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The Relevance of Theory

LA Résonance de la théorie

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Urano-Chthonian Ruminations on the Genealogy of Theory

*Die Sprache ist die Blume des
Mundes. In ihr erblüht die Erde der Blüte
des Himmels entgegen.*

— *Unterwegs zur Sprache*

*Il s'agit ici d'un concert de vocables,
de sons significatifs.*

— *Pour un Malherbe*

A Pongean Prelude : is it licit to speak of Theory's “réson” ?

As one might well surmise from its title, this paper will consist essentially of comparing and contrasting “theory” as it is understood and applied today with the way it was understood and practised in the past. The main purpose of doing so is to anticipate one of the directions theory may or perhaps should explore in the future and the *modus operandi* it should use to do so. But before entering *in medias res* I would like to try to convince the reader that this is something worth attempting to do by musing on the meaning of one of the words in the title of our colloquium. That word, a highly ambiguous and plurisemic word, is *relevance*. Usually when someone speaks about the “relevance” of something, one thinks of its pertinence or non pertinence to things

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outside or *adjacent* to what one is speaking about. “A” is relevant to “B” such that “A” and “B” are in some relationship to each other but nevertheless clearly distinct from one another. This is the usual way we use the word “relevance”. But a relationship of one thing to things exterior to it does not exhaust the meanings and applications of “relevance” or “being relevant”. It doesn’t because it is possible for things to be relevant, not to other things, but instead to themselves. To their interiors, to their origins, to a specificity or a *raison d’être* or a genealogy they share with nothing else.

To recall this, to suggest that one wants to make the “self-relevance” of a thing one’s *Befragte* could well be taken as a provocation by “conscientious” theorists. After all, doesn’t this incur the risk of “pre-comprehending” one’s object? Of trapping it within a reifying determination of identity or self-reference or ipseity and in so doing perpetuating a philosophical interpretation of the function and nature of language it has been the whole point of everything theory has been doing for decades to overcome?

Certainly that risk exists. The panoply of resources philosophy has given itself to make itself a “hegemonic signifying regime” is as formidable as it is insidious. But the risk should not be overstated. In any event it is false to say that language – even the one whose apophantical resources have been engineered by philosophy – cannot be used to inquire into the self-relevance of its objects and never succeed in finding anything except the quiddities, entelechies and *substantiae finitae* philosophy believes should be there. To accept that is tantamount to ignoring or doubting the viability of alternative approaches to the self-relevance of things. For from what we know of *yogis*, *fakirs*, *shādus*, shamans and other homologues of the philosophers, their meditation of the nature of their objects did not result in the apprehension of a self-centred ipseity. To the contrary, they resulted in an awareness of the impossibility of conceiving beings as decoupled from their belongingness to the totality of everything in the universe¹. What is more, in realising this basic truth, language was

¹ See M. Eliade, *Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, 416-17, L. Gardet, “Un problème de mystique comparée”, 205 & G. Rouget, *La musique et la transe*, 48.

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not an obstacle. It was the expedient. And if we dare to compare the way philosophers conceive and represent their objects with the way a shaman does so, it isn't to belittle philosophy. It is only to emphasise that the techniques used by the ancient practitioners of *theoria* to contemplate their objects were far closer to those of a shaman than to those of a philosopher².

However, if our own ruminations on the self-relevance of our *Befragte* are comparable to those of a shaman in that they will not consist in reducing it to a self-enclosed, self-referring, self-identity, it isn't because we will adopt "archaic techniques of ecstasy" to do so. It is rather because we understand the "self-relevance" of our theme the way Francis Ponge spoke of the "réson" of things in *Pour un Malherbe*? That is to say, as a quasi-musical sonority or *Stimmung* emitted from the veriest core of things, a sonority Ponge is not alone in thinking it would be the supremest merit of thought, art and literature to help us hear.

So, with what *Stimmung* does theory "réson-ate"? How does its possession of this resonance make it *sui generis*? Here it will be maintained that it is something associated with the "original meaning" of the appellative by which it is identified. Not exclusively. Not univocally. Above all, not in an elegiac mood. Words fall into abeyance with respect to their original meanings and are by no means impoverished as a result. Which is not to say that theory is necessarily enriched when it becomes a haven for all the sub-disciplines or sub-cultures which seek refuge in it. It is only to say that the range of things covered by the meaning of a word can grow to incorporate more than what it originally meant and there is nothing wrong with that. But neither is there anything wrong with recalling the relevance of a word to its original, "etymonic" meaning. And if we mention this, and insist on

² We are referring here to the "vorphilosophische Bedeutung des griechischen Wortes *theoria*" as a "Sehen der Prinzipien" that was inherited and then rationalistically disfigured by the Ionian natural philosophers, the "so-called Pythagoreans", Plato and, above all, Aristotle. For a discussion of the genealogy of the term and what it was variously interpreted to mean, see F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, 196-200, W. Jaeger, *Aristotle*, 430-432, E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, ch. III ("The Blessings of Madness"), J.-P. Vernant, *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs*, 407-08 & esp. H. Rausch, *Theoria: von ihrer sakralen zur philosophischen Bedeutung*, 47 sq.

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it, it is because it is on the basis of the legitimacy conferred by acceptance of this affirmation that we offer our “Urano-Chthonian” ruminations on the “genealogy” of theory. Ruminations which will take us on a two stage pilgrimage. The first stage will take us into the heart of a scandal which was decisive to the emergence both of modern linguistics and, accessorially, theory as it is known and practised today. For notwithstanding their aspiration to rigour, rationality and scholarly respectability, linguistics and theory are not foreign to unreason. Indeed, in a sense and to a degree, they are congenitally conditioned by the delusional. Ruminating on what such an inception suggests about theory as it is understood today will lead us further afield. To a noetic encounter with a music or *résón* at the heart of literature and language which was once the whole and unique point of theorising to recount.

So, what is the scandal that we refer to as decisive for the emergence of linguistics as the science of language? It concerns a highly significant part of the work of Ferdinand de Saussure. A part of his œuvre quite different from the *Cours de linguistique générale*. Indeed so different it was in some ways opposed to what we read in the *Cours*. I refer to Saussure’s work on ancient poetics and more particularly his study of the use of “anagrams” in it. Time was when it was *de mise* to refer to this aspect of his work as something mysterious, secretive, and difficult to understand. Not any more. The “*cahiers*” and correspondence containing Saussure’s ideas about his discovery are now too well documented for it to be credible to any longer refer to it this way. What is more, there is a high degree of concordance among experts regarding the circumstances and details of the discovery, evolution and ultimate fate of Saussure’s work on the anagrams.

The strange story of Saussure’s Anagrams: A theoretical delusion?

The discovery occurred at the beginning of 1906 while Saussure was undertaking an analysis of the phonetic and metrical characteristics of Saturnian verse. In the course of his study his attention was drawn to “certain phonetic repetitions” whose

constituents and recurrences described patterns Saussure had difficulty believing to be fortuitous. Pondering upon the apparent non-randomness of this distribution of clusters of phonemes he became convinced that the totality of the distinct phonetic elements in each verse was organised around an attempt to respect what he at first called a “law of alliteration”. This law was developed and adhered to to be able to encode “*mots thèmes*”³. That is to say, a variety of words whose phonetic properties were “diffracted isosyllabically” throughout the sounds and words of the ordinary, non-anagramatised language used in the verse in which they were encoded⁴. And inscribing anagrammatic *mots thèmes* in verse was not incidental or secondary to the verse studied. In fact, to be an auxiliary of a *mot thème* was the whole and sole *raison d’être* of all the other parts of the poem. This is so because composing poetry consisted of segmenting the phonetic properties of a *mot thème* and then inserting into the interstices

³ “*Tout le phénomène de l’allitération (et aussi des rimes) qu’on remarquerait dans le Saturnien, n’est qu’une insignifiante partie d’un phénomène plus général, ou plutôt absolument total. La totalité des syllabes de chaque vers Saturnien obéit à une loi d’allitération, de la première syllabe à la dernière; et sans qu’une seule consonne, – ni de plus une seule voyelle – ni de plus une seule quantité de voyelle, ne soit pas scrupuleusement portée en compte*” (Starobinski, *Les Mots sous les mots*, 21).

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 33, Toporov, 200-209, Bader, 18-20 & Gandon 2006, 18, n. 3 & 131 who offers this definition:

On définira l’anagramme comme la diffraction à travers les syllabes des mots d’un texte (plus rarement de lettres [‘phonèmes’ pour Saussure]) des syllabes d’un « mot-thème » dont le contenu sémantique importe peu. [...] Ainsi dans les deux vers du De rerum naturum (VI, 388-389) :

TERrifico quatiunt son**IT**u caelestia **TE**mpla
Et **I**aci**U**nt ignem quo cuiquest cumque vol**UPT**as

Mettent-ils en évidence (dans le désordre et de manière récurrente, c’est-à-dire stéréoscopique), le thème du passage, à savoir Jupiter. Dans cette optique, l’anagramme est une « seconde façon d’être, factice, ajoutée à l’original du mot », et le discours poétique a pour fonction de dupliquer (ou de multiplier) le signifiant de ce qui est décrit comme Stichwort ou mot-thème.

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separating the segmented phonemes all the other, non-anagrammatic elements of the poem⁵.

Further research led him to believe that this “law of alliteration” was essential not merely to Saturnian verse but to all Latin verse and even to the *prose* of Latin writers of the classical epoch. And that was just the beginning. The *Rig Veda* and all Vedic verse too were “*littéralement tapissés d’anagrammes*” and in as much as Homeric epic was “nothing but one vast, uninterrupted anagram”, “*il n’y a qu’à se baisser pour [en] rammasser à pleines mains*”⁶.

The conviction that he had stumbled upon the organising principle of all Indo-European literature, prompted Saussure to speculate on its origin and history. Anticipating subsequent research on the “Language of the Gods” by Guntert, Campanile, Toporov, Bader and Watkins, Saussure assumed that the practice began with the desire to “rivet” the name of divinities to verse for magical purposes⁷. However, once established as a convention of versecraft, the practice did not disappear with the decline of the I.-E. *paideia* and the eclipse of its pantheon. Instead the fabrication of anagrams of divinities was substituted with the practice of infiltrating verse with the “mottoes” of profaner and more trivial objects⁸.

⁵ This Saussure makes clear in his remarks in the *cahiers* on the poet’s “*travail de composition*”: “... *la méthode habituelle et fondamentale du poète consistait à décomposer préalablement le mot-thème et à s’inspirer de ses syllabes pour des idées qu’il allait émettre ou les expressions qu’il allait choisir. C’est sur les morceaux de l’anagramme, pris comme cadre et comme base, qu’on commençait le travail de composition*” (Starobinski, 127).

⁶ Gandon 2002, 15-17 & Wunderli, 175. See also Saussure’s letter to Bally dated 17 July 1906 on Homeric poetry : “*De toutes les choses que je viens de vous exposer, la plus absolument certaine pour moi maintenant est que le texte, entier des poèmes homériques [...] repose sur une loi secrète, <où> la répétition des voyelles et des consonnes en nombre absolument fixe, d’après un “Stichwort”, un mot-thème, est observée de vers en vers, avec une admirable et totale précision*” (CFS. 44 (1990), 52).

⁷ Utaker, 155-6 : “*En effet on comprend l’idée superstitieuse qui a pu suggérer que, pour qu’une prière ait son effet, il fallait que les syllabes même du nom divin y fussent indissolublement mêlées; on rivait pour ainsi dire le Dieu au texte, ou bien si on introduisait à la fois le nom du dévot et le nom du dieu, on créait un lien entre eux et que la divinité n’était pour ainsi dire plus libre de repousser*”.

⁸ Starobinski, 125, Utaker, 155-8 & Wunderli, 177.

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But Saussure was much less concerned with the “diachronic” specifics of the phenomenon than with matching the “*fureur de jeux phoniques*” he detected to a semiological model that he found satisfactory. In this, however, his efforts were anything but felicitous. For when he came up with a model whose constituent categories were comprehensive enough and applied strictly enough to be “scientific”, too much of the verse that ought to contain anagrams remained outside the model for it to be of any explicative value. On the other hand, when he tried to avoid restricting verse to too few anagrammatic possibilities by broadening the scope of his classificatory system or relaxing the modalities of their application, the analysed verse yielded too many anagrams⁹. Yet despite the difficulty of formalising the rules governing the use of these *jeux phoniques* in any semiologically satisfactory form, Saussure remained convinced that it was not so much the anagrams as their absence which was difficult to prove¹⁰. He also believed that failure to hear the “*sur-signification musicale*” expressed in this “*poétique phonisante*” was tantamount to hearing the poetry containing it either “*à rebours*” or not at all¹¹.

Ultimately, however, his research came to naught – and somewhat humiliatingly to boot. Getting nowhere by scanning ever vaster stretches of text and plunging ever deeper into their phonetic complexities, Saussure ended up soliciting aid from colleagues in academia and in the world of the arts. One contact turned out to be fateful, that with Giovanni Pascoli a specialist in Latin poetry. After an initial, cordial exchange in which the Genevan professor broached the

⁹ For a useful discussion on this matter, see Wunderli, 178-9.

¹⁰ Gandon 2002, 18.

¹¹ Here we are making ours Gandon’s assessment of Saussure’s attitude, one which Gandon resumes thus: “*En somme, estime Saussure, notre manière d’entendre [la poésie] nous met dans la position d’un amateur qui écouterait une symphonie où l’harmonie et la mélodie seraient brouillées ; où ligne mélodique, accompagnements, motifs [...] seraient joués avec la même intensité sonore ; où – plus perversément – les éléments accompagnateurs ou mineurs l’emporteraient même sur le thème, par une sorte de hiérarchie invertie, rendant chimérique l’ambition de le suivre ; une polyphonie où chaque voix serait étouffée par une emphatisation à rebours. Il s’agit donc de retrouver ces lignes mélodiques inscrites par le poète et inouïes du locuteur par une sur-signification musicale*” (ibid., 160).

subject of the anagrams, Saussure's Italian correspondent eventually and inexplicably stopped answering. Interpreting Pascoli's silence as a disavowal of his theory, Saussure evidently thought it best to drop any further research into the matter. In any case, April 1909 marked the end of any further work on the enigma.

The legacy of the *Cahiers* : are the Cours “*la part maudite*” of the *Cahiers*?

In addition to conjecture about why this adventure in semiological speculation was perhaps doomed from the start, commentators have been particularly exercised by the question of Saussure's state of mind in the 1906-09 period. When that happens, only rarely does the discussion stray from the shadow of the suspicion that he was perhaps clinically delusional. The other feature of his work on the anagrams that has attracted considerable interest is the extent to which it contrasts with a number of key axioms at the heart of the *Cours de linguistique générale*. In effect, his description of the anagrams deviated from the principle of the “linearity” of the linguistic sign it ought to have respected to make any semiological sense. Likewise, what he said about their use did not respect the rules governing the link between signifier and signified as stipulated in the *Cours*. He was also in a sense positing a cratylistic theory of language by making phonetic rather than purely formal or “differential” criteria decisive to poetic composition¹².

But if this be so, if through his work on the anagrams he was positing the existence and viability of a praxis of language that violated the principles of linguistics elaborated in the *Cours*, why did he do it? What was the meaning of “demolishing in private what he was professing in public”?¹³. Reflecting on the meaning of this apparent

¹² Wunderli, 179.

¹³ Cf., *inter alia*, Silvo Avalue, *L'ontologia del segno in Saussure*, 60-61: “Ora la lettura delle Note sulle leggende germaniche ci rivela un secondo Saussure, paradossalmente intento a demolire in privato i fondamenti stessi della scienza da lui pubblicamente preconizzata e difesa, e approccio metodico

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theoretical schizophrenia some deny that there was anything “Dr. Jekyll / Mr. Hyde” about the contrast¹⁴. Others focus on the fact that when he abandoned the search for anagrams, he turned resolutely to developing the ideas that took form in the *Cours* and draw the inference that he was doing so to exorcise his erstwhile obsession.

The hypothesis is strong. We retain it. We maintain that the *Cours* was a flight from the theoretical profligacy of which his *cahiers* are symptomatic. Which is why we also maintain that the *Cours*, and therefore the linguistics and theoretical trends issuing from it, are all, in a sense and to a degree, “*pathologisch bedingt*”. And it is important to not overlook this qualification “in a sense and to a degree”. In the *Cours*, the spectre of the Saussure of the anagrams is accompanied by evidence of many other pressures, preoccupations and priorities. The complexity this creates provides plenty of scope for those who want to relativise or even deny the significance of the work on the anagrams in the development of the *Cours* and *a fortiori* the linguistics it set in train. That, however, will be for others to consider, to argue and to prove. Here we maintain only this : if modern linguistics is in any degree conditioned by Saussure’s *Cours*, and the *Cours* by Saussure’s attempts to exorcise the demons of his obsession with the anagrams, then for this reason and to this extent modern linguistics, and relatedly modern theory are, in a sense and to a degree, “*la part maudite*” of Saussure’s work on the anagrams. And the reason we would like to insist on this is because we would like the reader to consider this affirmation to be a sort of threshold he is invited to step across in order to enter further, deeper and more *radically* into the pathology. To join Saussure in his auditory “hallucination”. To hearken with him to the *sur-signification musicale* he was sure he heard vibrating at the heart of the poetry he studied. But the purpose of doing so wouldn’t be to dally with the in-existent or the theoretically far-fetched. That would be the case if Saussure really was delusional. But he wasn’t. Advances in domains as diverse as ethnomusicology, paleolinguistics, philology and Indo-

all’universo di quelli che egli chiama gli elementi (o parti componenti del segno)”.

¹⁴ F. Rastier, “Saussure et la science des textes”,
www.saussure.ch/reprints/Rastier.pdf.

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European comparative poetics make it abundantly clear that ancient poetry really did contain and resonate with a plurality of distinct, hierarchically ordered languages. Which is important to us because it was the resonance of this polyglossia that Saussure heard and tried to typify in his *cahiers*, but with a semiological taxonomy totally unadapted to its object. And that is why we propose to join him in listening to ancient poetry. To hearken to a *réson* at its heart and match it with a “semiological” explanation which we believe should be of immense interest to contemporary theory and theory to come.

To get closer to this *réson*, and thereby to embark on the second leg of our pilgrimage, let us begin by identifying a major problem in Saussure’s study of anagrammatic poetics. Anagrammatic poetics did not encode “names” or *mots* or *Wörter* if by these expressions we mean anything like what we identify with these expressions. True, beyond a certain point in the history of poetry and language, this became not merely a fashion but also a *fatalité* and so it remains today. But not initially. Not among the *rhapsodoi* who invented the technique of poetic composition and recital Saussure describes as anagrams or hypograms. Among them it wasn’t even possible. The semantics which form an inextinguishable feature of our own language was unknown to them¹⁵. Or rather the *apophansis* or *semiosis* they associated with what they called names, words and language was utterly unlike our own. To see why we need only remind ourselves of the inception of what some have called “logocentrism” and the “onomastic propensity of the sign” set in train by logocentrism¹⁶.

**On the inception of “logocentrism” and the
“onomastic propensity of the sign”**

This *began* to be an irreducible and intransgressible feature of meaning or *semiosis* in Occidental languages when Plato wrote the *Sophist* and declared in it that “there are only two kinds of vocal

¹⁵ Cf. J. Lohmann, *Musiké und Logos*, 14.

¹⁶ J. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 233 & *passim*.

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imitation of Being”, *i.e.*, names and verbs. An adequate commentary on the consequences of this epoch instituting dogma wouldn’t be short for it would have to cover the whole history of linguistics, semantics and grammar in as much as the latter operate solely on the basis of the possibility of meaning originating in this affirmation. This, however, doesn’t concern us here. What does are four necessary corollaries of this decree, all having to do with linguistic *semiosis* or *apophansis* before and since Plato.

1. *Since Plato*, all parts of language which are neither nouns, nor verbs, nor “syncategoremic” auxiliaries thereof are not “indications of Being” and not indicating Being don’t mean anything.
2. The only nouns and verbs that can claim to be *bona fides* “imitations of Being” are names and verbs signifying a Platonic acceptance of Being.
4. *Prior to Plato*, nothing that was identified or used as an *onoma* or *rhema* can be considered a semantic servant of Plato’s acceptance of Being in as much as it hadn’t yet been conceived, much less elevated to the status of the sole and exclusive measure of Being and non-Being.
5. Plato’s belief that language had to be formed into *onomata* and *rhemata* to be considered “vocal imitations of Being” is no guarantee that anyone else up until the composition of the *Sophist* believed the same thing.

And if it is important to insist on this last point in a discussion of Saussure’s theory of the anagrams, it’s simply because Poets did not rely only or even mostly on *onomata* to create “vocal imitations of Being”. They relied on inarticulate, “musical” sounds instead.

Despite everything we know and like about Mallarmé, Valéry, Artaud and the late Joyce, this remains something we have difficulty taking seriously. We can accept that inarticulate or musical sounds, what Aristotle would call *phoné psophos*¹⁷, can stand “figuratively” or “imaginarily” for the objects they mime. But not literally. For the Poets

¹⁷ *De Anima*, 2, 8, 11 & *History of Animals*, 4, 9, 8.

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of yore, however, they could¹⁸. For the evidence clearly indicates that what they called *onomata* were “*agalmata phonéenta*”¹⁹. This expression is normally translated as “acoustical statues” but it is better described as a phonetic imitation of the sounds you would hear if you were able to hear the object you wanted to name telling you *in song* about its essence, nature or “truth”. What’s more, the *semiosis* Poets expressed with these *agalmata phonéenta* was considered incomparably more “significant” than the part of their verse we read and interpret semantically, onomastically, categorically or “logocentrically”²⁰. Perhaps not surprisingly Plato is one of our best sources on the use of inarticulate, sub-semantic or musical sound to mime with one’s voice the objects one wants to signify. In any event, this is what he refers to in Book III of the *Republic* in his condemnation of poetic mimesis involving “every kind of pitch and rhythm” and whose use would be appropriate only for “madmen”²¹. But let us not give the impression that Plato and his fulminations against mimetic practices among the Poets he knew so well is the only support we can adduce for the argument we are making. Let us look instead at the famous Derveni Papyrus, a commentary on a hexameter poem ascribed to Orpheus written by a near contemporary of Plato, but a near contemporary espousing a theory of language opposed utterly to the *orthologia* promulgated by Plato in the *Sophist*.

¹⁸ Cf. T. Georgiades, *Musik und Rhythmus bei den Griechen*, 42-44.

¹⁹ For a convenient description of the meaning of the term *agalma*, see L. Gernet, *Anthropologie de la Grèce antique*, 171-2. For the way names were described as *agalmata phonéenta* in late antiquity, see M. Hirschle, *Sprachphilosophie und Namenmagie im Neuplatonismus*, 12 sq.

²⁰ Cf. G. Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer*, 31 on the use of “song”, hence music, as “a marked speech act” reserved for signifying ritual, myth, sacrifice and prayer.

²¹ *Republic*, III, vi-ix, esp. 396d sq.

**The Derveni Papyrus : poetic “*eipein*” as allegory ? ...
or as music ?**

Though the least echo of this strange oracular text would justify an inexhaustible commentary, all that count for us on this occasion are the things the fragment suggests about poetry and versecraft (*rhapsodein*) among initiates to Orphism and presumably other bardic schools. Three points interest us in particular.

1. The fact that in the text “*phonein*” is said to be as capable as “*légein*” of vehiculating meaning where *légein* means onomastic-demotic-idiotic speech and *phonein* means sub- or inarticulate sounds²²,
2. The fact that the commentator says that there is a “non-coincidence” between the meaning of the poetic message (*eipein*) and the meaning of the words (*onomata, rhemata*) used in the poem,
3. The fact that the “momentous tidings” and the “sound and lawful things” the Poet “makes clear” in his “well-chosen verse” are heard clearly enough by “the pure of hearing” but are heard by the majority of the poetic public as “something strange and riddling”.

Some would have us believe that the difference between what “the pure of hearing” hear and “the many” *do not* hear corresponds to the difference between an ability and an inability to discern the “allegorical” meaning of the Orphic hymn commented on²³. On the face of it, this is a credible claim. In any case, serious studies of allegorical interpretations of poetry indicate that at this time it was already common practice²⁴. Still, to say that “the pure of hearing” heard no more than an “allegorical” meaning in the poem is doubly problematic.

²² We refer to the columns 7, 10 & 23 of the Papyrus reproduced in G. Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus: Cosmology, Theology & Interpretation*, 16-17 & 22-23.

²³ Cf. A. Laks, 1997a, 121-142 & A. Laks 1997b, 4 where the content of the fragment is described as “a sustained exercise in allegorical exegesis”.

²⁴ Cf. F. Wehrli, *Zur Geschichte der allegorischen Deutung Homers im Altertum*, 1928, F. Buffière, *Les Mythes d’Homère et la pensée grecque*, 1973 & J. Pepin, *Mythe et allégorie*, 1958.

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It is problematic first because “allegorical meaning”, like metaphorical meaning, operates within a semantic field determined by literal meaning (*pace* Ricoeur). Hence, if we say that the *semiosis* of the *eipein* heard by the “pure of hearing” is opposed to the *semiosis* heard by “the many” in the same verse because what the former hear is “allegorical” while what the latter hear is “literal”, we are not opposing the “literal” meaning of the text the way the author of the Derveni fragment suggests it should be opposed, *i.e.*, with a species of meaning which is *outside* and *inassimilable* to *légein* and the onomastic field of meaning. All we’re doing is opposing the field of meaning peculiar to *légein* with an integral and indissociable *part* of that very same field of meaning.

Moreover, and more seriously, if we suppose that the poem’s “momentous tidings” are expressed *more allegoricus*, we are left entirely in the dark about what the Derveni Papyrus commentator meant when he said that sub- or inarticulate “*phonein*” is as capable of carrying meaning as full-fledged *légein*. Which is a real pity for from the perspective of theory, semiotics and literary studies, the most interesting feature of this precious insight into versecraft in antiquity is the implication that some form of “inarticulate”, sub-onomastic vocal sound told the “pure of hearing” a story whose meaning was irreducible to or in any event not to be confused with the meaning of the nouns and verbs in the poem. Something which raises a rather obvious question : What kind of “sound” did the “pure of hearing” actually hear? Was it one that no one else could hear or that was not actually used in the hymn?

Obviously not. The “pure of hearing” heard the same *phonein* that everyone else heard. However, what that *phonein* meant, the “*eipein*” it told, the “momentous tidings” it brought, these things were different from the meaning associated with the *phoné* in whose configurations of sound we hear and understand nouns and verbs and ordinary language.

But how can that be? How can *one* phonetic substrate accommodate (1) sounds one can identify and use as names and *at the same time* (2) stand for a meaning *not* to be associated with the meaning of the ordinary language in the hymn? Quite simply because *the same phonetic substrate accommodates two distinct arrangements of*

sound at the same time. One arrangement modulates the phonetic substrate into sounds “the many” hear and identify as nouns, verbs and normal language; the other arrangement configures *the same* phonetic substrate into a melody and rhythm constituting *a separate*, “*contra-punctual*” code that only the “pure of hearing” can decipher.

Needless to say, the point we are making here is not “proved” by our *lectio difficilior* of the discussion of early poetics in the Derveni Papyrus. Proof like that won’t exist until literary studies produces a hermeneutical Achilles willing to confront Pindaric lyric and force its metrical complexities and melodic subtleties to confess the *metanoia* they enshroud²⁵. Still, even without definitive proof, we maintain the hypothesis we postulated above. Namely that ancient verse was fundamentally *diglossic* or *polyglossic* much the way Saussure suggests. However, if the “*mots sous les mots*” were “anagrammatical” the way Saussure portrays it, that was true of poetry only at some point subsequent to the annexation of Logos — and therefore poetry — by a Platonic acceptance of Being and non-Being. Prior to that, however, the *glossia* accompanying onomastic language in its phonemic depths was *musical*. A music whose *semiosis* was in principle inassimilable to the *semiosis* of onomastic language. An affirmation which raises a series of

²⁵ A good starting point for this exegesis would be an analysis of the metrical pattern in the typical Pindaric Ode, for example the one T. Georgiades uses in discussing the twelfth Pythian Ode.

--v v-vv---v v-vv-	Αντίπ σε φιλαγλαε καλλιστα βροτεαν πολιπν
-v v-vv---v v-vv-	Φερσεφοναω εσδοω ας τ' οξυαιω επι μηλοβοτομ
--v v-vv---v---v-	ναιειω /Ακραγαντωω εψδματων κολπναν π'α'να
-v v-vv---v v-vv-	ιλαοω α'βανατπν ανδρπν τε σπν εψμεινα"
--v v-vv---v---v-	δεξαι στεφανσμμα τοδ' εκ Πιλυπνοω εμδορσφ" Μιδα"
--v v-vv---v---v-	αψ'τον τε νιν <Ελλαδα νικασαντα τεξ'να" ταν ποτε
-v v-vv---v-	Παλλαω εφεμρε υρασειαν Γοργονπν
-v---v---v--	οψλιον υρηνον διαπλεφραισ' /Αυανα
	(1st strophe)

With Georgiades, we suppose that this pattern doesn’t merely represent long and short measures of sound. It also constitutes a non- or hypo-onomastic code capable of telling a story (*epos*) which is distinct from the story told by the words modulated by this rhythm pattern. And what does this non-onomastic story tell? Again with Georgiades we suspect that it is what the Poet considered to be “*das Wesen der Dinge selbst*” of which he sang.

key questions: What was the *signifié* of the musical *glossia* immanent “contrapunctually” in the phonemic substrate of ordinary, onomastic language? What *eipein-semia-metanoia* did it recount? How was that *metanoia* coded? And how are the answers to these questions relevant to modern Theory and theorists?

On the *semiosis* of the “*mousiké*” encoded in ancient verse

Let’s answer these questions in order and begin by identifying what poetic mimesis in the earliest times *did not* signify. It did not consist of the kind of mimesis Plato was wont to accuse poets of practising, *i.e.*, no more than a sort of crude onomatism consisting of the imitation in voice and gesture of the sounds and movements typically associated with the objects it was the purpose of poetry to mime²⁶. Granted, something like this may have begun to be the case in Plato’s Athens²⁷. Some may even have tried to make this the norm for all poetic production. However if this were indeed the case, all it reflects are a literary fashion and social and cultural conditions peculiar to Athens in Plato’s time. It does not reflect what rhapsodists of earlier times tried to mime in verse. What *they* were at pains to mime in song was far closer to what Plato tried in the *Timaeus* to make the basis of Logos. In other words, the true *signifié* or *etymon* of their poetics was something we should call the “cosmopoietic significance” of their objects²⁸. What is the “cosmopoietic significance” of the object of

²⁶ *Republic*, 373b, 393c, 595c sq., *Laws*, 668a sq., *Cratylus*, 423a-e, *Sophist*, 267a.

²⁷ See T. Georgiades, *op. cit.*, 49 sq., G. Thomson, *Greek Lyric Metre*, 2-3; M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music*, 201, 289, 294 & *Paulys Realencyclopädie* (English translation ed.), cols. 334-335.

²⁸ Which does not mean that we deny or minimise the theory that the musical “phrasis” expressed in Dorian, Ionian, Lydian and Phrygian “modes” (ethoi) existed to express ‘emotional associations’ (cf. W. Headlam, 209-27; G. Thomson, *op. cit.*, 45-69; Aristotle, *Politics*, VIII, 1341b; Plato, *Republic*, 400b, 424c, Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, XIV, 624c). It is only because we see these modes as being subordinate to a higher, “cosmopoietic” significance.

versification? It is the significance a thing must have before it can be significant in any other way and in whose absence a discussion of significance of any kind is not merely pointless but utterly inconceivable. What supplies the objects of versification with this manner of significance? In the pre-philosophical *paideia* we are speaking of here, there is only one thing, namely the comm-union (*hymen*) of the Sky and the Earth, the Uranian and the Chthonian, to create the “*in Zwischen*” wherein significance, man, life or Being *cannot not* be. This in any event is what we are told by scholars in the area of “Indo-European comparative poetics” for whom the status of the Poet as an intermediary between the poetry listening public and supra-human, cosmopoetic forces is a truism²⁹. Without dwelling on the exemplary role played by Poets and poetry, Eliade Mircea says as much in *Das Heilige und das Profane* when speaking of the efforts by pre-modern peoples to create a synchronicity or “homologisation” between human time, space and activity and cosmic time, space and activity. And it’s worth pointing out that Plato was aware of all of this. We can be sure for a number of reasons. First because it is from him that we learn that exploring and singing about what is “above the Sky and below the Earth” was an essential part of the Poet’s vocation³⁰. Second because his own attempts to elaborate an *orthologia* which was in conformity with the veritable essence, reality or nature of named beings was the prolongation of an identical aspiration by his poetical predecessors³¹.

So, again, the mimesis that counted for the Hellenic poets of yore wasn’t the one one needed to represent the immediately accessible

²⁹ See V. Toporov, *op. cit.*, 199-200 (“Für die Gesellschaft ist der Dichter wie der Opferpriester unentbehrlich : Durch sie werden die entropischen Tendenzen des Universums gebändigt, die Elemente des Chaos verdrängt oder verarbeitet, durch sie wird die Welt immer wieder als Kosmos erneuert, und dadurch werden Wachstum, Reichtum, Fortbestehen in den Nachkommen gesichert”), E. Campanile, 1987, 21-28, M. Detienne, *Maîtres de la vérité dans la Grèce archaïque*, 100 sq. (“Par la puissance de son verbe poétique, [le poète] institue les puissances du monde invisible ... Ce type de parole est toujours conforme à l’ordre cosmique, car il crée l’ordre cosmique, il en est l’instrument nécessaire”); W. Burkert, 444 & P. Kingsley, 229.

³⁰ *Ion*, 531c, *Theatetus*, 173e & *Republic*, 596cd.

³¹ Cf. F. M. Cornford, *Principium Sapientum*, 153 sq. & J.-P. Vernant, *op. cit.*, 373 sq.

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aspects of one's objects. What really counted was to sing the object of one's poetising to the power of the cosmic forces which bring and maintain it in its Being-there *without withal ceasing to speak of something belonging to the sensible world we find around us*. Something which explains the du-*pli*-city, "*Zweifaltigkeit*" or "*poikilia*" some discern in early poetry. For *through* the things the poet says in the poem about his object we hear him telling us about the cosmic order that determines his object's time, place, truth, worth, and destiny and *through* the things he says about the cosmic order we hear him tell us how its "orchestration" results in the object of the poem³².

But how did poetry encode all this? How did the Poet help us hear the cosmic within the earthly and the earthly within the cosmic if he did not use *onomata* to do so? Alternately, what *non-onomastic* modulation of *phoné* is required to express the cosmopoietic significance of one's objects? Thanks to the work of historians of the Greek language like Johannes Lohmann, Hermann Koller and Thrasybulos Georgiades we are in a position to answer these questions. In their studies they tell us that the determination of phonetics in early Greek language was identical to the determination of sound in the early Greek musical system and that the determination of sound in the early Greek musical system was designed to be able to replicate or mime the motions of various cosmos regulating forces³³. The key to this link between language, music and cosmos regulating activity is hidden in the original sense of the Greek word "*stoicheion*". And we do mean "hidden" for until recently the word was taken to mean "alphabetic letter". We now know, however, that what it really meant was, *first*, the lengths of the shadows cast by the solar "gnomon" at different hours of the day and, *second*, "measures of sound" to which the alphabetic letters – borrowed from the Phoenicians – were subsequently matched³⁴.

³² Cf. M. Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "der Rhein"*, 163 & Detienne, *op. cit.*

³³ H. Koller, "Stoicheion", 166 ("*Das älteste metrische System gründet ganz auf der Struktur des Wortes, auf den von ihm analytisch ableitbaren natürlichen Zahlenverhältnissen*"), J. Lohmann, *op. cit.*, 4-5 & T. Georgiades, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

³⁴ Cf. esp. J. Lohmann, *op. cit.*, 4-5.

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Further on we will see the significance of the fact that *stoicheion* stood both for measures of sound and for the measures of the shadows cast by the sun. Here, however, let us dwell upon the purely “linguistic” meaning and application of the term. What was important about the “measures” or “numbers” of the sounds at the root of Greek music and language? It was quite simply their correspondence to the “measures” or “calibres” of the *objects* it was the vocation of music, and therefore language, to signify.

***Stoicheia* : a “common measure” of matter and sound, things and words ?**

A convenient reference on this point is the famous passage in the *Philebus* where we are informed that the rules for defining “units” of sound in music and language are identical to the way *everything* is constituted as an individual being.

Soc.: But, my friend, when you have grasped the number and quality of the intervals of the voice in respect to high and low pitch, and the limits of the intervals, and all the combinations derived from them, which the men of former time discovered and handed down to us, their successors, with the traditional name of harmonies, and also the corresponding effects in the movements of the body, which they say are measured by number and must be called rhythms and measures – and they say that we must understand that every one and many should be considered in this way – when you have grasped these facts, you have become a musician, and when by considering it in this way you have obtained a grasp of any other unity of all those which exist, you have become wise in respect to that unity (Philebus, 17de, italics mine, F.B.).

These remarks entail two highly significant implications, one ontological, the other semiological: (1) there is a direct correspondence (*systoicheia*) between the way individual things (*eonta*) are constituted and the way the elements of music, verse and language are constituted; (2) the sounds of music, verse and language can be selected and arranged to characterise or “epiphonise” the “nature” which

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singularises or individualises things. But this information also raises a question: what determines the “measures” that are decisive to the constitution of (a) individualised things and (b) of the sounds used in music, verse and language to signify individualised things? Alternately, if both *eonta* and the sounds in music, poetry and language were “measures”, *what were they measures of?*

Let’s split this question in two and begin by asking about the measures which constitute things (*eonta*). Convenient though it may be, we are going to resist the temptation of appealing to the usual way of answering the question, namely by referring to Pythagoras and the Pythagorean idea of the “harmony of the spheres”. Not so much because so little is known of Pythagoras and his legacy or because what is known of them is so aporetic, enigmatic and, bewhiles, inexplicable. More so because nothing that is attributable to them with any certainty, and that is relevant to us, is dissociable from any other philosophical tradition of comparable importance³⁵. In any event, nothing one could say with any certitude about the basics of Pythagorean cosmology and ontogenesis cannot be said, *mutatis mutandi*, with almost equal certainty about ideas concerning *kosmopoiesis* and ontogenesis expressed (or implicit) in Hesiodic Theogony, in the Eleusinian fertility cults, in Ionian Natural Philosophy and even in the philosophical system of Aristotle. This is so because none of them derogate from the basic premise that natural beings – *and therefore the language that represents them* – are totally dependent on the “*choreia*” of the forces of nature and paramountly the “hierogamic” relationship linking the Sky and the Earth. Indeed if the paucity and ambiguity of the evidence authorises us to say anything at all, it could be that what distinguishes Pythagorism from other schools of thought is the fact that, from the perspective of cogency and completeness, the ontology and physics of non-Pythagorean schools of thought are superior to those of the Pythagoreans. And in saying this we are not thinking only of the elaborate and highly sophisticated system we find in Aristotle. Even earlier cosmological and ontological models like that of Heracleitos of Ephesia are more satisfying and credible in that they

³⁵ Lohmann, 5-6, 8.

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give to the “harmony of the spheres” a “passive” counterpart to operate on and in so operating engender a cosmos. So without denying Pythagoras and Pythagorism their due, let us look – as summarily as we dare – at the elements of Heraclitian cosmogenesis and ontogenesis to see how they explain the “measures” which were decisive for the constitution of *eonta* and thereby for the constitution of the sounds in the music and verse which “epiphonised” the “truth” or “nature” of *eonta*.

Heraclitian *kosmopoiesis* and ontogenesis

The entirety of his thought, including therefore his physics and ontology, is dependent upon his cosmology³⁶ and the entirety of his cosmology depends on the role played in it by fire³⁷. Fire is the unique source of the totality of nature by being what its non-igneous constituents derive from when fire dies as fire to turn first into water and then into earth³⁸. However the “*pyros tropai*” whereby this occurs is not a “one way” process. For the water and earth that live off the death of fire can and indeed eventually must die as water and earth in order to feed and keep alive the fire from which they are born³⁹. That is what explains the diurnal and annual course of celestial phenomena;

³⁶ See, *inter alia*, Brieger, 209 sq. ; Reinhardt, 192 sq. ; Delatte, 16-17 & Kirk, *passim*.

³⁷ FR. DK [= H. Diels & W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 3 vols. (Hildesheim; Weidman, 1989-90)] 22 B 30 (“This world, the same for all, neither the Gods nor men created it, rather it has always been, and it is and will remain an ever-living fire that by measure ignites and by measure goes out”) & B 64.

³⁸ FR. DK 22 B 31 (“Fire’s turnings : first sea, and of sea one half is earth, the other *prester* ... [earth] is dispersed as sea, and is measured so as to form the same proportion as existed before it became earth”) & B 90.

³⁹ FR. DK 22 B 126: “Cold things become warm, and what is warm cools; what is wet dries and the parched moistens”.

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the hunt for and consumption of the non-igneous parts of the cosmos by which the cosmic fire is sustained⁴⁰.

Heracleitian cosmology is therefore characterised by a state of dynamic equilibrium among the three “oranidic” cosmic elements – fire, water and earth – each of them living off the death of the others. Because of these “allelphagic” transformations, the totality of the matter in the cosmos is subject to a constant *double* motion proceeding simultaneously in two opposite directions: upwards (*epi to ano*) whilst earth and water ignify and downwards (*epi to kato*) when fire aquifies and inmineralises⁴¹. Now this ceaseless to-ing and fro-ing between the above and the below was essential to *kosmopoiesis*. For if it is true that this interactivity between *Uranos* and *Chthonos* meant that the entire physical mass of the universe is subject to a “constant fluctuation”, it did not follow that there was something “chaotic” about this “*panta rhe*”. At least not “in principle” (*kat’ archen*). This is so because, much the way the seasons are “periodised”, the flux of physical matter is *cadenced* or *rhythmed*. That is to say, characterised by the predominance in given times and places of a content received primarily from above (fire) or primarily from below (water or earth). And this “periodisation” was vital for ontogenesis. For it was *in* and *as* these rhythms, succeeding one another with the waxing and waning of now one, now the other of the cosmic opposites, that *eonta* come-to-be and pass away. Not as the sole motor of genesis and corruption. Not without the collaboration of non-cosmic, auxiliary causes. For contingent, proximate and ontic actors and factors had a role to play in ontogenesis. So too did Titanistic, counter-cosmic agents. Noticeably so. But in no wise and by no one were agencies of this order considered equal or superior in importance to the ones attributed to the constant

⁴⁰ On this interpretation of Aristotle’s, *Meteorologica*, II, ii-iii, 355a 14 sq. & the ps.-Hippocrates, *De Victu*, I, 3, see Burnet, 155-6; Delatte, 16-17; Wiggins, 19-20 & Conche, 284: “[L]e Feu se nourrit de lui-même – par la médiation du monde. [...] le Feu se transforme en cela même qui est sa nourriture, cela dans un cycle toujours équilibré, sans excès ni défaut”. Aliter Kirk (1951), 272.

⁴¹ Fr. DK 22 A 1 & Kirk, 107-8 for the ‘commonest’ interpretation of Fr. DK 22 B 60.

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coupling and uncoupling (*sympherein*, *diapherein*) of the Sky and the Earth.

All of which is important to us because it was this constant coupling and uncoupling which explains what *eonta* are “measures of” and it does so in this sense: if the Urano-Chthonian *choreia* is the source of the *élan* which “rhythms” matter and energy in time and space to form *eonta*, then in addition to everything else you can say about them, mortal beings are “periods”, “portions” or “measures” of something “immortal” and “infinite”. For along with “harmony” and “regularity”, “infinity” was one of the predicates one associated the most with the hierogamy of the Sky and the Earth: an endless or “incommensurable” succession of cycles *in relation to which the singularised beings it creates are but “measures”*⁴².

To this extremely schematic, “normalised” representation of Heraclitian *diakosmesis* there is a lot to add. Especially about the logomachy among its exemplars and dissidents about the best way to make it a “*homologeîn ta phainomena*”. For to give the phenomenal world and its perceptual content the best possible “rational account” (*logon didonai*) was the sole purpose of this kind of metaphysical speculation. We could also ponder over why this idea of *diakosmesis* seems so strange to us given that it describes a prior, irreducible and indispensable condition of possibility of everything in the world we occupy too. Still we could neglect these and other equally noteworthy facts and not have neglected what is essential. Namely the fact that acceptance of this basic schema of ontogenesis was the *conditio sine qua non* for speaking of the essence, substance or structure of the world, or of mortal things, that anyone then could accept as credible or relevant. We see it in Ionian Natural Philosophy, in Pythagorism, in Platonism and in Aristotle. We also see it at the foundations of *all* “non-trivial” forms of literary output from the Orphics to lyrical poetry *via* epic and tragedy. And if it is important to mention literature and poetry

⁴² W. Jaeger, *Paideia, The Ideals of Greek Culture*, vol. I, 125-26, E. Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, vol. I, 327-35, J. Lohmann, *op. cit.*, 17-18, 21 & R. Desjardins, *The Rational Enterprise: Logos in Plato's "Theaetetus"*, 133 sq.

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in all this it is simply because, as we pointed out above, it was from poetry and the Poets that the philosophers borrowed and developed the idea we have just described. However, the poetry we are speaking of here must not be confused with any *praxis* of poetry we know of today. For in earlier times Poets did not select and arrange harmonies and rhythms to tell us about their “impressions” or the “sentiments” they felt towards their objects. No one cared about that. No more than they cared about their own impressions or sentiments about the things one could subject to poetic treatment. All that really counted for the poetry listening publics at the dawn of our own literary tradition, was a revelation of the objective, immutable “truth” of the object of poetising. And the Poet and his audience alike knew there was no point in attempting to attain truths like this independently of the relationship beings have with the orderly, “cosmopoietic” operations of the physical universe⁴³.

Which is precisely why they listened to poetry : to hear the poet recount the objects of verse to the power of the “laws of nature”. That’s what Poets were trained to do. For when the Poet “took leave of his senses” to listen to “Sirens” above the sky and under the earth as well as to “Nymphs” and “Satyrs” in rivers, rocks and trees it wasn’t to indulge in idle whimsy or to dally with inexistent creatures. He was only taking leave of an *inability* to which every mortal is condemned if his relationship to the world is limited to sense perceptions alone. And the purpose of taking leave of limitations like that was to gain insight into and to distil wisdom about *diakosmesis*, *kosmopoïia* or, more prosaically, “the laws of nature”. Hence the “sweets” the Poet brought his public from the “honey-dropping founts in the gardens and glades of the Muses” (*Ion*, 534ab) was information about the way the Urano-Chthonian ballet orchestrates nature into harmonies and rhythms. The rhythms one needs to discover to know the “correct” time, place, character and destiny of the entities occupying these rhythms and the “role” these entities should play on the cosmic stage both for their own good and for the good of the rest of the beings they share the cosmos

⁴³ Cf. supra, _____. As we see in the *Phaedrus*, 269d, it was axiomatic that one could not speak artfully, scientifically or even adequately on *any* subject except by engaging in “high speculation about nature”.

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with. *That* is what Poets wanted to declaim and audiences wanted to hear. Truths about their world and themselves higher or deeper than which it is impossible to aspire and which are impossible to obtain without the “hermeneutic” intercession of a Poet who is “out of his wits” because, as Hölderlin puts it, he stands “unprotected in the storms of God”, seizes “the lightening-flash divine” and passes it “wrapped in song” to the people⁴⁴. And it was indeed “*ins Lied gehüllt*” that he communicated his “gift from the Muses”⁴⁵. In melodies and metre commensurable with the harmonies and cadences of the Urano-Chthonian ballet which modulate matter and energy into mortal beings and determine their respective times, places, natures and fates. A point which brings us to the question of the “code” used by Poets to describe and to tell the truth about the objects of verse. A full discussion of this point would require an impossibly long discussion not limited to Plato’s comments in the *Laws*, the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*. For us the *Cratylus* suffices. For if this dialogue is about namecraft (*onomatourgia*), it was *poetic* wisdom about namecraft which guides us through the discussion⁴⁶.

The poetics of namecraft (*onomatourgia*) in the *Cratylus*

Essential to poetic ideas about the way to forge “naturally correct names” is the belief that astral and para-astral phenomena are the divine source of everything that enters the light of day. Predictably, this is made clear in the etymologies of the Gods (“*thein*”, “*Zeus*”, “*Chronos*”, “*Ouranos*”), but also in those of “year”, “season” and “justice” (*etos*, *hora*

⁴⁴ We refer to the last stanza of the poem which begins “*Wie wenn am Feiertage ...*”
[...] *Doch uns gebührt es, unter Gottes Gewittern,*
Ihr Dichter ! Mit entblößtem Haupte zu stehen,
Des Vaters Stral, ihn selbst, mit eigener Hand
Zu fassen und dem Volk ins Lied
Gehüllt die himmlische Gaabe zu reichen, ...

⁴⁵ Cf. *Ion*, 534d.

⁴⁶ *Cratylus*, 391cd.

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and *dia-ion*). Foremost among the literally endless implications of this *doxa* was the conviction that no name stands any chance of being “naturally correct” if it fails to reveal the destiny-determining link between the object one wanted to name and its Uranian or Celestial source. The way the poetic namewrights (*onomatourgoi*, *tithemenoi tou onomatoun*) made this link clear is explained, as well as not, in the passage of the *Cratylus* (423a sq.) devoted to the “scientific” way to analyse the earliest names into their phonemic elements (*stoicheia*). Those one must select from and arrange to mime in sounds the natures (*ousiai*) of the entities it is the vocation of naturally correct names to “illuminate”. Not hidden by Plato’s brief, manifestly begrudging and slightly garbled “*logon didonai*” is the basic idea that the analysed *stoicheia* stand for different kinds of (a) movement (b) interruptions of movement and (c) interactions of these movements and interrupted movements among themselves⁴⁷. What do these movements and non-movements stand for? For two things: first for air (*pneuma*) passing through the lips to make the phonemes used in speech and second and *concomitantly* for the movements of the *cadentia sidera* or, more precisely, for the choric to-ing and fro-ing of Sky and Earth⁴⁸. That is

⁴⁷ This is why the so-called “*logon didonai*” limits itself to an analysis of the lexemes “*rhei*”, “*doun*” and “*ion*” despite there existing many other *prota onomata*.

⁴⁸ Though this is not explicit in the passage we are commenting on, it can scarcely be denied. In the *Cratylus* it is axiomatic that the etymologies of *onomata* forged by the first name givers were all “conferred under the assumption that the objects named are always full of constant motion and flowing” (411c, 436e & 439c). This “motion” is traceable back to, through and beyond their “theogonised” forms to the Heraclitian belief, shared by all of early Hellenic humanity (402ac, *Theatetus*, 152e, 180cd, Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 983b 31, etc.), in the divinity of natural, astro-meteoro-geological phenomena because of the role the latter play in orchestrating primeval chaos into *panta ta onta* (*Cratylus*, 397cd, *Laws*, 715e - 716b, 886a, *Apology*, 26d, Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1074b 1-14, *De Caelo*, 284a 2-18, etc.). This ontogenetic given couldn’t be essential to the correctness of correct constituted names without being even more essential to their constituent *stoicheia* in as much as it is a basic premise of the entire theory that it is by virtue of their being constituted of the latter that the former enjoy their “co-naturality” with respect to their correlative objects (424ab). Consequently, if it is indeed astro-meteorologico-geological processes which bring mortal beings to the light of day, and are for this

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to say, again, a movement divisible into measures, periods or portions corresponding to the time, place, character and destiny (*hora, mora, ethos, aioun*) of each existing being. And there was nothing fortuitous about the fact that the phonemes in “naturally correct” names were “mimetic reciprocals” of cosmopoietic processes. For like the *bijas* used by the *kavis* and other masters of *mantra shastra* to weave Vedic rags, the logic regulating the construction of correct names was “analogical” and it was analogical in this sense: *individual measures of sound in naturally correct names are to the continuum of breath they are sculpted from as the rhythms of matter and energy which form individual things are to the continuum of the cosmic “choreia” of which they are periods, portions or measures*⁴⁹.

So as individual *stoicheia* stood *simultaneously* for the elementary forms of sound used in namecraft and *concomitantly* for measures of life-creating cosmic movement, the namewright using them had all he needed to forge “naturally correct” names. For in using the forms of sound associated with these *stoicheia* to make names, he was *ipso facto* miming the *reciprocal* measures of the cosmic ballet accounting for the *ousia* of what he was naming thereby. On condition, of course, that the phonemically mimed “measures of cosmopoietic movement” really were the ones that produced the Being-there of the objects named. When and because that was so, we have to do with names which are “*homoia ta alétheia*”, *i.e.*, likenesses of the true nature of their objects. Conversely, when this *wasn't* the case, the name the Poet-namewright made was either less than naturally correct or not a

reason alone decisive for their essences or natures, the phonetic *stoicheia* in their names *had* to correspond to them to be able to constitute “naturally correct” names.

⁴⁹ For a fascinating discussion of the parallels between namecraft as discussed in the Cratylus and as practised by the masters of Vedic literature, see J. Bronkhorst, “Etymology and Magic : Yasha’ Nirukta, Plato’s Cratylus and the Riddle of Semantic Etymologies”, 147-203 & R. A. Yelle, Explaining Mantras, *passim*. For a presentation of the principles underlying the belief that the *cadentia sidera*, musical composition and, by extension, the phonetics of ‘correct’ names are all reciprocals of one another (*antistrophon alleloun*), see A. Delatte, *Etudes sur la littérature pythagoricienne*, 249-268, P. Boyancé, “Note sur la Tétractys”, 421-425 & M. L. West, “Alcman and Pythagoras”, 1-15.

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name at all. Necessarily so. For if that were the case, you would *not* be hearing a phonetic replica (*mimema phoné*) of the conjugations of cosmic movements that go into the making of and are presupposed by the *ousia* which *mimemata phonéenta* are supposed to “make clear”.

And, again, when speaking of this manner of *mimemata phonéenta* we are speaking of a *semiosis* and a praxis of language and communication which had nothing lexical or prosaic about it in as much as, unto itself, it consisted of *musical* sound. But a music which, like normal prosaic-lexical language, was capable of recounting an *epos*. One told by sculpting breath (*pneuma*) into melodies and rhythms mimetically com-mensurable to the cosmic movements whose conjugations produce the *eonta* it was the purpose of these melodies and rhythms to imitate or “epiphonise” in song and music.

This review of namecraft and versecraft in ancient Greece is as schematic and synthetic – therefore incomplete – as was our summary of Heraclitian *kosmopoia* and ontogenesis and the time has come to confess the sins we have committed by allowing this to happen. They are multiple. First we have given the impression that Greek verse is monolithic. It isn't. True, what we have looked at (all too superficially) may have been essential “metapoetically”. But surviving Greek verse includes works by artists who very obviously didn't care a jot about *diakosmesis* or about acting as a hermeneut for his audience. Just as there are works by Greek Poets who did care about these matters but who didn't withal fail to account for Titanistic, counter-cosmic agents and forces. Equally to be regretted are the multitude of points of interest regarding namecraft and *rhapsodia* we did not discuss but which deserve full consideration: why poetic namewrights were called “*meteorologoi*”; why correct names have a “more than human source”; why the voice of God was compresent in the voice of the poet; why studying the name of a thing was tantamount to studying the thing itself; why music and astronomy were “sister sciences” and how this implied that hearing and seeing are sister senses. A completer treatment would also enable us to extend our analysis beyond Plato and antiquity to look at “*avant-garde*” developments in literature and the arts in the 19th and 20th century. For if the ideas and

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accomplishments of Mallarmé, Valéry, Artaud, Joyce and Ponge were indeed so many “*voyages en Cratylie*”, they were for that very reason an *Andenken* of the music that once resonated in verse. However, none of this is relevant to why we undertook our Urano-Chthonian reflections on ancient versecraft.

Recapitulation and concluding remarks

We did that because we wanted to approach theory “enstatically” and we wanted to do that the better to get close to the *résón* or *Stimmung* its genealogy makes a part of it. For that’s all we’ve been doing here, listening to what *théoria* meant to the people who gave us the word. For them it meant cleansing the doors of perception and thought in order to commune noetically with the supremely high and the unfathomably deep. That is what is required to empty Uranos and Chthonos of the mystery concealed in their epiphany and to make that mystery the soul of “literary treatment” of their earthly progeny. But not a “literary treatment” which used “words”. What we call words can represent the “ontic” or “pragmatological” or “profane” character of phenomena. What they cannot do is “epi-phonise”, as it were, the Urano-Chthonian essence of phenomena. “Epiphony” like that required a distinct, *musical* language. However, the music that did this was not separate from ordinary, “hermogenic” or “prosaic” language in as much as it shared with the latter one and the same phonetic-acoustical substrate. A sonic substrate modulated according to two distinct arrangements of sound: in one arrangement we hear hermogenic, idiotic, demotic words. In the other arrangement *contrapunctually compresent in the same phonemic substrate* we hear “measures of sound” corresponding “mimetically” to the conjugations of cosmopoietic activity which engendered the being epiphonised in music.

Obviously, all this is something modern theorists are free to ignore, relativise and disparage. Just as they are free to attempt to place it “*sous rature*” and to substitute it with “*tout autre chose*”. But all they’ll ever accomplish for their efforts is the consummation of their own non-relevance to what theory’s genealogy makes it. They will never

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succeed in evincing the profoundest, highest and widest sense in which theory is relevant and will remain relevant forever to absolutely everything it is possible to theorise about.

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