

ANAXAGORAS THE ALLEGORIST?

The place of Anaxagoras of Clazomenae in the history of Homeric exegesis has been subject to widely varying assessment. Appealing to Diogenes Laertius 2, 11 (= 59 A 1 and 61 A 2 Diels-Kranz = Favorinus F 29 Mensching), D. B. Monro claimed that Anaxagoras read the Homeric poems "as a *moral* [his emphasis] allegory," in contradistinction to the physical allegory detected by his pupil Metrodorus of Lampsacus¹). Two years later Sir John Edwin Sandys stood Monro's (and Favorinus') position on its head:

Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (c. 500–428 B. C.) saw the rays of the sun in the arrows of Apollo. Not content with this obvious anticipation of Solar Mythology, he is said (whether truly or not) to have found in the web of Penelope an emblem of the rules of dialectic, the warp being the premises, the woof the conclusion, and the flame of the torches, by which she executed her task, being none other than the light of reason. Though he is stated to have been the first to interpret the Homeric myths in a moral sense, this is probably true of his pupils only, especially of Metrodorus of Lampsacus...²)

Favorinus' testimony has been the focal point of recent discussion. F. Wehrli has pointed out that it is incorrect to assert that Anaxagoras was the first to find moral instruction in Homer³). E. Mensching goes still further in suggesting that, since Anaxagoras' surviving fragments betray no ethical tendency, the report is an invention, with Metrodorus' allegorism as its starting-point⁴). The peculiar is not necessarily false, however⁵), especially in the case of authors whose works are fragmentarily transmitted: Favorinus could have been mistaken in the matter of priority but still have been correct in saying that Anaxagoras found moral teachings in Homer (whether or not Anaxagoras himself was interested in inculcating morality). The decisive point is Pfeiffer's that nothing in this report suggests that Anaxagoras' interpretation of Homer took allegorical form⁶). The allegorism of Metrodorus should not be retrojected without evidence.

This brings us back to Sandys' remarkable claim that specific and quite

1) Homer's *Odyssey* Books 13–24, ed. D. B. Monro (Oxford 1901) 411: δοκεῖ δὲ πρῶτος (sc. Ἀναξαγόρας), καθά φησι Φαβωρίνος ἐν Παντοδαπῇ Ἱστορίᾳ, τὴν Ὅμηρου ποίησιν ἀποφῆνασθαι εἶναι περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ δικαιοσύνης· ἐπὶ πλείον δὲ προστῆναι τοῦ λόγου Μητροδώρον τὸν Λαμψακηνόν, γνώριμον ὄντα αὐτοῦ, ὃν καὶ πρῶτον σπουδάσαι τοῦ ποιητοῦ περὶ τὴν φυσικὴν πραγματείαν.

2) J. E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship from the Sixth Century B. C. to the End of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge 1903) 30. The passage is unfortunate in its confusing of moral and physical allegory.

3) F. Wehrli, *Zur Geschichte der allegorischen Deutung Homers im Altertum* (diss. Basel 1928) 67.

4) E. Mensching (ed.), *Favorin von Arelate. Der erste Teil der Fragmente: Memorabilien und Omnigena Historia* (Berlin 1963) 115: "Die physikalische Erklärung gehörte dem Schüler, so blieb für den Lehrer nur noch die ethische."

5) Cf. P. Maas, *Textual Criticism*, tr. B. Flower (Oxford 1958) 12.

6) R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford 1968) 35 n. 3.

elaborate allegorical interpretations are attributed to Anaxagoras, a claim which subsequent scholarship has ignored. This paper will examine the foundations on which that claim rests.

As the source for Anaxagoras' interpretation of Penelope's web Sandys cites schol. β 104. The D-scholia do, in fact, preserve this doctrine *ad loc.*, but, at least in published versions, without Anaxagoras' name attached⁷). Moreover, the attribution is obviously false; Anaxagoras can hardly have anticipated the fully-developed Aristotelian syllogistic in this off-hand manner⁸).

More difficult is the case of Anaxagoras' alleged equation of the rays of the sun with Apollo's arrows, for which Sandys fails to specify a source. This interpretation, aiming to provide a physical, rationalistic explanation for the origin of the plague, enjoyed currency in later antiquity and Byzantium⁹). Not merely an "anticipation of Solar Mythology", as Sandys thought, this interpretation presupposes the equation – not impossible in the age of Anaxagoras – of Apollo with the sun¹⁰). However, a careful search having failed to turn up any documentary evidence for the attribution of this interpretation to Anaxagoras, one suspects that in the remarkably speedy composition of his *History of Classical Scholarship*¹¹), Sandys may have been misled by hasty reading of a notice like the following in which Anaxagoras is mentioned in the context of the equation of the rays of the sun with Apollo's arrows: ἀλληγορικῶς δὲ ὁ Ὀμηρος φυσικεύεται περὶ τοῦ ἡλίου, καὶ φησιν ὅτι τόξον τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, τουτέστι τὸ φῶς τοῦ ἡλίου, δι' οὗ μακρόθεν τοξεύει λαμπρὰς ἐπιπέμπων ἀκτῖνας, λευκὸν ἔστι, καὶ οὐχ, ὥσπερ Ἀναξαγόρας τὸν ἡλίον λέγει, τουτέστι πετυρακτωμένον σίδηρον¹²).

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7) Didymi antiquissimi auctoris interpretatio in Odysseam, ed. Fr. Asulanus (Venice 1528) 14^r = Scholia antiqua in Homeri Odysseam maximam partem e codicibus Ambrosianis ab Angelo Mai prolata nunc e codice Palatino et aliunde auctius et emendatius edita a Ph. Buttmanno (Berlin 1821) ad loc.: Πηνελόπῃ, φασίν, ἢ φιλοσοφία· ἰσθὺς ἢ ἐπίθεσις τῶν προτάσεων, ἐξ ὧν αἱ συλλογιστικαὶ συμπλοκαὶ . . . θεράπεινα δὲ ἢ προστετηκνῖα τῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ συλλογιστικῇ μέθοδος· δαΐδες δὲ αἱ τῆς γνώσεως. Cf. Eust. 1437, 20.

8) Aristotle himself did not hit upon it at once, as F. Solmsen, *Die Entwicklung der aristotelischen Logik und Rhetorik* (Berlin 1929), demonstrated in detail.

9) Cf. Heracl. Probl. Hom. 13, 1 ff.; Demo, p. 18 Ludwich (n. 12 below); Eust. 41, 16.

10) Cf. passages cited at Euripides, *Phaethon*, ed. J. Diggle (Cambridge 1970) 147, of which Aesch. Suppl. 212–14 qualifies if one accepts (with Bamberger and Kiehl) ἴνυ for ὄνον at 212; cf. also Stein ad Hdt. 3, 35; Diggle's dating near to the *Electra* (cf. 47–49) would put the reference at Phaeth. 224–25 a few years after the probable date of Anaxagoras' death.

11) Cf. Pfeiffer (n. 6 above) viii.

12) Ioannes Tzetzes, *Exegesis in Homeri Iliadem*, ed. (after [Draco Stratonicensis]) G. Hermann (Leipzig 1812) 94; cf. also *allegoriae Homericae ex codice Vindobonensi* [gr. 49, XIII. saec.] primum ed. ab A. Ludwich, Ind. lect. (Königsberg 1895) 5 = *Die Homerdeuterin Demo. Zweite Bearbeitung ihrer Fragmente von A. Ludwich, I, Ind. lect.* (Königsberg 1912) 16 (fr. 14). Both passages should be added to the Diels-Kranz collection of A-testimonia for Anaxagoras' doctrines. – I should like to thank Prof. David Sider, who first called this problem to my attention.