clara accendisset saeui certamina belli,*
> *nec clam durateus Troiianis Pergama partu*
> *inflammasset equos nocturno Graiiugenarum;*
> *perspicere ut possis res gestas funditus omnis*
> *non ita uti corpus per se constare neque esse,*
> *nec ratione cluere eadem qua constet inane,*
> *sed magis ut merito possis eventa vocare*
> *corporis atque loci, res in quo quaeque gerantur.*
>
> Finally if there had been no material for things, and no place and space in which each thing is done, no fire fanned to flame by love through the beauty of Tyndareus' daughter, and glowing beneath the breast of Phrygian Alexander, would ever set Pergama in flames by its night-born brood of Grecians; so that you may perceive that things done never at all consist or exist in themselves as body does, nor are said to exist in the same way as void; but rather you may properly call them accidents of body, and of the place in which the things are severally done.[77]

In terms of the architecture of their respective "plots," both Lucretius's *DRN* and Vergil's *Aeneid* tell an Empedoclean double tale, a tale of

[76] The interdependence of various modes of succession in Vergil (and in epic tradition) is discussed by Hardie 1993, 88–119.

[77] Translation by Martin F. Smith.

coming to be (concord) and passing away (discord).[78] But for Lucretius the love of Paris and the destruction of Troy are no more than temporal and fleeting products of the permanent reality of atoms and void, where the cycle of creation and destruction is endlessly repeated.

While Lucretius's poem logically connects the cycle of creation and destruction with the atomistic explanatory account of the universe, Vergil's *Aeneid* does not attempt to clarify in any scientific or coherent way the connection between the Empedoclean philosophical principles and the mythical and historical events of its narrative. The two planes are only juxtaposed, and thus form two discreet, albeit coalescent, layers of material. The juxtaposition has illuminating comparanda in modern literature. One thinks, for example, of the way in which the laws of chemistry are integrated into the plot of Johann W. von Goethe's novella *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*; or of the way in which mathematical ideas, theories of chaos, fractals, and thermodynamics construct the backdrop in Tom Stoppard's play *Arcadia*. The scientific theories in these works of fiction do not exactly explain anything. Their main function is to give depth to the plot, to offer a glimpse of an infinite encompassing layer, and thus create an esthetically pleasing impression of depth and perspective. This is precisely the effect of the glimpse of the cosmic cycle of concord and discord behind Vergil's stories of attraction and subsequent separation in the *Aeneid*. The exact character of the relationship between the two planes remains elusive.

The cyclic nature of poetic progression, suggested above, can also be discerned within Vergil's own opus. Empedoclean backdrop does not seem to be an occasional element of the *Aeneid*, but a recurring background image in Vergil's poetic *mise-en-scène*. In each collection of his poetry, regardless of the genre, the poet reaches the most sublime, cosmic themes, revealing for a moment a recognizably Empedoclean universe. It has already been suggested that the closing of the *Georgics* 2 draws on the material from Empedocles's opening of *On Nature*, and that the allusion is particularly appropriate at the moment at which the poet

[78] 17.1–5 D.-K. For the pattern of creation and destruction as a framing device in *DRN* see Schiesaro 1994 (and cf. Nelis 2001, 347). For Empedoclean cycles in Vergil's earlier work, notably *Eclogue* 4 and the Song of Silenus in *Eclogue* 6, see Stroppini 2010, 201–234 and 293–309.

is about to announce his plans for the *Aeneid*.[79] Two places in the *Bucolics* should also be added to the list.[80] First is the centerpiece of *Eclogue* 6, the Song of Silenus, which follows the pattern established by Apollonius' song of Orpheus, narrating a universal history of the world in two stages, cosmological and mythological.[81] Second is the early *Eclogue* 4, a poem in which Vergil constructs the development of history as an eternal recurrence of events: in this version, the Golden Age *returns*; in Hesiod, the Golden Age is irretrievably *lost*. And since in *Eclogues* 4 Vergil ascribes the idea of return to the "Cumaean song,"[82] one may wonder to what extent should his poetic voice be perceived as a distant but deliberate echo not only of the Italian prophetic song, but also of the Italian philosophical tradition to which the poet Empedocles belonged.[83]

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[79] Nelis 2004.

[80] For Empedoclean cycles in *Eclogue* 4 and the Song of Silenus in *Eclogue* 6, cf. Stroppini 2010, 201–234 and 293–309.

[81] *Vita Donatiana* describes the content of the eclogue as μεταμορφώσεις (68 Brugnoli-Stok). The sequence of the beginning of the song of Silenus was emulated in the opening of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Knox 1986, 9–14).

[82] Cf. the recurrence of the Trojan War in the prophecy of the Cumaean Sybil in *Aeneid* 6.83 ff., mentioned above.

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Empedoklovo kosmološko učenje kod Vergilija

Apstrakt

Iz pregleda problema funkcije Jopine kosmološke pesme na kraju prvog pevanja *Eneide* autor izvodi zaključke koji potvrđuju i nadograđuju zapažanja Damiena Nelisa o kompozicionom značaju Empedoklovih principa sloge i nesloge u zapletu Vergilijevog istorijskog epa. Vergilijeve aluzije na Empedokla u *Eneidi* su suptilne, ali prisutne u dovoljnoj meri da naznače obrise pesnikove vizije univerzalnog kretanja istorije. Autor povezuje *indireknu* prirodu ovih aluzija sa *apstraktnom* ulogom Empedoklovih filozofskih principa u imaginarnom svetu pesme, te objašnjava Empedoklov kosmički ciklus u *Eneidi* pre svega kao *estetsku* kategoriju. Promišljanje Vergilijevih aluzija na ciklično kretanje i reinkarnaciju otkriva principe koji udahuju život u pesnikov *književni* kosmos, kako u *Eneidi* tako i u njegovom opusu uopšte.

Ključne reči: Vergilije, Eneida, Empedokle, alegoreza Homera, Servije, kosmogonija, univerzalna istorija.