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ALCMAN'S 'COSMOGONIC' FRAGMENT (FR. 5 PAGE, 81 CALAME)*

I

In 1957, Edgar Lobel published an Oxyrhynchus papyrus (P. Oxy. 2390) containing anonymous commentaries to poems of Alcman which has not ceased to fascinate philologists and historians of ancient philosophy.[1] The text of the most celebrated of these commentaries is presented in Calame's recent edition of the poet as follows:[2]

fr. 2 col. II

. . λίσσομαι π[αντ]ῶν μά-
λιστα [· τὰς Mo]ύσας ὑπερ.[. . . .] ματρός·
τῆς τ[ῶν]ντιδων φυλ[. . .χ]ορός (ἐστι)
Δυμα[ ]τρα Δυμα[. . . · ἐν δ]ὲ ταύ-
τηι τῆι ὠι[δῆι Ἀλ]κμὰν φυσ[ιολο(γεῖ)· ἐ]κθη-
σ[ό]μεθα δὲ [τὰ δ]οκοῦντα ἡ[μῖν μ]ετὰ τὰς
τῶν λοιπῶ[ν πεί]ρας. Γῆς [μὲν] Μούσα[ς
θυγατέρας ὡς Μίμνερμ[ος .]τας ἐγε[νεα-

col. III

[λόγησε]
. . . . . .
.ν.[. .
πάντων. . .[
τις ἐκ δὲ τῶ π[τέ-
κμωρ ἐγένετο τ[
μο[.] ἐντεῦθεν ει.[
πόρος ἀπὸ τῆς πορ.[. .].[
ὡς γὰρ ἤρξατο ἡ ὕλη κατασκευα[σθῆναι
ἐγένετο πόρος τις οἱονεὶ ἀρχή· λ[έγει
οὖν ὁ Ἀλκμὰν τὴν ὕλην πάν[των τεταρ-
αγμένην καὶ ἀπόητον· εἶτα [γενέ-
σθαι τινά φησιν τὸν κατασκευά[ζοντα
πάντα, εἶτα γενέσθαι [πό]ρον, τοῦ [δὲ πό-
ρου παρελθόντος ἐπακολουθῆ[σαι] τέ-
κμωρ· καὶ (ἔστιν) ὁ μ(ὲν) πόρος οἷον ἀρχή, τὸ δὲ τέ-

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[1] E. Lobel *et al.*, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XXIV* (London, 1957), pp. 52–5.

[2] C. Calame, ed., *Alcman* (Rome, 1983), pp. 104–7. In D. L. Page, ed., *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford, 1962), this is Fr. 5.2, I.22–9, II.1–29. Hereafter, fragments of Alcman are cited by their number in Page's edition, followed by '=' and their number in Calame's.

κμωρ οἱονεὶ τέλος. τῆς Θέτιδος γενο-
μένης ἀρχὴ καὶ τ̣έ[λ]ο̣[ς ταῦτ]α̣ πάντων ἐ-
γένε[τ]ο καὶ τὰ μὲ̣ν̣ πάντ̣α̣ [ὁμο]ίαν ἔχει
τὴν φύσιν τῆι τοῦ χαλκ̣ο̣ῦ̣ ὕ̣λ̣ηι, ἡ δὲ
Θέτις τ[ῆι] τ̣οῦ τεχνίτου, ὁ δὲ πόρος καὶ τὸ τέ-
κμωρ τῆι ἀρχῆι καὶ̣ τῶι τέλει. πρέσγ[υς
δ(ὲ) ἀν(τὶ) τοῦ πρεσβύτης. καὶ τρίτος σκότος·
διὰ τὸ μηδέπω μήτε ἥλιον μήτε σε-
λ]ήνην γεγονέναι ἀλλ' ἔτι ἀδιάκρι̣τ̣[ο]ν̣ (εἶναι)
τ]ὴν ὕλην· ἐγένοντο οὖν ὑπο.[.]... π̣ό-
ρος καὶ τέκμωρ καὶ σκότ[ος...].[ἅμαρ
τὲ καὶ σελάνα {καὶ τρίτον σκότος} τὰ̣ς̣ [
μαρμαρυγάς· ἅμαρ οὐ ψιλῶς ἀλλὰ
σὺν ἡλίωι· τὸ μὲ̣ν̣ πρότερο̣ν̣ ἦν ο̣κότος μό-
νον, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτ̣α διακριθέ[ντο]ς̣ αὐτοῦ

From the very beginning, this remarkable text has provoked astonishment. Lobel was surprised that it was Thetis to whom the role of cosmogonic demiurge was assigned,[3] and his surprise was shared by his first reviewers.[4] But Thetis' appropriateness has been defended by reference to her name (cf. *τίθημι*)[5] and to her status as a primordial goddess, most famous of the Nereids,[6] and the structure and many details of the cosmogonic process described here have been clarified by the citation of numerous parallels (largely from non-Greek sources or from Greek texts far later than Alcman).[7] Gradually the astonishment has subsided – indeed, Vernant has gone so far as to suggest that the only surprising thing about the choice of Thetis is that some scholars have been surprised by it[8] – and it has been replaced by a growing recognition of the importance of this fragment as a document in the evolution of Greek thought from *mythos* to *logos*:[9] thus several recent standard histories of Greek philosophy[10]

[3] Lobel, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 55.

[4] W. S. Barrett, *Gnomon* 33 (1961), 682–92, here 689; D. L. Page, *CR* 9 (1959), 15–23, here 21.

[5] H. Lloyd-Jones, *apud* C. M. Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry from Alcman to Simonides*[2] (Oxford, 1961), 26 n. 1. Cf. J. L. Penwill, 'Alkman's Cosmogony', *Apeiron* 8 (1974), 13–39, here 26–7; M. Treu, 'Licht und Leuchtendes in der archaischen griechischen Poesie', *Studium Generale* 18 (1965), 83–97, here 86; M. L. West, 'Three Presocratic Cosmologies', *CQ* 13 (1963), 154–76, here 154f.

[6] W. Burkert, rev. H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums*, *Gnomon* 35 (1963), 827–8, here 827. Cf. A. Garzya, *Studi sulla lirica greca da Alcmane al primo Impero* (Messina–Florence, 1963), here 23; G. Ricciardelli Apicella, 'La cosmogonia di Alcmane', *QUCC* 32 (1979), 7–27, here 13ff.; J.-P. Vernant, 'Thétis et le poème cosmogonique d'Alcman', pp. 38–69 in *Hommages à Marie Delcourt* (Brussels, 1970), here 41ff. (reprinted in M. Detienne et J.-P. Vernant, *Les Ruses de l'intelligence. La métis des Grecs* [Paris, 1974], 134–64); M. L. West, 'Alcman and Pythagoras', *CQ* 17 (1967), 1–15, here 3, 5–6.

[7] Besides the works cited in notes 5, 6, and 11, cf. especially H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums. Eine Geschichte der griechischen Epik, Lyrik und Prosa bis zur Mitte des fünften Jahrhunderts*[3] (Munich, 1969), pp. 183f., 290; and M. L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 206–8; also Y. Hirokawa, 'Alcman as One of the Forerunners of Philosophical Cosmogonists', *Journal of Classical Studies* [*Kyoto*] 20 (1972), 40–8 and L. A. Jelnickij, 'The Origins of the Ancient Etruscan Cosmology', *Vestnik Drevnej Istorii* 140 (1977), 121–8.

[8] Vernant, op. cit. (n. 6), 41.

[9] Cf. A. J. Voelke, 'Aux origines de la philosophie grecque: La cosmogonie d'Alcman', pp. 13–24 in *Métaphysique. Histoire de la philosophie. Festschrift F. Brunner* (Neuchâtel, 1981), here 13–14.

[10] G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*[2] (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 47–9.

and literature[11] discuss Alcman's cosmogony prominently. Yet even so, this papyrus has not lost its capacity to astonish: Calame's commentary on this fragment begins, 'Le fr. dit "cosmogonique" d'Alcman constitue certainement la plus grande surprise réservée par la publication des *P. Oxy.*'[12]

Philology, like philosophy, begins in wonder. Surprise should be taken seriously, for it has an important hermeneutic function: it signals a lack of correspondence between our horizon of expectations and some new object and thus suggests that, if we have not radically misunderstood that object, then our prior expectations must be significantly revised. Rather than discounting or merely acknowledging our astonishment at Alcman's fragment, it may be better to linger over it and analyse it closely.

What, then, is so surprising about this fragment? It would seem, at least three things:

(1) Before the publication of this papyrus nothing had ever been heard of this poem of Alcman's or indeed of any poem of Alcman's anything like it, for no later extant author ever refers to any philosophical poem of Alcman's at all, let alone to this one. This is, at the very least, quite odd. For one thing, ancient scholarship on Alcman was a lively industry: we know of treatises on the poet by Philochorus,[13] Sosibius,[14] and Alexander Polyhistor,[15] and the scholia on the Louvre Partheneion give an idea of how closely his poems were studied; yet Alcman's reputation in antiquity was as an erotic, never as a philosophical poet.[16] This silence becomes all the more remarkable when it is recalled that archaic cosmogonies were a subject of particular interest and study for the Greeks. Aristotle's review of his predecessors in *Metaphysics* A discusses Homer and Hesiod, but nowhere even hints at Alcman.[17] This cannot be because Aristotle was unfamiliar with Alcman:[18] Aristotle wrote about the disease of which Alcman died[19] and about the question of whether the poet was of Lydian or Spartan origin,[20] in the latter case almost certainly using Alcman's poems as evidence.[21] For the ancients, biographical speculation was a fundamental mode of interpretation of the poetry itself,[22] and there is no reason to suppose that Aristotle was any less familiar with Alcman's lyrics than with those of the other poets he cites and discusses in the same way, Stesichorus, Sappho, Alcaeus, Simonides, and Pindar.[23] Nor can we explain

[11] C. Segal, in P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox, ed., *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*. I: *Greek Literature* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 179.

[12] Calame, op. cit. (n. 2), pp. 437–8.

[13] *FGrHist* 328 T 1 (Testim. 41 Calame).

[14] *FGrHist* 595 F 6 (Testim. 42 Calame).

[15] *FGrHist* 273 F 95, 96 (Testim. 43 Calame).

[16] Testim. 4, 31, 34 Calame. Evidently, the many expressions of homoerotic sentiments on the part of the choruses of maidens in his poems (e.g. 1 = 3 *passim*, 3.3 = 26.61f., 37[a] = 151, 58 = 147, 59[a] = 148, 59[b] = 149, 81[b] = 150) were misconstrued as statements of personal involvement on the part of the poet himself: so Calame, op. cit. (n. 2), p. xx; of little if any value are the speculations of F. G. Sirna, 'Alcmane εὑρετὴς τῶν ἐρωτικῶν μελῶν', *Aegyptus* 53 (1973), 28–70. This is of course a typical strategy of ancient literary criticism: cf. below n. 22.

[17] *Met.* A.3.983b27–33, 4.984b23–31, 8.989a9–11. Aristotle's silence is pointed out by Penwill, op. cit. (n. 5), 13, and Ricciardelli, op. cit. (n. 6), 7f.

[18] As suggested by Penwill, op. cit. (n. 5), 13.

[19] *Hist. An.* 5.31.557a2.

[20] *P. Oxy.* 2389, Fr. 9, I.12 = PMG 13 Page.

[21] So e.g. Calame, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 357; and R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford, 1968), p. 242.

[22] Cf. in general Mary Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (Baltimore, 1981).

[23] Stesichorus: *Hist. An.* 5.9.542b25; *Rhet.* 2.20.1393b9, 21.1395a1, 3.11.1412a22. Sappho: *Rhet.* 1.9.1367a8, 2.23.1398b12, 27. Alcaeus: *Pol.* 3.14.1285a7, *Rhet.* 1.9.1367a9, Fr. 75 Rose[3]. Simonides: 16 references. Pindar: *Rhet.* 1.7.1364a28, 2.24.1401a17, Fr. 75 Rose[3]. Aristotle seems never to refer to Ibycus, Anacreon, or Bacchylides.

Aristotle's silence by his having excluded poets from his metaphysical precursors: in his *Poetics*, Aristotle emphasises that metre does not determine whether a writer like Empedocles is to be classified as a philosopher or a poet but that only content does,[24] and Aristotle himself was the author of a philosophical paean to ἀρετή[25] and might well have been particularly interested in examples of the expression of philosophical doctrines in lyric metres. Not only is Aristotle's silence strange; what is more, that silence is never broken after him. For the ancient cosmogonists and early Presocratics continued to be a favourite theme for the doxographic tradition, yet no doxographer ever mentions Alcman: the only time Alcman's name ever appears in Diels' edition of the Greek doxographers is as an error in the manuscripts for Alcmaeon of Croton.[26] For all we know, Alcman's cosmogonic fragment seems to have dropped into the well of later Greek culture without ever making a splash.

(2) Not only is the very fact of Alcman's philosophising, but also its particular nature, quite remarkable. For Alcman's cosmogony evidently makes use of the figure of Thetis as a personal demiurge who creates the world by organising the disordered mass of its primal material. What is astonishing here is not so much that it is Thetis who plays the role of demiurge but rather that there is a demiurge at all. For elsewhere early Greek cosmogonic speculation never uses as a conceptual model the activity of the craftsman, but instead always that of biological reproduction.[27] An enormous gap separates the mythical genealogies of Hesiod's and Pherecydes' *Theogonies* from such a demiurgic model – a gap not only of conception, but also, it had seemed, of time. For, according to Aristotle, the earliest thinkers, poets and philosophers alike, all shared the defect of recognising only a material cause and hence were unable to provide a principle of movement which could explain how out of the eternal stasis of primal matter the single unique event of creation could ever have occurred.[28] It had generally been thought that Anaxagoras was the first, in the fifth century, to try to confront this problem by separating off the ordering νοῦς from the matter it orders,[29] followed by Diogenes of Apollonia on νόησις,[30] and that the image of the creator as craftsman was in particular a contribution of Socrates to Greek philosophy, recorded in Xenophon[31] and taken over and transformed in Plato's *Timaeus*.[32] Yet even Plato's cosmic demiurge is limited in his creative ordering by the requirement that he keep his gaze fixed on the eternal Ideas,[33] while there is no indication that Alcman's Thetis is constrained by any such rules: indeed, so sovereign and independent an ordering of primal matter as Alcman's cosmogonic fragment seems to describe is not found again in Greek thought before the Stoics, for whom this was a central doctrine.[34] The philosophical acumen with which Alcman recognised the difficulties analysed by Aristotle and the prescience with which he anticipated the solutions found for them

[24] *Poet.* 1.1447b13–20.

[25] *PMG* 842.

[26] H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci* (Berlin, 1879), 386 test. b6; cf. e.g. 590.22ff., 610.11ff. In contrast, Pindar did write a cosmogonic hymn in which he recounted the creation of the world and the birth of the Muses (*Hymn* 1, cf. B. Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes. Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Griechen*[4] [Göttingen, 1975], pp. 83ff.): and Theophrastus cited a fragment of it in his Φυσικῶν δόξαι (Pind. Fr. 33e Sn.-M. = Theophr. *Phys. opin.* Fr. 12, *Dox. Gr.* 486.27–487.5 Diels).

[27] Cf. in general H. Schwabl, 'Weltschöpfung', *RE* Suppl. 9 (Stuttgart, 1962); and W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*. I: *The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 142ff.; also Penwill, op. cit. (n. 5), 13 and 31 n. 4.

[28] *Metaph.* A.2.984a18ff. [29] 59 B12 D–K. [30] 64 B3 D–K.

[31] *Mem.* 1.4.5, 7; 4.3.13.

[32] Cf. Guthrie, op. cit. (n. 27), V: *The Later Plato and the Academy* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 253–5. [33] *Tim.* 28aff. [34] *SVF* 1.85ff., 2.299ff., 579ff.

two or even three centuries later are more than surprising: they are miraculous. A poet of such capacities deserves to be called not only a philosopher, but a prophet.

(3) Finally, and most surprisingly of all, it is astonishing that, of all the lyric poets, it should be Alcman to whom this cosmogonic fragment must be attributed. For Alcman's poetry, more than that of any other of the surviving archaic Greek poets, is intimately and inextricably bound up in religious ritual, in Alcman's case in the religious ceremonies of ancient Sparta.[35] The comparative material studied especially by Calame[36] has yielded a fairly clear picture of these ceremonies: rites of passage, rituals of initiation whereby pubescent girls made the transition from childhood to adulthood and were presented to the community at large as newly eligible candidates for marriage. How did Alcman's partheneia fit into this ritual context? The highly fragmentary evidence seems to permit the generalisation that his poems normally began with an invocation to the Muses and then went on to narrate a myth, provide gnomic reflections inspired by that myth, and then to conclude with a section alluding with a wealth of explicit detail to the circumstances of the particular ceremony at which they were sung; and it is noteworthy that, again at least according to our fragmentary evidence, Alcman seems in general to have composed each of these parts in such a way as to bind them as closely as possible to that ceremony. This is obvious in the case of the final, circumstantial section, as well as in that of the opening invocation of the Muses, which designates the singing of the poem as a legitimate part of the religious ritual; but it is no less true for the gnomes, which provide important instruction to the girls, at this critical juncture of their lives, concerning the moral foundations of human existence, and at the same time, by means of the privileged instance of the girls, invite the community as a whole to reflect upon what that instance reveals about the relations between men and gods. But what of the myths? Unfortunately, the mythic sections of Alcman's poems have suffered more grievously in the course of their transmission than any other; yet the surviving evidence strongly suggests the preponderance among Alcman's myths of stories of erotic violence, of abduction and rape.[37] One type of pertinence such myths might have had to rituals

[35] It is symptomatic that most of the mysteries of the Louvre Partheneion are due, not to any obscurity in the poet's language, but rather to our ignorance of the ritual which that poem accompanied; this is quite misunderstood by Penwill, op. cit. (n. 5), 14.

[36] C. Calame, *Les Choeurs de jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque.* I: *Morphologie, fonction religieuse et sociale.* II: *Alcman* (Rome, 1977); idem ed., *Rito e poesia corale in Grecia. Guida storica e critica* (Bari, 1977), e.g. p. 112; cf. idem, op. cit. (n. 2), pp. xvi–xxi.

[37] Thus, in the Louvre Partheneion, the best preserved of Alcman's poems, the highly fragmentary first twelve lines of the papyrus recounted the story of the combat between the Tyndarids and the Hippocoontids (1.1–12 = 3.1–12), and the scholarly consensus is that the animosities were almost certainly due to the erotic rivalry between these heroes reported by other sources (cf. D. L. Page, *Alcman. The Partheneion* [Oxford, 1951], pp. 31–3; Calame, op. cit. [n. 2], p. 313, and op. cit. [n. 36], 2.52ff., especially pp. 55–8); and after the gnome there was a second myth of which even less can be read (22–35), but still enough to permit most recent scholars to agree that Alcman told of the destruction of Otos and Ephialtes, punished among other reasons for their attempt to rape Artemis (cf. especially P. Janni, *La cultura di Sparta arcaica. Richerche* I [Rome, 1965], pp. 69–71; Calame, op. cit. [n. 2], pp. 320–1, with further references). So too, in other poems Alcman recounted the combats between the Dioscuri and the Apharetids, rivals for the daughters of Leucippus (8.1–6 = 20, and probably 5.1 = 79), and the combats between the Dioscuri and Aphidnos arising from the attempt of the Dioscuri to rescue Helen after she had been abducted by Theseus (21 = 210); other Alcmanic myths that may similarly have emphasised the theme of erotic violence are those of Paris (70[b] = 98, 77 = 97) and Circe (80 = 102). To be sure, Alcman seems also to have referred to apparently non-erotic myths on occasion: 5.49 = 83, 7 = 19, 50(b) = 124, 56 = 125, 68 = 95, 74 = 101, 79 = 100, 87(d) = 103; but none of these is certain to have been the central myth of one of his partheneia.

celebrating girls' sexual maturation is obvious: in some cases they could have provided an implicit warning against illicit sexual unions and praise for licit ones and thereby furnished a strong religious argument against those men (or girls) who might have wished to take advantage of their newly acquired sexual ripeness and in favour of the legitimate marriages upon which the survival of the community depended.[38] Now this is the context within which Alcman's cosmogonic fragment becomes most peculiar. For it is clear that Alcman's poem was a partheneion: it seems to have come from the first two books of the Alexandrian edition of his poems, which contained exclusively partheneia;[39] it certainly began with an invocation to the Muses (II.23–4) and was performed by a chorus of Dymainai (II.24–5), maidens from one of the three Dorian tribes of Sparta who also sang at least three other poems of Alcman's (11 = 24; 4.5 = 61; 10[b] = 82a). If so, Alcman's cosmogonic speculations (which could hardly have formed part of the invocation, gnomes, or circumstantial section) most likely occupied the place of the myth;[40] but if they did, they were a very strange substitute indeed. Whatever could have induced Alcman to place such a rebarbative doctrine in the tender mouths of the Dymainian maidens? Either we must attribute to Alcman, that most ceremonial of poets, a quite unparalleled degree of freedom from the ceremonial context in this instance; or we must invent unattested social implications of such cosmogonic systems.[41]

Perhaps, taken individually, each of these three grounds for perplexity could be dealt with by some kind of *ad hoc* explanation. But their cumulative weight is such as to raise the question whether in fact Alcman's cosmogonic fragment is everything it is taken to be. What, then, do we really know about Alcman's poem?

From Lobel on, scholars have recognised that two serious constraints limit the amount of information we can securely derive about Alcman's poem from this papyrus.[42] (1) Obviously, the papyrus provides, not Alcman's poem, but a commentary on it. Yet since the commentator was evidently writing for readers who had the poem to hand and is therefore hardly likely to have been guilty of wholesale fabrication, it would seem that his summary can be accepted as a reliable general guide to the contents of the poem. But (2) the commentator's language, especially such terms as ὕλη (III.7, 9, 18, 24), ἀρχή (8, 14, 16, 20), and τέλος (15, 16, 20), suggests that he is presenting Alcman's doctrine by means of philosophical concepts developed much later and of a general Aristotelian flavour. Hence, it is thought, the specifics of the language in which Alcman's system was couched cannot be reconstructed; but, on the other hand, there is widespread confidence that a fairly clear picture of the general outline of that system can be attained.

Is such confidence in fact justified? The commentator himself asserts, 'We shall set forth our own opinions, after the attempts of all the others' (II.26–8), and this can only mean that his interpretation is not self-evident: for if it were, it would be hard to explain why all his predecessors had failed to see it. Clearly, Alcman's poem was regarded as providing the interpreter with serious difficulties. What kind of difficulties were these? In the immediately preceding sentence, our commentator had written, 'In this ode Alcman φυσιολογεῖ, "speaks about nature", or φυσικός ἐστι, "is a natural

[38] On the pedagogic function of Alcman's myths, cf. Calame, op. cit. (n. 36), 1.410f.
[39] Cf. Calame, op. cit. (n. 2), pp. 431, 442.
[40] So Calame, ibid., p. 442.
[41] So Calame, loc. cit.
[42] E.g. Barrett, loc. cit. (n. 4); Fränkel, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 290 n. 2; Lobel, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 55; Page, loc. cit. (n. 4); Ricciardelli, op. cit. (n. 6), 19; Schwabl, op. cit. (n. 27), 1467; West, op. cit. (n. 6), 4.

philosopher"' (depending on how the lacuna in line 26 is supplemented),[43] and it is most natural to suppose our commentator to have meant these two sentences to be understood together. That is, it is what Alcman has to say about nature to which certainly our commentator (and perhaps some or all of his predecessors) addresses himself, for it is there that his poem's interest and difficulty are evidently thought to lie. Hence, in order to decide how to take what our commentator says about Alcman's poem, we must first understand what he thought its subject and character were; and to understand this we must first clarify what he means when he says that Alcman φυσιολογεῖ or φυσικός ἐστι.

Unanimously, scholars seem to have taken this word (whatever it is) to mean that, in the view of our commentator, Alcman was intentionally and explicitly offering a theory of nature of the same general kind and in the same general way as did the early Presocratic philosophers. Yet what evidence is there that the word could mean that here? Aristotle, to be sure, often refers to the Presocratics, particularly the Ionian philosophers, as οἱ φυσικοί or οἱ φυσιολόγοι;[44] but his usage does not justify this interpretation of the Alcman papyrus, since, for Aristotle, Alcman would never have counted as one of the Ionian Presocratics like Thales and his successors, but instead as one of the archaic poets, like Orpheus, Homer, and Hesiod, for whom Aristotle uses a different technical term, οἱ θεολόγοι or οἱ θεολογήσαντες.[45] Of course, our commentator need not have been constrained by the fine points of Aristotelian usage: his deployment of other Aristotelian concepts later in his commentary is, at the very least, idiosyncratic. But even outside of Aristotle I know of no evidence for the use of φύσις words, applied to archaic poets, to mean that in some text they were intentionally and explicitly providing a philosophy of nature. But what else could such a word mean here?

There is in fact another, much better attested usage of φύσις words in the context of the interpretation of archaic poetry, but it seems not to be widely recognised and is not indicated as such in the standard lexica. In this usage, the word is a *terminus technicus* of one kind of allegorical interpretation and means that while the surface level of an archaic poetic text is a mythical narrative, what the allegorist takes to be its real meaning is only to be found at a deeper, hidden level, in a concealed philosophical doctrine about some natural phenomenon. There are a large number of passages, in scholia and in other technical discussions of archaic poetry, in which φυσικός, φυσιολογέω, and a variety of related words are applied to such physical allegorical interpretation of Greek myths; and this is obviously the genre of passages to which the Alcman papyrus belongs. These passages can be divided more or less roughly into two groups. In the first group, these words designate the activity of the interpreter; the following are some representative examples:[46]

[43] F. D. Harvey, 'Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 2390 and Early Spartan History', *JHS* 87 (1967), 62–73, here 69–70, criticised Lobel's φυ̣ς̣[ιολο(γεῖ) and proposed instead φυ̣ς̣[ικός (ἐστι); parallels in support of Lobel's supplement are provided by Ricciardelli, op. cit. (n. 6), 7 n. 2. In terms of the argument of the present article, either supplement is acceptable; but the parallels offered below may make φυ̣ς̣[ικός (ἐστι) slightly preferable.

[44] He also occasionally uses such evidently synonymous expressions as οἱ πρῶτοι φυσιολογήσαντες, οἱ πρότερον φυσιολόγοι and οἱ ἀρχαῖοι φυσιολόγοι; cf. H. Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus* (Berlin, 1870), ss.vv.

[45] Cf. Idem.; and W. D. Ross, ed., *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Oxford, 1924), 1.130 ad A.3.983b29.

[46] Cf. also φυσικῶς: Plut. *De Daed. Plat.* 4, Schol. Arat. 1 (40.6ff. Martin). φυσικώτερον: Schol. Pind. *N.* 4.101b, 107b. κατὰ τὸν φυσικὸν λόγον: Schol. Pind. *I.* 7.3a. φυσικὴ θεωρία:

(1) Schol. Pind. *P.* 3.177: *Σεμέλη δὲ ἢ κατὰ τὸ μυθικὸν ἡ τὰ μέλη τοῦ σώματος ὑπὸ τῶν βροντῶν διασαλεύσασα, ἢ κατὰ τὸ φυσικὸν ὅτι σείει τὰ μέλη τῶν οἰνουργούντων αὐτὸν ὁ Διόνυσος, ἐν ᾧ τοὺς βότρυς ἀλλόμενοι πατοῦσιν· ἡ δὲ Θυώνη κατὰ τὸ μυθικόν, διὰ τὸ κεραυνοῖς τεθραῦσθαι. κατὰ δὲ τὸ φυσικόν, ὅτι πυρώδης ἡ οὐσία τοῦ οἴνου.*

(2) Schol. Hom. *Il.* 5.722–31: *⟨"Ηβη δ' ἀμφ' ὀχέεσφι – κάλ' ἔβαλε χρύσει':⟩ τὸν δίφρον τῆς "Ηρας οὕτως ἡ Δημὼ φυσιολογεῖ· "Ηραν γάρ φησιν εἶναι τὸν ἀέρα. τὴν δὲ φύσιν ἐκτιθέμενον τοῦ στοιχείου φησὶ τὸν ποιητήν. τὰ μὲν περίγεια αὐτοῦ μέρη, ἅπερ ἐστὶ ζοφωδέστερα καὶ πολὺ τὸ γεῶδες ἔχοντα, ταῖς παχυτέραις ὕλαις †εἰκάζει†, χαλκῷ τε καὶ σιδήρῳ.*

(3) Schol. Hom. *Il.* 1.399–406: *δεῖ τοίνυν φυσικόν τινα μᾶλλον ἐν τούτοις ὑπονοεῖν λόγον· Δία γάρ φησι τὴν ἄκρατον θερμασίαν, τὴν καὶ τοῦ ζῆν καὶ τοῦ εἶναι ἡμᾶς αἰτίαν, Ποσειδῶνα τὸ ὕδωρ, "Ηραν τὸν ἀέρα, 'Αθηνᾶν τὴν γῆν, Βριάρεων τὸν ἥλιον (πάντων γὰρ τῶν ἄστρων φωτεινότατός ἐστι), Θέτιν δὲ τὴν θέσιν καὶ φύσιν τοῦ παντός.*

(4) Cic. *De nat. deor.* 1.15.41: et haec quidem in primo libro de natura deorum; in secundo autem volt Orphei Musaei Hesiodi Homerique fabellas accommodare ad ea quae ipse primo libro de deis inmortalibus dixerit, ut etiam veterrimi poetae, qui haec ne suspicati quidem sint, Stoici fuisse videantur. quem Diogenes Babylonius consequens in eo libro qui inscribitur de Minerva partum Iovis ortumque virginis ad physiologiam traducens deiungit a fabula.

Here the commentator recognises that he has available a variety of interpretative strategies, one of which consists in the allegorical reduction of the mythic fable into its supposed natural scientific truth. Not infrequently, as in passage 1, an explicit contrast is drawn between the physical and the mythical interpretation, apparently without recognition of the fact that the former is allegorical and the latter not; modes of exegesis which, for us, operate on entirely different levels are thereby correlated as though they were equivalent alternatives. The second group, in which the interpreter applies these words, not to his own activity, but to the alleged activity of the poet, is more interesting still. These are some examples:[47]

(1) Plut. *De primo frig.* 14.950e: *τὸ γὰρ ὕδωρ ὁ μὲν Αἰσχύλος εἰ καὶ τραγικῶς ἀλλ' ἀληθῶς εἶπε* (fr. 360)

'παύσυβριν δίκην πυρός'

"Ομηρος δὲ (Φ 342,435) *τῷ ποταμῷ τὸν "Ηφαιστον καὶ τῷ Ποσειδῶνι τὸν 'Απόλλωνα κατὰ τὴν μάχην φυσικῶς μᾶλλον ἢ μυθικῶς ἀντέταξεν.*

(2) Heraclit. 14.3: *"Ομηρος δὲ καὶ σφόδρα φυσικῶς τὴν περὶ τὰ λοιμικὰ τῶν παθημάτων συντυχίαν διὰ τούτου παρίστησιν· αἱ γὰρ ἐμπειρίαι ἰατρικῆς τε καὶ φιλοσοφίας ἔχουσαι δι' ἀκριβοῦς παρατηρήσεως ἔγνωσαν ἐν ταῖς λοιμικαῖς νόσοις τὸ δεινὸν τῶν τετραπόδων ζώων ἀρχόμενον.*

(3) Heraclit. 58.4: *Τίς οὖν οὕτω μέμηνεν, ὡς θεοὺς μαχομένους ἀλλήλοις παρεισάγειν, 'Ομήρου φυσικῶς ταῦτα δι' ἀλληγορίας θεολογήσαντος.*

Heraclit. 16.5. *φυσικὴ ἀπόδοσις*: Philo, *De fuga et inventione* 108 (3.133.11 Cohn–Wendland). *physica ratio*: *SVF* 2.313.11. *physici*: Servius ad *Aen.* 1.47. *φυσιολογία*: Heraclit. 72.1. *φυσιογνωμονέω*: Philo, *De somniis* 1.164 (3.240.2). *φυσιολογέω*: Diod. Sic. 3.62.3, Philo, *De mutatione nominum* 62 (3.168.9), Schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.1098–1102a. This usage is also extremely frequent among the Church Fathers, e.g. Tertullian, *Ad nat.* (*physiologice* 2.12.17; *argumentationes physiologicae* 2.4.13; *physicum theologiae genus* 2.12.14), Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* (*φυσιολογία* 3 Praef. 1, 5; 2.1, 3; 6.2, 7; *φυσικὴ θεολογία* 3.1; *φυσικωτέρα θεολογία* 3.6.1; *φυσιολογέω* 3.15.1), Augustine, *De civ. Dei* (*interpretationes physicae* 7.5; *interpretationes physiologicae* 7.5; *interpretationes naturales* 7.18; *physiologice* 7.27.2; *naturales rationes* 7.33).

[47] Cf. also *φυσικῶς*: Heraclit. 8.5, 15.2, 43.7, 46.1, 66.10; Philo, *Legum alleg.* 2.5 (1.91.11). *φυσικώτερος*: Heraclit. 25.1, 56.1; Philo, *Legum alleg.* 1.37 (1.70.11). *physice*: Servius ad *Aen.* 10.5. *φυσικοί*: Heraclit. 22.2. *φυσικὴ θεωρία*: Heraclit. 25.12, 36.1. *λόγος φυσικώτατος*: Philo, *Quod deus sit immutabilis* 77 (2.73.19), *De plantatione* 120 (2.157.8). *physica ratio*: Servius ad *Aen.* 1.52, 78, 142. *φυσιολογέω*: Georg. Syncel., *Eclog. Chron.* 30.9–10 Mosshammer (cf. Alex. Polyhist. *FGrHist* 273 F 79). *φυσιολογία*: Philo, *De somniis* 1.120 (3.230.24).

(4) Diogenes Laertius 7.187–8 (*SVF* 2.1071): *εἰσὶ δὲ οἳ κατατρέχουσι τοῦ Χρυσίππου ὡς πολλὰ αἰσχρῶς καὶ ἀρρήτως ἀναγεγραφότος. ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῷ περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων φυσιολόγων συγγράμματι αἰσχρῶς τὰ περὶ τὴν Ἥραν καὶ τὸν Δία ἀναπλάττει, λέγων κατὰ τους ἑξακοσίους στίχους ἃ μηδεὶς ἠτυχηκὼς μολύνειν τὸ στόμα εἴποι ἄν. αἰσχροτάτην γάρ, φασί, ταύτην ἀναπλάττει ἱστορίαν, εἰ καὶ ἐπαινεῖ ὡς φυσικήν, χαμαιτύπαις μᾶλλον πρέπουσαν ἢ θεοῖς, ἔτι τε καὶ παρὰ τοῖς περὶ πινάκων γράψασιν ⟨οὐ⟩ κατακεχωρισμένην· μήτε γὰρ παρὰ Πολέμωνι μήτε παρ' Ὑψικράτει, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ παρ' Ἀντιγόνῳ εἶναι, ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δὲ πεπλάσθαι.*

(5) Plut. *De Daed. Plat.* 1: *ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἡ παλαιὰ φυσιολογία καὶ παρ' Ἕλλησι καὶ βαρβάροις λόγος ἦν φυσικὸς ἐγκεκαλυμμένος μύθοις, τὰ πολλὰ δι' αἰνιγμάτων καὶ ὑπονοιῶν ἐπίκρυφος, καὶ μυστηριώδης θεολογία τά τε λαλούμενα τῶν σιγωμένων ἀσαφέστερα τοῖς πολλοῖς ἔχουσα καὶ τὰ σιγώμενα τῶν λαλουμένων ὑποπτότερα, κατάδηλόν ἐστιν τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς ἔπεσι καὶ τοῖς Αἰγυπτιακοῖς καὶ Φρυγίοις λόγοις.*

Here the interpreter seems so convinced of the truth of his allegorical interpretation that he speaks as though he were not applying this technique to an authentically mythical text, but simply rediscovering the real meaning which the poet had had in mind when he had written his poem but had, for whatever reason, concealed. Obviously, it is easy to slip from the former usage to the latter, and it is worth noting that some authors – Heraclitus, Plutarch, Servius – are found in both groups. But, just as obviously, the passages in the second group are making a stronger claim than are those in the first: when Heraclitus or Plutarch writes that Homer has composed a particular passage *φυσικῶς* (Texts 1–3), when Chrysippus entitles his book of allegorical interpretations *περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων φυσιολόγων* (Text 4),[48] a conceptual border has been crossed with a casualness we would do well not to imitate: in such passages, the interpretation has substituted for the text. If one of these passages had been preserved on a papyrus while the poetic text it discusses had been lost, modern scholars would be in the same position as they are with the Alcman papyrus and would run the danger of mistaking the interpretation for the text – without even knowing it.

The evidence of these passages is compelling. At the very least, they raise the possibilities that the poem of Alcman's that our commentator is interpreting was not a philosophical poem in any sense that we would accept, but was instead a mythic narrative (for physical allegory was applied exclusively to myths), and that our commentator is not just a philosophically minded interpreter, but more specifically a physical allegorist: so too, another fragment of Alcman's poetry (57 = 93) receives a physical allegorical treatment at the hands of Plutarch and the other authors who cite it. Cosmogonic interpretations of myths were a favourite weapon in the arsenal of the ancient allegorist, for they redeemed the criticised poem by attributing to it the very loftiest of philosophical contents:[49] might not our papyrus belong to the same tradition? If it does, then on the one hand lines 25–8 will acquire added point, for they will mean, 'In this ode [perhaps as opposed to others], what Alcman *really* is is not a mythic poet, but rather a natural philosopher [or: what he is *really* talking about is not gods and goddesses, but nature], and we will set forth our own opinions on what he *really* meant, after the attempts of all the others'. But on the other hand, would we not thereby preclude any chance of reconstructing Alcman's poem? For if that poem contained, not a cosmogony, but a myth, how can this cosmogonic interpretation serve as the basis for reconstructing it? If this interpretation was in fact an allegory, will we ever know what it was an allegory of?

All is not lost: for it is certain that Alcman's poem told of Thetis (III.15, 19); and

[48] Apparently the same work is referred to at *SVF* 2.212.38f. under the title *περὶ ἀρχαίας φυσικῆς*.

[49] Cf. F. Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris, 1956), pp. 155–86.

the fact that it is no longer necessary to attribute to her a demiurgic role in a philosophical cosmogony means that instead some appropriate mythic role can be sought for her in this poem. But which one? Cornutus provides a cosmogonic allegorical interpretation of the Homeric myth according to which it was Thetis who saved Zeus when the other gods tried to bind him.[50] But the details of Cornutus' cosmogony are not at all close to those of the Alcman commentator, and above all it is difficult to imagine how this myth would have been any more relevant to the cultic circumstances of the partheneion's performance than would have been the philosophical cosmogony described in the Alcman papyrus. Instead one would expect a myth of erotic violence, of attempted rape, along the lines of the Louvre Partheneion and the other texts discussed above.

There is, in fact, such a myth: the one according to which, when Peleus sought to ravish Thetis, she resisted by metamorphosing herself into various shapes, until eventually she gave up and yielded. Homer does not recount this story,[51] but Hesiod does,[52] and the frequency with which it appears in Pindar,[53] the Greek tragedians,[54] and later Greek and Latin poets and prose writers[55] makes it one of the most familiar Greek myths; so too, it is a very popular theme for vase painters from the archaic age on.[56] The circumstantial relevance of such a myth is evident: but could it have provoked this kind of allegorical interpretation?

At least from Plato[57] to Proclus,[58] such divine metamorphoses were a favourite target of philosophical critics of the archaic poets: after all, what kind of goddess turns herself into a cuttle-fish? And, predictably, such criticisms were answered by allegorical interpretations designed to show that the poets had been guilty of no impiety, but instead had concealed a mystical and highly edifying doctrine under the mythic raiments. The Pindar scholia offer one such allegorical defence of a myth of Thetis' transformations:[59] here the fact that, according to Pindar, Thetis transformed herself into 'all-powerful fire' admits of the 'more physical' explanation that the poet is alluding to the doctrine that the essence of the gods is fiery.[60] Apparently, this is the only surviving allegorical interpretation of the myth of Thetis' metamorphoses; but this is not surprising, since that myth is found only in poets later than Homer and the main focus of the activity of ancient allegorists was usually Homer. Only if Homer had recounted Thetis' transformations would one expect to find a rich tradition of allegorisation of the myth.

But if Homer did not recount Thetis' metamorphoses, he did, in the *Odyssey*,

[50] *Compend. Theol.* 17 (27.2–17 Lang). Cf. Buffière, op. cit. (n. 49), pp. 176–7.

[51] Cf. Schol. ad *Il.* 18.434a Erbse, Eustath. 1152.9f. *ad loc.*

[52] Fr. 210 M.–W.

[53] *N.* 3.35, 4.62. Cf. J. Kaiser, *Peleus und Thetis. Eine sagengeschichtliche Untersuchung.* I (Munich, 1912), pp. 44–63.

[54] Soph. Fr. 150, 618 Radt; Eur. *Andr.* 1253, *IA* 705, 1040, Fr. 1093 Nauck[2].

[55] Hdt. 7.191; Xen. *Cyn.* 1.8; Apollodor. *Bibl.* 3.13.4f.; Ovid, *Met.* 11.237ff.; Val. Flacc. 1.130; Paus. 5.18.5; Quint. Sm. 3.618–24, 4.131ff.; Tzetzes Schol. ad Lycophr. 175, 178, *Chiliad.* 4.519; Eustath. 1685.64 ad *Od.* 11.285.

[56] Cf. F. Brommer, *Vasenlisten zur griechischen Heldensage*[3] (Marburg, 1973), pp. 321–9, *Denkmälerlisten zur griechischen Heldensage* (Marburg, 1976), 3.365–7; E. Paribeni in *Enciclopedia dell'arte antica classica e orientale* (Rome, 1958–73), s.v. Teti; K. Schneider, *Thetis im Verwandlungskampf mit Peleus in der griechischen Vasenmalerei* (Breslau, 1941).

[57] *Rep.* 2.381bff. (especially 381d5: Proteus and Thetis).

[58] *In Remp.* 1.109.20 (Proteus and Thetis), 112.14–113.19 (Proteus) Kroll.

[59] Schol. ad *N.* 4.101b.

[60] That this whole myth in Pindar's Fourth Nemean was most probably the subject of an extended physical allegorical interpretation is suggested by the passage in the subsequent lemma (Schol. ad *N.* 4.107b) in which another 'more physical' explanation is cited, this time so as to be refuted.

recount Proteus'; and, for this latter passage, Heraclitus provides an extensive allegorical interpretation which is epitomised in the Odyssey scholia, criticised in Eustathius, and interestingly varied in Sextus Empiricus:[61]

(1) τὴν γοῦν προμήτορα τῶν ὅλων ὑφίσταται γένεσιν, ἀφ' ἧς τὸ πᾶν ῥιζωθὲν εἰς ὃ νῦν βλέπομεν ἦκει κατάστημα. (2) παλαιοὶ γὰρ ἦσάν ποτε χρόνοι, καθ' οὓς ἀτύπωτον ἦ ὑπόλιμνον ἦν, οὐδέπω κεκριμένοις χαρακτῆρσιν εἰς τέλειον ἥκουσα μορφῆς· (3) οὔτε γὰρ γῇ τῶν ὅλων ἑστίᾳ κέντρον ἐπεπήγει βέβαιον οὔτ' οὐρανὸς περὶ τὴν ἀίδιον φορὰν ἱδρυμένος ἐκυκλεῖτο, πάντα δ' ἦν ἀνήλιος ἠρεμία καὶ κατηφοῦσα σιγή, καὶ πλέον οὐδὲν ἦν [ἢ] κεχυμένης ὕλης· (4) ἄμορφος γὰρ ἀργία, πρὶν ἡ δημιουργὸς ἁπάντων καὶ κοσμοτόκος ἀρχὴ σωτήριον ἐλκύσασα τῷ βίῳ τύπον τὸν κόσμον ἀπέδωκε τῷ κόσμῳ· (5) διεζεύγνυ τὸν μὲν οὐρανὸν γῆς, ἐχώριζε δὲ τὴν ἤπειρον θαλάττης, τέτταρα δὲ στοιχεῖα, τῶν ὅλων ῥίζα καὶ γέννα, ἐν τάξει τὴν ἰδίαν μορφὴν ἐκομίζετο· (6) τούτων δὲ προμηθῶς κιρναμένων ὁ θεὸς ⟨. . .⟩ μηδεμιᾶς οὔσης διακρίσεως περὶ τὴν ἄμορφον ὕλην.

Heraclit. *Quaest. Hom.* 65

Heraclitus allegorises the metamorphoses of Proteus as a concealed cosmogony: the god's transformations into various shapes represent the ordering of an originally disorganised primal matter into the recognisable shapes of our world. It is evident that Heraclitus' allegory and our Alcman commentary are very closely related. Where the papyrus speaks of the ὕλη of all things as being convulsed and unformed (ἀπόητον III.9–10) and says that originally the ὕλη was unseparated (ἀδιάκριτον 23–4, cf. 29), Heraclitus refers to ancient times, when the universe was formless (ἀτύπωτον) and had not yet received the distinguishing marks (κεκριμένοις χαρακτῆρσιν) which would permit it to reach its perfect form but was instead nothing more than confused matter (κεχυμένης ὕλης 65.2–3). And where the Alcman commentator says that, at a certain point, someone came into being who organised (κατασκευασθῆναι 7, κατασκευάζοντα 11) this mass, the Homer commentator speaks more specifically of the craftsman of all things and generative principle of the cosmos, who separated heaven from earth, land from sea, and brought the four elements into their proper form and structure (65.4–5), while beforehand there had been no separation (διακρίσεως) in the ἄμορφος ὕλη (65.6). If, by some disastrous miracle, this paragraph of Heraclitus had been saved while all of Homer had been lost, what modern scholar would dare to suggest that Homer had written narratives of gods and heroes?

Further striking affinities between the Alcman papyrus and the ancient allegorical traditions will be examined below. But it should already be clear that Alcman's 'cosmogonic' fragment stands a very good chance of never having been cosmogonic at all, but that instead in all likelihood it contained a straightforward myth. We seem to have lost a crucial document in the development of the Greek spirit and to have moved backwards from *logos* to *mythos*. But we have gained on the one hand the shadowy outlines of a new mythic poem of Alcman's, which in the second section of this article I shall very tentatively try to reconstruct, and on the other a very good insight into the techniques of an ordinary ancient allegorist. That man, our anonymous Alcman commentator, is the hero of this story, and it is only fitting that we return to him in the third and last section.

II

Most scholars have already recognised how difficult and uncertain the reconstruction of Alcman's original text on the basis of this commentary must be, and some have

[61] Cf. Schol. ad *Od.* 4.384, Eustath. 1503.7ff. *ad loc.*, Sextus Emp. *Adv. Math.* 9.5; and Buffière, op. cit. (n. 49), pp. 179–86.

even seen affinities between several of its phrases and the allegorical tradition;[62] but if we are driven to conclude that that commentary in fact in its totality offers an allegorical interpretation, any attempt to draw conclusions from it about Alcman's poem must become all the more speculative and tentative. In this second section I shall try to show that everything in the Alcman commentary is compatible with a non-cosmogonic poem. Necessarily, the suggestions that follow are extremely tentative. But, methodologically, they need not be any stronger than that to show that Alcman's poem may well not have been cosmogonic after all.

It is certain that Alcman began this poem with an invocation to the Muses (the coronis is extant), as he seems to have begun all the other partheneia for which there is evidence.[63] He will have entreated the Muses, above all other gods, to come to the ceremony and lend their support to the chorus of Dymainian maidens.[64] And he will thereby have addressed the Muses as the daughters of Earth (28–9). If his poem had indeed been cosmogonic, one could adopt the suggestion made by some scholars that Alcman had used this genealogy, which derives the Muses from a primordial figure, to justify his poem on the beginnings of things;[65] but in fact there is no more reason to believe that Alcman did have such a philosophical motivation than to think that Mimnermus, who apparently offered the same genealogy, did too. Both poets may simply have wished to give a prestigious pedigree for the Muses of their poetry.

After this invocation will have come the myth of Peleus' attempt to ravish Thetis. It was suggested above that similar myths seem to have featured frequently in Alcman's partheneia and that one way in which they might sometimes have been relevant to the cultic circumstances was by an implicit condemnation of erotic violence. But of course there is no reason why such myths could only be moralised in one direction, and, in the present poem, a consideration of the outcome of the myth – Peleus' success and the celebrated wedding, to which even the gods came – makes it quite likely that the general point Alcman wanted to make with this narrative was not that such violence as Peleus attempted should be condemned, but rather that Thetis' resistance was exaggerated and Peleus' fearlessness rewarded, since their union was fated to be. So far as the general point of the myth goes, this hypothesis seems reasonable, if uncertain; but the precise details of Alcman's treatment of the myth seem to have been lost beyond recovery. It must be supposed that Alcman indicated that Thetis reacted to Peleus' assault by metamorphosing herself, for otherwise there would have been no foothold for the commentator's allegory; but whether Alcman indicated what shapes Thetis assumed, and if so which ones, cannot be decided with certainty. According to Pindar, Thetis transformed herself into fire, a lion, and other shapes;[66]

[62] E.g. Burkert, op. cit. (n. 6), 828; already Lobel, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 55 n. 1; Penwill, op. cit. (n. 5), 13; West, op. cit. (n. 6), 4.

[63] Cf. 14(a) = 4; 8.7–11 = 21; 27 = 84; 28 = 85; probably 3.1 = 26.1–12; near the beginning, 30 = 86; probably Apollo, 51 = 1. So too, Pindar seems to have begun his partheneia with an invocation to the Muses (probably Fr. 94b Sn.–M.) or Apollo (probably Fr. 94c Sn.–M.).

[64] For parallels in Pindar, cf. the openings of *P.* 4, *N.* 3, 9; and, near the beginnings, *O.* 10.3f., *I.* 8.6f. That Alcman referred explicitly in this part of the poem to the chorus as being Dymainian is rendered probable by the commentator's discussion of the chorus immediately after his gloss on the poem's opening: for how else will he have known who the constituents of the chorus were unless Alcman had announced the fact, here as he does in other poems (10[b].8–9 = 82.8–9, 45.4 = 61.4), and why else should the commentator make mention of the fact at this point in his commentary?

[65] Fränkel, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 291 n. 4; Penwill, op. cit. (n. 5), 16.

[66] *N.* 4.62–5.

other sources add everything from wind and water to a tree, a snake, and a cuttle-fish.[67] It seems quite likely that Alcman simply said that Thetis assumed all possible shapes: this would explain the commentator's repeated references to πάντα (III.9, 12, 16, 17), but is obviously merely a guess. It also seems likely that the word τεταραγμένην 'convulsed' (III.9–10) is derived from Alcman's poem and is being glossed here, as is normal in scholia, by καί and a near-synonym: if so, then Alcman will have said that Thetis was 'convulsed, upset' by Peleus' approach;[68] but this too is just a guess.[69]

Still in connection with the myth of Thetis, Alcman went on to speak of πόρος and τέκμωρ, 'way' and 'end'. This pair of terms occupies the prime attention of the ancient commentator (III.3–4, 6–8, 12–20, 24–5) and of modern scholars as well, who have offered a wide variety of suggestions for understanding them cosmologically.[70] Yet they are entirely intelligible within the context of the myth, and need not be taken to be metaphysical entities belonging to a philosophical system. Consider the Louvre Partheneion: there Alcman had concluded the myth of the battle between the Hippocoontids and the Tyndarids with gnomic reflections about the overwhelming power of Aisa and Poros, oldest of the gods, and about the inevitable failure of human *hybris* (1.13ff. = 3.13ff.). These lines do not offer independent extended philosophical speculation, but provide instead a moral closely connected with the myth they are designed to explain; and if Alcman calls Aisa and Poros oldest of the gods, it is not because he has developed and is now illustrating his own cosmogonic system, but simply because the antiquity of these gods explains their overwhelming strength and authority. Nevertheless, the scholiast on the Louvre Partheneion is misled by these personifications into supposing that at this point Alcman's text has suddenly taken a philosophical turn: he glosses this line with the quite erroneous comment, 'that he [i.e. Alcman] said that Poros was the same as the Chaos mythologised by Hesiod' (Sch. A3). Much the same thing, though on a much larger scale, may have happened in the commentary under discussion here: personified concepts belonging to a gnomic reflection on the mythic narrative seem to have been taken out of context by the commentator and given a philosophical weight they were never intended to bear. To understand the role these terms may have played in Alcman's poem, it should be borne in mind that there is something scandalous about Peleus' victory: after all, he was merely a mortal, while Thetis was a goddess. How then could he possibly have defeated her wiles and won her to be his wife? We do not know; but he must have had some way, some means: some πόρος.[71] And the effect of this πόρος was that Thetis' metamorphoses had an end and that Peleus thereby attained his goal: on either

[67] A useful summary of the various traditions is found in M. Ninck, *Die Bedeutung des Wassers im Kult und Leben der Alten. Eine symbolgeschichtliche Untersuchung* = Philologus Supplementband 14.2 (Leipzig, 1921), pp. 138–80, especially pp. 161ff.

[68] This psychological meaning for ταράσσω seems otherwise not to be found before Aeschylus: *Ag.* 1216, *Choe.* 289. So too, Alcman's usage of the word πόρος has no parallels before Aeschylus: cf. n. 71 below.

[69] One more guess: perhaps the commentator's τῆς Θέτιδος γενομένης (III.15–16) refers to her regaining her familiar shape and identity after her metamorphoses.

[70] E.g. Fränkel, op. cit. (n. 7), pp. 184–5; Penwill, op. cit. (n. 5), 17–24; Ricciardelli, op. cit. (n. 6), 18–21; Vernant, op. cit. (n. 6), 44–56; Voelke, op. cit. (n. 9), pp. 18–21; West, op. cit. (n. 5), 155f.

[71] Outside of Alcman, this meaning for πόρος seems not to be found before Aeschylus: *PV* 59, 111, 477. But it is supported by such archaic words as ἄπορος and ἀπορία; and in any event it is guaranteed for Alcman by the Louvre Partheneion.

account, a τέκμωρ was achieved.[72] As Alcman seems to have put it, 'from the way (ἐκ δὲ τῶ π[) arose an end'; or, in the more cumbersome pseudo-Aristotelian language of the commentator, 'the πόρος is like a beginning and the τέκμωρ as it were the end' (III.14–15). If, as is most likely, the lemma πρέσγυς (III.20–1) belongs in this context, it will have had much the same point as γεραιτάτοι in the Louvre Partheneion (1.14 = 3.14): in the end Thetis did not stand a chance, for she was fighting not only against Peleus, that brave mortal, but also against Poros, that dread and ancient god.

The next lemma, καὶ τρίτος σκότος (III.21) is the most enigmatic phrase of this papyrus. The commentator's explanation – 'because neither the sun nor the moon had as yet come into being, but the primal matter was still unseparated' (22–4) – has apparently been simply borrowed from the Homeric allegorical tradition, where the fact that Hephaistos forged Achilles' shield at night receives precisely the same explanation.[73] But even if we can feel some confidence that Alcman himself intended no cosmogonic role for his 'obscurity', obscurities enough remain.[74] One grammatically possible meaning for the phrase would be, not 'and third of all, darkness', as it seems always to have been understood by scholars, but rather 'and the third darkness'. But in that case, what would be the third darkness, and what the first two? Two suggestions can be offered. First: from Homer on, the Greeks divided the night into three watches;[75] might Alcman have written something like 'Peleus wrestled with Thetis for two watches of the night; *and the third darkness* brought him victory'? Alternatively: Alcman might perhaps have used σκότος as a poetic equivalent for 'night',[76] thereby extending the duration of Peleus' combat to positively heroic dimensions: 'Peleus wrestled with Thetis for two nights and two days, *and the third darkness* brought him victory'.[77] On the other hand, there does exist evidence in support of the traditional understanding of the phrase καὶ τρίτος σκότος, for in another fragment Alcman writes, 'He established three seasons, the summer, the winter, and third of all the autumn (κὠπώραν τρίταν)' (20.1–2 = 12.1–2): here the Greek might have meant 'and the third autumn', but this is obviously impossible.[78]

[72] For 'goal', cf. *Il.* 13.20, Pind. *P.* 2.49; for 'termination', Pind. Fr. 165 Sn.–M. Other archaic usages of the word – 'fixed line of separation' (Hes. Fr. 273.2 M.–W.), 'sure sign or token' (*Il.* 1.526, Pind, *N.* 11.44) – have a no less obvious pertinence to Thetis' ceasing to transform herself and readopting her true identity.

[73] Heraclit. *Quaest. Hom.* 43.3, 7: note ἀδιάκρι̣τ̣[ο]ν̣ (εἶναι) [τ]ὴν ὕλην in the Alcman papyrus (III.23–4) and διακριθῆναι and μὴ διακεκριμένης ὕλης in Heraclitus.

[74] For example, it is odd that the words καὶ τρίτον σκότος return as part of the next lemma together with day and moon (26). Scholars are practically unanimous – rightly so, in my opinion – in deleting the second occurrence of the phrase as an interpolation: for the commentator's explanation at its first occurrence must mean that the darkness was described before the appearance of sun and moon: so most recently Calame, op. cit. (n. 2), pp. 449–50. The only exceptions were early: Barrett, loc. cit. (n. 4); Page, op. cit. (n. 4), 20; Treu, op. cit. (n. 5), 86. The decisive arguments were formulated by West, op. cit. (n. 5), 156.

[75] *Il.* 10.252; *Od.* 12.312; Pind. *P.* 4.256.

[76] But I find no parallel for such a usage of σκότος.

[77] As far as I know, no ancient source reports the length of the wrestling-match between Peleus and Thetis; hence there are no close parallels in support of these hypotheses, but neither is there any evidence against them. Various, more general parallels for such triads are provided e.g. by R. Müller, *Die Zahl 3 in Sage, Dichtung und Kunst* (Teschen, 1903); H. Usener, 'Dreiheit', *Rh. Mus.* 58 (1903), 1–47, 161–208, 321–62; cf. also Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature. A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books and Local Legends*[2] (Bloomington and London, 1966), H.1463, D.758.1, and especially Z.71.1, and cf. E.162.1, H.1472, and T.165.

[78] Some scholars have argued that this fragment too is cosmogonic and may belong in the same context as the poem discussed here: H. Lloyd-Jones *apud* West, op. cit. (n. 5), 156; Penwill,

If, then, Alcman's phrase here could indeed mean 'third of all the darkness', what other two things could the darkness have been following? One possibility is that darkness was the third thing into which Thetis transformed herself: she could for example have changed herself into 'a river, fire *and third darkness*'.[79] Another possibility – in my judgement, the likeliest one – is suggested by the commentary's collocation of κκότος with πόρος and τέκμωρ (III.24–5): might Alcman have written that Peleus had three allies on his side, three powers that helped secure him victory, first 'the way' he used to grapple with Thetis, second 'the end' that was thereby given to her transformations, 'and third the darkness' of the night, the obscurity (always the seducer's best ally) in which perhaps the maiden goddess was frightened or could not put to good use all her wiles?[80] As it happens, Pindar reports that the night in which Peleus and Thetis wrestled the full moon was shining;[81] but it may be supposed either that he is following a different tradition from Alcman or that, as often, he is here implicitly criticising his poetic predecessors. Which of these hypotheses, or which other one, is correct, our information does not permit us to decide; but it is enough to confirm Barrett's prescient suggestion that the κκότος 'must (though the commentator is still valiantly explaining it as the primal darkness) be the darkness of a moonless night'.[82]

There is one more lemma before the papyrus breaks off: 'day and moon the twinklings' (III.25ff., accepting the editors' deletion of καὶ τρίτον κκότος).[83] Scholars incline to interpret μαρμαρυγάς with reference to stars, but this is almost certainly mistaken: the likelihood that this substantive is to be taken as co-ordinated with the other two is lessened by the fact that it is in the accusative while they are in the nominative; and the earliest parallels for such a usage are not found until about a thousand years after Alcman.[84] Furthermore, the commentator refers, in his gloss on καὶ τρίτος κκότος, to the sun and the moon, and near the end of the extant text indicates that he sees Alcman's ἆμαρ as a reference to the sun. Why, if τὰς μαρμαρυγάς referred to the stars, did our commentator not speak of sun, moon, and stars? It would have been more than appropriate, in this cosmogonic context, for him to have done so: his silence is a strong argument against an astral meaning. In the two instances in which it occurs in archaic epic, μαρμαρυγή is applied to the flashing of choral dancers' feet;[85] and it seems wiser at least provisionally to seek a meaning for the lemma along these lines. On the one hand, Alcman's phrase might have come from the conclusion to the myth: for what would have been more appropriate at that point than a description of the celebrated wedding of Peleus and Thetis, which put an end to all their labours and established them for all time as the paradigm of bliss? Alcman might have written that 'at the wedding, *the day and moon* beheld *the twinklings* of

op. cit. (n. 5), 14; Treu, op. cit. (n. 5), 85. But, as Ricciardelli points out (op. cit. [n. 6], 26), the tone here is jocular: this fragment belongs much more in the context of Alcman's various 'eating' poems, e.g. 17 = 9, 19 = 11, 94 = 132, 95(b) = 92, 96 = 130.

[79] No ancient source corroborates such a suggestion; but Alcman was famous for his idiosyncratic versions of myths, cf. e.g. Page, op. cit. (n. 37), pp. 31ff., 44.

[80] As R. Nicolai (Rome) has suggested to me, these three allies of Peleus might be a divine version of the three mortal allies Menelaus uses to subdue Proteus (*Od.* 4.408–9, 433–4). In other regards too, Alcman's poem may well have been modelled fairly closely upon its Homeric analogue, cf. the use of τέκμωρ at *Od.* 4.373 and 466, and of πάντα at 4.417 to refer to the variety of forms Proteus will take on.

[81] *I.* 8.44: ἐν διχομηνίδεσσιν ἑσπέραις.

[82] Barrett, loc. cit. (n. 4).

[83] Cf. above n. 74.

[84] Jul. *Gal.* 357a; Dam. *Princ.* 213.

[85] *Od.* 8.265; Hom. *H. Apollo* 203.

the dancers' feet': that is, that the festivities lasted from day into night or that the boys invoked the day (i.e. the sun, cf. III.27–8) and the girls the moon.[86] On the other hand, the remarkable frequency and prominence of comparisons and other allusions to the sun and stars in Alcman's partheneia, particularly in the sections describing the chorus and referring to ritual activities,[87] may suggest that references to heavenly bodies were a generic convention in such poems;[88] and if so, another possible interpretation suggests itself. For, as suggested above, it seems to have been conventional for the part of the partheneion that followed the gnomic reflections on the myth to refer to the details of the chorus and the ceremony in the course of which the partheneion was performed; and these words might just as easily have come from this final section of Alcman's poem. For example, Alcman might have written, 'May *the day and moon* look with favour upon *the twinklings* of the dancers' feet'; or even, recalling the frequency of solar and astral comparisons in Alcman, 'The two chorus leaders [or the chorus leader and her favourite[89]] are like *the day and moon* in comparison with *the twinklings* of our dancing feet'.

This, I think, is all that we know about Alcman's poem. And, barring unforeseeable finds, it is all that we are ever likely to know.

III

Of necessity, the preceding section was highly speculative: for many of the suggestions made there, only the most tentative status can be claimed. This was inevitable, for the only way to gain any information about Alcman's poem, once the allegorical nature of the commentary had been recognised, was to examine every phrase in it microscopically for its possible significance – but for a significance different from the one the commentator intended: at every moment, as it were, the commentary had to be brushed, but against the grain. But as what had been taken to be Alcman has faded, he has been replaced by the much clearer contours of another figure, one about whom in fact much more can be inferred than had been thought. This figure is the commentator: I shall conclude with a few remarks about his character and intentions.

At least as far as we can judge, for the commentator the central interest in Alcman's poem is its myth. He seems to demonstate practically no interest in the ceremony for which it was composed: he dutifully reports that the chorus was composed of Dymainian maidens (II.24–5) but, at least in the extant part of his commentary, says nothing more than that about the particular ritual during which this poem was performed. Perhaps it did not occur to him that such information might be useful in resolving the problems in the poem that so perplexed him.[90] Nor does he show much

[86] Cf. Schol. ad Theocr. 2.10b = Pind. Fr. 104 Sn.–M.

[87] E.g. 1.41, 62–63 = 3.41, 62–63; 3.3 = 26.66; cf. also perhaps 1.60 = 3.60.

[88] It may be of interest in this connection that Proclus reports that sun, moon and stars played an important role in the ceremony accompanied by another kind of partheneion, the daphnephoricon (*apud* Photius, *Bibl.* 321b18–21).

[89] On this problem. cf. Calame, op. cit. (n. 36), 2.46ff., 86ff., 137ff.

[90] In the surviving part of the commentary on this poem, the commentator says nothing about its historical background; contrast the commentary, from the same papyrus, to 5.2 I.1–22 = 80. This may be due to our papyrus' using different sources for the commentaries to the different poems; or, more likely, we may suppose that this poem, in the part whose commentary survives, gave no occasion for discussing historical matters. In the latter case our commentator displays a familiarity with a considerable variety of interpretative techniques which he adapts to the particular exigencies of the passages he is commenting on.

interest in grammatical issues: the only dialectal form he glosses as such is πρέςγυς (III.20–1), where the dissimilation of gamma for beta is rare inasmuch as elsewhere in Alcman's transmitted poetry it only occurs before liquids.[91] Presumably, this commentary is intended for advanced students, who do not have to be told the basic features of Alcman's Doric dialect and who can be expected to be familiar with the fundamental concepts of Aristotle's philosophy. To be sure, the commentator does seem to have offered an etymological explanation of at least one of the key terms in Alcman's poem (III.6); but this is a normal feature of allegorical interpretation and provides no evidence of a specifically linguistic interest *per se*.

When the commentator considers Alcman's myth, he does not do so in terms of what we would recognise as literary criticism. Of course he does not discuss such features as structure, organisation, point of view, irony, imagery, symbolic patterns, and so forth: we would hardly expect him to, for practially no ancient critic ever does. But the commentator does not even discuss rhetorical figures or apply to Alcman's poetry the conventional judgements – appropriate, inappropriate, obscure, fine, etc. – that are found in the scholia to other poets.

For the commentator, Alcman's myth poses in essence a cognitive problem: the central question it raises is, what does it refer to? And he has no doubt that the tools for answering that question are those traditionally provided by allegorical interpretation. Of course, Alcman's text will have seemed to him to offer various kinds of foothold for such an analysis: the unusual genealogy of the Muses will have alerted him to the fact that Alcman was up to something; and especially the poet's tendency to moralise his myths by means of gnomic reflections deploying personifications of abstract concepts[92] will have seemed to him virtually to compel an allegorical reading of the whole. But what kind of allegorical meaning was there to be found under the baffling surface of Alcman's poem? Out of all the wealth of possible themes he could have chosen, why had Alcman narrated the myth of Thetis' metamorphoses? Earlier scholars has discussed this passage but they had not developed for it an interpretation that satisfied this commentator.[93] Our man is aware of his predecessors in the study of Alcman, but instead of bothering to contradict or even discuss their views, he decides to propose a new solution of his own. He recalls that the metamorphoses of Thetis were similar to those of Proteus: this was a commonplace of ancient literary scholarship.[94] Since the metamorphoses of Proteus are recounted by Homer, there will be a rich tradition of allegorical interpretations of them; and our commentator has the idea of transferring that tradition to Thetis. It may be supposed that, just as Homer scholarship was central and prestigious in Greek culture, Alcman scholarship was probably marginal and derivative: in effect, with a mixture of acuity and ambitiousness, our man has chosen to re-use that authoritative scholarly material for his own less prestigious problem. The fact that Alcman called Poros ancient will have confirmed to him the correctness of his strategy of finding in the myth a hidden

[91] Cf. Calame, op. cit. (n. 2), pp. 400, 449.

[92] E.g. 1.13–21 = 3.13–21; 64 = 105; 102 = 108; 146 = 106. Cf. in general A. Piatkowski, 'Personificări şi abstractii la Alcmana', *An. Univ. Bucureşti, Ser. ştiinţ. soc. filologie* 9.18 (1960), 319–24; and, on the Louvre Partheneion, Calame, op. cit. (n. 36), 2.59f.; Garzya, op. cit. (n. 6), pp. 21–4; Page, op. cit. (n. 37), pp. 33–7; C. O. Pavese, 'Alcmane, il Partenio del Louvre', *QUCC* 4 (1967), 113–33, here 116–20.

[93] We have no way of knowing for certain what kind of interpretation earlier scholars had given Alcman's myth of Thetis (*pace* Penwill, op. cit. [n. 5], 15); but the guess may be hazarded that, had their approach been allegorical, our commentator might not have simply dismissed their views.

[94] Schol. ad Pind. *N.* 3.60, 4.101b; Tzetzes ad Lycophr. 175; *Paradox. Vat.* 33.

cosmogony. To explain other aspects of the myth, he invokes other, in fact unrelated allegorical explanations of Homeric myths. For, convinced of the truth of his discovery of the concealed cosmogonic meaning of Alcman's myth, he will recall that the most important cosmogonic myth in Homer for the ancient allegorists was Hephaestus' creation of the shield of Achilles;[95] and the fact that it was Thetis who asked for the shield will have seemed to him a further confirmation of the hidden link between the two myths and hence of the legitimacy of his bringing the interpretation of one to bear upon the other.[96] The allegorical explanation of the reason why Hephaestus forged Achilles' shield at night can now be made to serve to clarify why Alcman refers to darkness in his poem, while the image of the craftsman provides a model for explaining the relation between Thetis and primal matter. As often in such allegorical interpretations, our commentator can feel free to skip from one passage in the poem that apparently supports his thesis to another one, not even attempting to produce a close lemmatic commentary that follows the text line by line but instead letting the broad succession of phases of the original poem suggest to him the tight temporal sequence of a cosmogony organised in terms of εἶτα (III.10, 12), of μηδέπω (22) and ἔτι (23), and of τὸ πρότερον (28) and μετὰ ταῦτα (29).

Hence our commentator turns out to be a skilled and sophisticated manipulator of literary scholarship.[97] But he is more than just an allegorist: he is also interested in and acquainted with Greek philosophy. The very fact that he offers a physical allegory for this myth aligns him with the Stoics, who were notoriously inclined towards this type of interpretation; yet his own tastes are catholic, and he does not hesitate to apply Aristotelian categories to the explanation of Alcman's meaning. The fact that Peleus' means led to his attainment of his goal and to the cessation of Thetis' transformations, that the πόρος led to a τέκμωρ, can be put in vaguely Aristotelian terms by saying that the πόρος is like an ἀρχή while the τέκμωρ is like a τέλος. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this explanation is the commentator's curious but evident belief that this translation into pseudo-Aristotelian language actually clarifies his meaning. He may have been strengthened in this belief by the fact that Aristotle also provides numerous examples of the use of the analogy of the craftsman and his material,[98] and thus unwittingly gives further support to our commentator's use of the Hephaestus myth to explain the metamorphoses of Thetis. If both Heraclitus and Aristotle agree on the usefulness of the τεχνίτης/ὕλη model, he may have felt, then surely they must be right. To be sure, the data of the poem cannot be made to square exactly with the fine points of Aristotle's doctrines;[99] but the real miracle, he must have felt, is the extent to which they do fit.

[95] Cf. Buffière, op. cit. (n. 49), pp. 155–65.

[96] As L. Koenen suggests, the cosmogonic implications of the prophecy that Thetis' son would be stronger than his father (e.g. Pind. *I.* 8.26aff.) may have also helped lead the commentator in this direction.

[97] It is tempting to suggest that he may have been using up-to-date scholarship: this papyrus can be dated with certainty to the second century A.D. (Lobel, op. cit. [n. 1], p. 49), and Heraclitus' *Homeric Questions* probably date from the reign of Augustus or Nero (F. Buffière, ed., *Héraclite. Allégories d'Homère* [Paris, 1962], p. x): if the former is directly dependent upon the latter, it must have been composed not too long afterwards. But both texts may be drawing on a common source or sources, and the Alcman commentary may be earlier than Heraclitus. Yet it remains striking that the closest source for both the cosmogonic and the nocturnal parts of the Alcman commentary is Heraclitus.

[98] E.g. *Phys.* 2.3.194b23–6, 7.3.245b8f., *Part. An.* 1.1.640b25f., *Gen. An.* 1.18.724a23–6, *Metaph.* A.3.984a22–5, *Pol.* 1.8.1256a6–10.

[99] Cf. Voelke, op. cit. (n. 9), pp. 14–15.

Our commentator, by and large, has received a terrible press.[100] Scholars accuse him of stupidity, ineptitude, and confusion. Part of the trouble, the interpolation in the last lemma, is probably not his fault at all, but that of a copyist; another part, the tendency, normal among allegorists, to focus the attention so fully upon each detailed problem that the explanation of the whole becomes rather incoherent, seems not to have been fully recognised by modern scholars. If my argument holds, our commentator is apparently guilty of only one error: the Homeric allegory distinguishes Proteus as the primal matter from Eidothyia as the shaping form, but in the myth of Thetis, there is only one figure, Thetis herself, who could play either or both roles. Our commentator chooses to identify her with form (III.18–19), perhaps in part because of her name[101] and her role in other allegorical cosmogonies,[102] in part because the series of transformations she goes through is concluded by her gaining her own recognisable shape; hence all that can be left to play the role of matter is τὰ πάντα (III.9, 12, 16, 17).[103] But if, as was suggested above, this latter refers to the many different shapes into which Thetis transformed herself, then in effect she will be playing both roles: as matter in her various metamorphoses, as form in her true and final identity. If this is so, then our commentator is certainly guilty of an inconcinnity; but, considering how much he was trying to explain, it may seem an ingenious one. And even taking it into account, it seems that modern scholars have not been quite fair to him. He was widely read, and could apply Mimnermus, the Homer scholia, and Peripatetic and Stoic philosophy to the understanding of Greek lyric poetry. He was fairly original, fairly intelligent, and entirely honest. All in all, he is one of the better specimens of his profession. His only handicap was that he was trying to find an answer for an irresolvable problem, that of the hidden physical meaning of Alcman's myth. Or rather, not so much an irresolvable problem: a non-existent one.

It may well be suspected that he would have been even more astonished than we are by the extraordinary success which the luck of the sands of Egypt and the unwariness of modern scholars would one day combine to lend his patchwork creation.

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[100] So e.g. Harvey, op. cit. (n. 43), 62; Penwill, op. cit. (n. 5), 13, 26.

[101] Cf. above n. 5.

[102] Cornutus, *Compend. Theol.* 17, Schol. Hom. *Il.* 1.399–406.

[103] The commentator gives three versions of the sequence of Alcman's alleged cosmogony: (I) III.7–8: (1) organised matter, (2) πόρος as an ἀρχή; (II) III.8–14: (1) matter, (2) an organiser, (3) πόρος as an ἀρχή, (4) τέκμωρ as a τέλος; (III) III.15–17: (1) Thetis, (2) ἀρχή and τέλος. At III.17–20 he also identifies (1) matter with τὰ πάντα, (2) the craftsman with Thetis, (3) the ἀρχή with πόρος, and (4) the τέλος with τέκμωρ. Correlating these various versions leads to the result that τὰ πάντα is disorganised matter and Thetis is the organiser (despite the masculine gender at III.11).