

μέγα χεῦμα, 32) from the earth (Γαῖα, 29) reconciles the two alternatives of *ρέϊν* and *ἔρα*.⁷

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⁷ McLennan makes the interesting suggestion that we should see in *ἐλαφραῖ* an allusion to adverbial *ρέϊα*, with implicit contrast of Rhea and Gaia.

I am indebted to Dr F. J. Williams for useful criticism.

Νημερτής τ' ἑρόεσσα μελάγκουρος τ' Ἀσάφεια

In *fr.* 122B and 123B (DK) Empedocles mentions a series of opposite personifications, e.g. Beauty and Ugliness (122.3), Movement and Rest (123.2); the last pair mentioned in *fr.* 122 is *Nemertes-Asapheia*.

Nemertes is known to us from Hom. *Il.* xviii 46, and Hes. *Th.* 262; on both occasions she appears in a catalogue of Nereids. Hesiod emphatically says that she has her father's character, about which he has told us already: *Th.* 233, *Νηρέα δ' ἀψευδέα καὶ ἀληθέα¹ γείνατο Πόντος*. Nereus' name, furthermore, is explained by the adjectives *νημερτής* and *ἤπιος* (235).

The original meaning of *νημερτής*, 'unerring', develops easily into 'true'²—cf. Hom. *Il.* vi 376, where Hector says: *εἰ δ' ἄγε μοι, δμωαί, νημερτέα μυθήσασθε!*, and the reply in 382: *ἀνωγας ἀληθέα μυθήσασθαι*. The meaning of *νημερτέα* here is clearly 'true'. The same meaning can be distilled from the fact that *ψεύδος* is the opposite of *νημερτής*—cf. *Od.* iii 327–8: *... ἵνα νημερτές ἐνίσπη / ψεύδος δ' οὐκ ἔρέει*. These words remind us of the catalogue of the Nereids in the *Iliad* mentioned above, where the meaning of the name *Nemertes* seems to be strengthened by the immediately following name *Apseudes*: for such litotes-like combinations cf., e.g., Critias, *fr.* 1.4, where Anacreon is said to be *ἡδὺν ἄλυπον*.

So the meaning of the name *Nemertes* is 'Truth', *pace* van der Ben, who renders the name 'Unfallible';³ the meaning 'Truth' is also given by Guthrie,⁴ Wright,⁵ and DK.

The name *Asapheia* is a neologism derived from (ἀ)σαφής analogous to *ἀληθής-ἀλήθεια*; van der Ben 162 gives some other parallels: *Λιμνώρεια*, *Ἀμάθεια*, *Ἥριγένεια* and *Ἀτρέκεια*. Empedocles had other personifications at his disposal to express the opposite of Truth—e.g. *Pseudos* (Hes. *Th.* 229); *Apate* (*ibid.* 224);⁶ *Lethe*.⁷ So Empedocles coined the name *Asapheia* probably *metri causa*.

¹ H. Boeder, 'Der frühgriechische Wortgebrauch von Logos und Aletheia', *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* iv (1959) 91, observes that *ἀλήθεια* and *ἀληθής* are never used as predicate or attribute with the exception of Hes. *Th.* 233.

² Boeder (n. 1) 91 remarks that the pre-Homeric *ἔτεόν* ('true') is replaced by *σαφής*, *νημερτής* and esp. *ἀληθής*; cf. *ibid.* 98.

³ N. van der Ben, *The Proem of Empedocles' Peri Physios* (Amsterdam 1975) 107.

⁴ W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* ii (Cambridge 1965) 255.

⁵ M. R. Wright, *Empedocles: the extant fragments* (New Haven/London 1981) 280.

⁶ For the implications of this word see M. L. West, *Hesiod, Theogony* (Oxford 1966) *ad loc.*

⁷ For *Lethe* and its negative *ἀληθής* see West (n. 6) 230–1, 233, Boeder (n. 1) 92–4.

The basic idea inherent in *ἀσάφεια* is that of the negative of *σαφής*, 'clear, distinct';⁸ but in view of the fact that *Ἀσάφεια* is a neologism it seems legitimate to take into account the fact that 'lie, untruth' is a regular opposite of *νημερτής*. A close relationship between the concepts of 'clearness' and 'truth' is suggested for example by comparison of Parmenides *fr.* 1B.29–30, where *Ἀληθείης ἦτορ* is opposed to *βροτῶν δόξας*, and Xenophanes *fr.* 34B.1–4, where *τὸ μὲν σαφές* (1) is the opposite of *δόκος δ'* (4)—so it seems that the meaning of *ἀλήθεια* and *τὸ σαφές*⁹ is very similar. The same is suggested in Page's note *ad Eur. Med.* 72: *μῦθος εἰ σαφής ὁδε κτλ.*, 'the story which is clear . . . is the true story'.¹⁰ One might argue that clarity is still at the centre of the meaning there, but there is certainly no broad distinction of meaning, if any, between Penelope's words to Telemachus (*οὐκ ἔτλης*) *νόστον σοῦ πατρὸς σάφα εἶπμεν*, and Telemachus' reply: *τοιγὰρ ἐγὼ τοι, μῆτερ, ἀληθείην καταλέξω* (*Od.* xvii 106–8); finally, there seems to be no doubt possible in *Il.* iv 404: *μὴ ψεύδε', ἐπιστάμενος σάφα εἶπεῖν*, where Leaf prefers the meaning 'truly', referring to Soph. *El.* 1223, *Trach.* 387, and Eur. *Med.* 72.

So, in view of the fact that there is no parallel to support a distinct meaning for the neologism *ἀσάφεια*, and because the idea naturally and not infrequently opposed to *νημερτής* is 'Untruth', I accept the meaning 'Untruth' in the present passage—*pace* DK 'Verworrenheit', Guthrie 'Obscurity', van der Ben 'Uncertain', Wright 'Uncertainty' and Lloyd 'Obscurity'.¹¹

The meaning of *μελάγκουρος* is disputed: some connect the element *-κουρος* with *κείρω*, e.g. LSJ 'black-haired' (so Guthrie). But Wright 281 observes correctly: 'the color of the hair is irrelevant'. On the same grounds we can reject Wilamowitz' 'mit schwarzem Haarschur'.¹² The derivation from *κούρη*, 'pupil', seems preferable—cf. van der Ben 162. DK had already translated 'schwarzaugeig', but, again, I can see nothing relevant in the dark colour of the pupils(!) or of the eyes: the pupil of the eye tends to be black, while dark eyes can be very beautiful and are in consequence an inept opposite of the preceding *ἑρόεσσα*, the qualification of *Νημερτής*.

It is therefore with good reason that van der Ben tries to expand the meaning 'with dark pupils', but his 'blind' seems too subtle: "with dark pupils then means with pupils without light or vision", "blind"—the meaning accepted by Wright 281–2. Van der Ben bases this interpretation primarily on Soph. *Aj.* 955, *κελαινώπαν θυμόν*—but the adj. *κελαινώπησις* does not imply blindness of the soul: cf. Stanford *ad loc.*, 'Jebb may be right in giving the ending full value as "faced" here so as to suggest "the dark soul which watches from its place of concealment with malevolent joy"'.¹³ So

⁸ Boeder (n. 1) 93 argues that 'the *λήθων* prevents his knowledge from being shared with someone else'—which could be qualified as *ἀφανές* or *ἄδηλον*: but the former word is not found in epic at all, while the latter is found once meaning 'invisible' (Hes. *Erga* 6).

⁹ For *τὸ σαφές* ('Klarheit und Zuverlässigkeit die auf Augenzeugenschaft beruht') see H. Fraenkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums* (München 1962) 382–3, esp. n. 20; also *id.*, *Frühgriechisches Denken* (München 1960) 342–9.

¹⁰ D. L. Page, *Euripides Medea*² (Oxford 1952).

¹¹ G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy* (Cambridge 1966) 63 n. 1.

¹² U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Sitz. d. preuss. Akad. d. Wiss. Berlin* 1929, 639 f.

¹³ W. B. Stanford, *Sophocles Ajax* (London 1963).

μελάγκουρος seems to me to mean 'with dark, malignant eyes'; cf. LSJ s.v. μέλας III.4.

Another interpretation, however, seems possible as well: Fraenkel¹⁴ remarks *ad* A. Ag. 391 that κακός χαλκός loses the fine lustre of its surface; instead there appears an unsightly blackness which cannot be removed: κακοῦ δὲ χαλκοῦ τρόπον . . . μελαμπαγής. If we assume for beautiful Truth the possession of ὄμματα μαρμαίροντα, her opposite Untruth has 'dark, dull, false eyes'.

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¹⁴ E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950).

Euripides, *Bakchai* 877–81 = 897–901

τί τὸ σοφόν, ἢ τί τὸ κάλλιον	877
παρὰ θεῶν γέρας ἐν βροτοῖς;	878
ἢ χεῖρ' ὑπὲρ κορυφᾶς	879
τῶν ἐχθρῶν κρείσσω κατέχειν;	880
ὃ τι καλὸν φίλον ἀεί.	881

877 σοφόν editores vetustiores, Grégoire:¹ σοφόν; editores recentiores: σοφόν, Ammendola² σοφόν; ἢ τι Willink³ τὸ delerunt Dodds,⁴ Willink 878–9 βροτοῖς ἢ editores plerique: βροτοῖς; ἢ Blake,⁵ Roux⁶

The correct interpretation of these lines significantly affects our understanding of the attitude of Dionysiac worshippers towards violence. If the chorus is here saying that power over one's enemies is the best possible gift from the gods and furthermore that this statement constitutes wisdom, violence and vindictiveness are essential ingredients of Dionysiac religion. If, on the other hand, they are renouncing power over their enemies, Dionysiac religion is essentially peaceful and non-aggressive. The first interpretation, that triumph over one's enemies is the greatest gift and that knowing this constitutes wisdom, is the popular view at the present time. It is the interpretation which is found in all current English translations of the play, including those of Arrowsmith⁷ and Kirk.⁸ It is also the view of several scholars who have undertaken a detailed study of the passage. These include Dodds,⁹ Winnington-Ingram,¹⁰ and Arthur.¹¹ Others who have studied the passage have reached the opposite conclusion, that the greatest

gift consists of caution and respect, which in turn lead to restraint and avoidance of violence. These include Blake,¹² Festugière,¹³ and Roux.¹⁴ The aim of this paper is to reach a greater degree of certainty concerning the meaning of the passage by a close examination of the grammatical constructions.

To begin with, τὸ σοφόν in 877 cannot be taken by itself to mean 'wisdom'. There are two reasons for this. The first is the use of the expression τὸ σοφόν elsewhere in the play. It has long since been noted that Euripides in *Bakchai* is drawing a sharp distinction between true wisdom and false wisdom or mere cleverness. The word used for 'wisdom' is σοφία and the words used for 'cleverness' are τὸ σοφόν, σοφίσματα, and σοφίζεται. The contrast between the two is stated explicitly at 395: τὸ σοφόν δ' οὐ σοφία, 'cleverness is not wisdom'. The negative connotations of σοφίσματα (30, 489) and σοφίζεται (200) are readily evident from the context. The expression τὸ σοφόν in its other two occurrences besides 395 and 877 = 897 is a negative entity. It is clearly so at 202–3: οὐδείς αὐτὰ καταβαλεῖ λόγος, οὐδ' εἰ δι' ἄκρων τὸ σοφόν ὑρῆται φρενῶν, 'no argument will cast them [the ancestral traditions] down, not even if cleverness has been found by acute minds'. At 1005, although the text is corrupt, τὸ σοφόν is contrasted with βροτείως ἔχειν in 1004 and hence must also be a negative entity. Thus on the basis of the usage of these words in the play alone the interpretation of τὸ σοφόν in 877 as 'wisdom' is extremely unlikely. Arthur's theory that τὸ σοφόν is the positive entity and σοφία the negative entity is not adequately supported by the evidence.¹⁵ The use of σοφός apart from the expression τὸ σοφόν is ambiguous in the play and the meaning depends on the speaker. In the usage of Kadmos (179 bis, 186) σοφός clearly means 'wise'. Similarly the word means 'wise' in the usage of Dionysos (480, 641, 656, 839), the chorus (427), Teiresias (266), and the Messenger (1151). Pentheus (655 ter, 824) and Agaue (1190), on the other hand, use the word with the meaning 'clever'.

The second reason why τὸ σοφόν in 877 cannot be taken by itself to mean 'wisdom' is the alternative question construction in which the expression occurs. Alternative questions of the form τί . . . ἢ τί are a favorite device of the Attic orators. The useful observation is that in this construction both questions expect the same answer. Thus at Aischines iii 155: τί ποτ' ἀνερεῖ, ἢ τί φθέγγεται; 'What will he claim, what will he say?' the expected answer is οὐδέν. A similar answer is expected at Demosthenes ix 16: τί δὲ ταῦτ' ἐστίν, ἢ τί τούτων μέλει τῇ πόλει; 'What are these things, of what concern are they to the city?' At Andokides i 129: τίς ἂν εἶη οὖτος; Οἰδίπους ἢ Αἰγισθος; ἢ τί χρὴ αὐτὸν ὀνομάσαι; 'What could he be? An Oidipous or an Aigisthos? What should one call him?' the expected answer to the second question is likewise Οἰδίπου ἢ Αἰγισθον; There are numerous other examples in the orators. The question words in alternative questions of this type can also occur in two repeated constituents with the rest of the sentence shared by both constituents. A good example of this is found at Dem. ix 43: τίς ἦν

¹ *Les Bacchantes* in *Euripide*, ed. H. Grégoire, 6 vols (Paris 1959–64).

² Euripide, *Le Baccanti*², ed. G. Ammendola (Torino 1950).

³ C. W. Willink, 'Some problems of text and interpretation in the *Bacchae*', CQ xvi (1966) 229.

⁴ Euripides, *Bacchae*², ed. E. R. Dodds (Oxford 1960).

⁵ W. E. Blake, 'Euripidis Baccharum interpretatio secundum versus 877–881', *Mnemos.* lx (1933) 361–8.

⁶ Euripide, *Les Bacchantes*, ed. J. Roux, 2 vols (Paris 1970–2).

⁷ *The Bacchae*, tr. W. Arrowsmith, in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, ed. D. Grene and R. Lattimore, 9 vols (Chicago 1953–9).

⁸ *The Bacchae* of Euripides, tr. G. S. Kirk (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1970).

⁹ Dodds (n. 4) 186.

¹⁰ R. P. Winnington-Ingram, 'Euripides, *Bacchae* 877–881 = 897–901', *BICS* xiii (1966) 34–7.

¹¹ M. Arthur, 'The Choral Odes of the *Bacchae* of Euripides', *YCS* xxii (1972) 159–65, 176–9.

¹² Blake (n. 5) 365–6.

¹³ A. J. Festugière, 'Euripide dans les *Bacchantes*', *Eranos* lv (1957) 135–7.

¹⁴ Roux (n. 6) 516–17.

¹⁵ Arthur (n. 11) 176–9.