
BIBΛΙΟΚΡΙΣΙΕΣ

Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou – Antonios Rengakos – Christos Tsagalis (eds), *Contests and Rewards in the Homeric Epics. Proceedings of the 10th International Symposium on the Odyssey (15-19 September 2004)*, Ithaca, Centre for Odyssean Studies, 2007, pp. 427.

The Centre for Odyssean Studies regularly hosts conferences on a wide variety of topics ranging from the Homeric poems to Latin epics, thereby providing a much-needed international forum for a detailed analysis of ancient epic poetry. This by no means suggests that non-epic genres are excluded; it is fair to say that by frequently inviting internationally renowned speakers to deliver papers on Greek lyric, Hellenistic poetry and classical archaeology the Centre for Odyssean Studies offers a highly valued space for a lively debate on ancient literature and culture. The latest beautifully designed and produced volume of the proceedings of the 10th international symposium on the *Odyssey* held in Ithaca on September 15-19, 2004 is an eloquent testimony to the rich resources of the Centre and the scholarly sophistication of the participants. This reviewer has nothing but praise for the way the editors completed the formidable task of producing a collection of 24 variously flavoured essays; Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou, Antonios Rengakos and Christos Tsagalis have edited a book that will delight the discerning reader by the contributors' original research and command his unremitting concentration by its tireless exploration in depth and at considerable length of the agonistic spirit of the ancient world. The excellent idea of convening the conference, «Contests and Rewards in the Homeric Epics», is credited to the capable president of the Centre, Dimitris N. Maronitis, who was duly inspired by the hosting of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens.

This sumptuous volume opens with a thought-provoking essay by Françoise Létoublon, «L'esprit de compétition chez Homère» (pp. 11-28), who seeks to show that there are significant differences in the ways the characters of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* embody the vigorously competitive spirit of the heroic age. In the *Iliad*, as Létoublon points out in a meticulous analysis of the relevant Homeric vocabulary, the warrior exemplifies this unwavering drive for victory through his performance as a hero in combat on the battlefield. The Homeric hero is a man of unbending principle who

cannot allow his values to be compromised and thus, to him, the notion of personal achievement is paramount. His highly developed sense of honour and glory, combined with self-esteem, dignity, and moral autonomy demonstrated through the life-and-death risks of battle, is inextricably linked with his passionate ambition to ensure a place in the social memory of his community. Furthermore, by offering a comprehensive view of the possible connections between Homeric genealogy and heroic distinction, Létoublon gives a fascinating insight into the ways the agonistic spirit of the *Iliad* is reflected in the tense opposition between genealogical narratives, which are moreover widely recognized as important vehicles for conflicting principles and beliefs. Finally, and perhaps most important, Létoublon finds sufficient support in the *Odyssey* for the reasonable recognition that the Homeric agonistic spirit permeates other areas of Greek life, including the hugely competitive art of poetic performance: in antiquity the burning ambition of excelling at poetic contests prompted one performer to compete with another. It is characteristic of the *Odyssey* that various controversial social and moral issues are regularly given a passionate intensity and a powerful grip on the emotions by their grounding in numerous bardic tales with varying degrees of directness or fullness of narrative. Often some of these rhapsodic accounts create a complex web of rivalling stories that allows the critic to attain a sense of how ferociously competitive a Homeric *aoidos* can be in an effort to outshine all others in poetic skills and win ample praise from his audience.

Alexandra Zervou, «Jeux athlétiques – jeux de réception» (pp. 29-53), argues that modern theories of reception offer a welcome way of building bridges between Neanalysis and Orality. Despite the disarray of modern critical opinion on the Homeric epics, she believes that it is possible to discern patterns of action, thought, and feeling that help us find our bearings in the interpretation of the poems by combining a close discussion of the Homeric sources with a detailed analysis of the performative aspect of oral poetry. This is no cause for surprise: in their groundbreaking work Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, two of the most important and influential exponents of the Constance School, explored the intricate relation of literary history to social history, offering a genuine understanding of literature as communicative activity. Zervou seems to be fully aware of the enormous implications of reader-response theory; in fact, in her elegantly argued essay she goes to great lengths to unearth hidden connections between the Iliadic crowds watching enthusiastically the exciting athletic competitions and the fifth-century Athenian audiences swarming up the theatre of Dionysus to enjoy the dramatic performances.

The essay by Dimitris N. Maronitis, «Φωνικά άθλα και έπαθλα στα ομηρικά έπη» (pp. 55-68), is a model of clarity and precision. Maronitis rightly uses the pursuit of Hector by Achilles around Troy in *Iliad* 22 and the

contest of the bow in *Odyssey* 21 – both characteristic instances of physical and emotional overstrain in which athletic competitiveness and murderous impulse become almost indistinguishable – as a window onto the resourcefulness and complexity of epic technique. It is clear enough that the poet of the *Iliad* weaves into the texture of the unsettling scene between Achilles and Hector revealing similes and metaphors of athletic prowess and accomplishment so as to produce an intensifying effect, turning the similes and metaphors into a kind of powerful commentary on the action. An even more striking example of this attitude towards the paradoxical blending of athletic challenge and homicidal retribution can be found in Odysseus' trial of the bow. Maronitis offers a fascinating discussion of the ethical issues associated with the slaughter of the suitors. By providing much intelligent solidity where the subject has often prompted over-sympathetic moral estimations of the actual bloodshed, he casts a vivid new light on the highly symbolic significance of the bow as a death-dealing instrument that plays a pivotal role in the context of an otherwise captivating sporting occasion – that is, a non-lethal contest. According to Maronitis, what is surprising is that the incongruous intermixture of athletics and killings in the *Odyssey* thrusts the moral question regarding the inescapability of the murder of the suitors into sharper relief. There are good grounds for believing that the free association of athletic and martial images allows for numerous levels of meaning in the same scene. It should be pointed out none the less that the significance of this peculiar nexus of contrasting sentiments must not be pressed beyond the hint that we are invited to witness here not primarily a morally problematic act of vengeance but a deep reflection on the perplexities arising from the uneasy conjunction of divine retributive powers and human justice.

Jenny Strauss Clay, «Art, Nature, and the Gods in the Chariot Race of *Iliad* Ψ» (pp. 69-86), Seth L. Schein, «Ο Αχιλλέας και η κηδεία του Πατρόκλου στη ραψωδία Ψ της *Ιλιάδας*» (pp. 77-86), and Joachim Latacz, «A Battlefield of the Emotions: Homer's Helen» (pp. 87-100), examine the Homeric portrayal of character. Both Clay and Schein place strong emphasis on the ways in which the funeral games for Patroclus not only mirror the broader design of the *Iliad*, but also prefigure a substantial change in the attitude of Achilles. It is not too much to hazard the view that the horse race in honour of Patroclus is a symbolic condensation of battlefield operations and crisis feelings; in particular, Clay and Schein are right to suggest that the funeral games have a civilizing effect on the participants, not least on Achilles himself. Similarly, though he takes a long time to get to the point, Latacz turns his lens of enquiry to the character traits of another exceptional figure of the *Iliad*: Helen, he argues, possesses a wide array of admirable qualities, such as «enormous vigour, passion, sensuality and drive» (p. 99). The various stories about Helen, which are repeatedly echoed in the course of the poem, contribute greatly to the delineation of her character. It should be added that

through her dynamic presence at critical moments of the action and her inner struggle with self-doubt and despair she gives the impression of power and aliveness.

Antonios Rengakos, «The Smile of Achilles, or the Iliad and the Mirror-Image» (pp. 101-110), and Wolfgang Kullmann, «Οι Ολυμπιακοί αγώνες στην Ιλιάδα (Λ 698-702)» (pp. 111-119), investigate how the *Iliad* exploits pre-Homeric tales and motifs, but brings them together in complex overlappings and inversions that reach beyond the special significance of any one of these domains. In the poem's subtext, athletic contests offer not only a microcosm of the wider story but also a most vivid evocation of the Epic Cycle. Both Rengakos and Kullmann strongly believe that the narrative stream of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* can be sifted for nuggets of pre-Homeric information; their well-argued and admirably documented discussions open up new ways of thinking about epic poetry as a narrative configuration that is essentially dynamic rather than static, deliberately encouraging tension between those mythical traditions that record momentous events beyond the time scale of the poems. Furthermore, pointing to recent theories about the date of composition of the *Iliad*, Kullmann challenges the current orthodoxy and argues that the first half of the seventh century BCE seems to be the preferred date. More important, Rengakos carefully dissects modern narratological interpretations of the Homeric epics to show that the poet delights in pushing large chunks of the Trojan legend outside the limited boundaries of the principal narrative.

The essays by Nicholas Richardson, «The Games in Book θ of the *Odyssey*» (pp. 121-127), and Nancy Felson, «Epinician Ideology at the Phaeacian Games: θ 97-265» (pp. 129-143), offer an enticing insight into the eighth Book of the *Odyssey*. Both Richardson and Felson provide the reader with a good understanding of the ways in which the Phaeacian Games project a vision of Odysseus the persevering competitor that extends in the remote future. But the notion of Odysseus as a resolute athletic contestant will take on a darker meaning in the closing movement of the poem, in which a boxing-match and a bow competition culminate in the massacre of the suitors, the only pitched battle of the poem. The inference seems stronger still if we remember that for the ancient Greeks the athletic games offer a non-violent counterpart of battle challenges. It is especially interesting to observe, and both Richardson and Felson are fully aware of the potential implications for the interpretation of the *Odyssey*, that the Phaeacian Games is a typical example of a long sequence of disputes, be they martial, athletic or amatory, which prepare the ground for the bloody showdown between Odysseus and the suitors.

Menelaos Christopoulos, «Contests without Rewards: Musical Contests in the *Odyssey*, and the Homeric Hymn to *Hermes*» (pp. 145-155), and Ariadne Gartzidou, «Οδυσσεύς θεατής, αθλητής και αφηγητής άθλων» (pp. 157-

178), look at what the musical competitions in the *Odyssey* really mean and whether they serve as points of cohesion and in an external way provide the necessary drive to keep the narrative moving. The essay by Christopoulos is too unfocused to have any significant impact, while the essay by Gartzou is underpinned by extensive research. The most striking feature of Christopoulos' analysis is the distinction between the honour allotted to the singer and the rewards presented to him by the community. But the sharp and systematic differentiation between the audience's unflagging admiration and respect for the *aidos* and the hefty prizes that are awarded for excellence in song performance, one that Christopoulos extracts from a detailed consideration of certain bardic contests in the *Odyssey*, depends on interpretations, which some might take issue with. For example Christopoulos believes that the portion of meat offered by Odysseus to Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8.474-484 does not qualify as a proper reward. It is none the less hard to think of reasons for such a suggestion. Although the minstrel performance is yet to come, the sacrificial meaning of the gesture and the exceptional nature of the offering cut off as it is from a white-tusked boar not only highlight the elevated status of the court-singer, but also serve as a long-awaited recompense for the bard's previous song performance that Alcinous had duly interrupted in view of Odysseus' distress (*Odyssey* 8.83-96). This argument can be strengthened by the fact that the scene between Odysseus and Demodocus prefigures the transformation of Odysseus into a capable singer of tales that wins the admiration and praise of his audience through the enthralling narration of his adventures (*Odyssey* 9-12). Moreover, the section on the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* contributes nothing of value to the discussion and seems imperfectly integrated with the rest of the essay. Gartzou, by contrast, offers a compellingly argued and theoretically informed study that provides nuance for our understanding of Homeric foreshadowing and suspense, demonstrating just how creative and energetic efforts to trouble the narrative's straightforward linearity can be. And through many engaging examples, she shows how crucial the combination of physical and social graces is in the portrayal of Odysseus as a towering figure in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus is consistently presented as a consummate athlete and political leader through the accomplishment of difficult trials; his undeniable achievement in the areas of athletics and politics can be seen as a foretoken of his triumph over the suitors.

Coming now to the material rewards presented to athletic contestants in antiquity, Michalis Tiverios, «Τῶ δὲ νικῶντι [ἐν Παναθηναίοις] δίδεται ἄθλον ἔλαιον ἐν ἀμφιφορεῦσι» (pp. 179-201), Eurydice Kefalidou, «Γεωμετρικά και αρχαϊκά ἐπάθλα: κείμενα, ευρήματα, εικονογραφία (8ος-7ος αιώνας π.Χ.)» (pp. 203-229), and Isabelle Ratinaud, «À l'origine des Concours d'Olympie: *Aristoi et Athla* d'Homère à l'Altis» (pp. 231-259), seek to gain insight into the nature of those prizes and sporting occasions that were

generally held with great admiration and respect. In his lucidly and engagingly written essay Tiverios lays special emphasis on the panathenaic amphoras and demonstrates his main thesis unequivocally: the massive production of those, mostly ceramic, vases offered to winners in athletic contests must have been closely supervised by the Athenian authorities by means of pottery competitions. Furthermore, Tiverios' expert analysis of the latest epigraphical and archaeological data is coupled with considerations of what can be known about the substantial material gains stemming from athletic distinction in sporting challenges throughout Greece and especially in the Panathenaic Games. Similarly, in her richly illustrated study Kefalidou considers specific aspects of literary and archaeological evidence about athletic occasions in geometric and archaic Greece and asks how enhanced knowledge of such topics as music contests and dance competitions strengthens our understanding of ancient award-offering ceremonies. By recognizing the importance of those geometric and archaic instances of prize-winning challenges, scholars will no longer be able to regard the pre-classical iconographic evidence as less relevant for understanding the trajectory of the Greek athletic tradition. The complex problem of contests and awards in ancient Greece must be seen as a broader topic that calls for the urgent scrutiny of our preconceptions about chronological boundaries and provokes us to think again about issues of central importance in the light of fresh archaeological data. Furthermore, Ratinaud's greatest contribution is not only that she brings the archaeological and architectural evidence to the forefront and attempts to reconcile this with the ample ancient literary sources, but that she also discusses in significant detail the hotly debated topic regarding the beginning of the Olympic Games against the backdrop of the Homeric epics. Going beyond this, she aims to provide a unified composition by presenting the early history of the Olympic Games in all its interconnected facets. One important theme that unites the various strands of her essay is the special attention paid to describing the effects of the emergence of Greek aristocracy during the geometric period and the reflection of this political, cultural, and social change in athletic competitions. Ratinaud astutely explains why the Olympic Games are closely related to the aristocratic way of life. It would not then be overbold to argue that the games at Olympia may have started before 776 BCE as regular athletic meetings of the local gentry.

The essays by Apostolos Athanassakis, «Οι κατάλογοι των ονομάτων στην Ιλιάδα και στην Οδύσσεια» (pp. 261-267), Christos Tsagalis, «The Metaphor of Sailing and the *athlon* of Song: Reconsidering the *Nautilia* in Hesiod's *Works and Days*» (pp. 269-295), and Timothy Heckenlively, «Combat and Competitive Poetics in the Hesiodic *Shield*» (pp. 297-319), not only probe less explored aspects of Homeric and Hesiodic poetics, but also offer novel readings of the pivotal role of such narrative devices as the catalogue, the metaphor, and the *ecphrasis* in the epic tradition by examining

a broad spectrum of archaic texts and poetic practices. Although space considerations may have prevented Athanassakis from fully exploring his point, he provides a brief yet profoundly suggestive overview of Homeric and Hesiodic catalogues as important yardsticks of poetic achievement. He seeks to clarify and defend his comments on the poet's irresistible urge to amaze and entertain his audience through the performance of demanding set pieces by taking a look at the catalogue of the Nereids in Book 18 of the *Iliad* and the much smaller catalogue of the Muses in Hesiod's *Theogony* 77-79. Modern Greek folklore motifs creep into this essay that is principally an exploration of the ways in which catalogues are often considered to be a measure of artistic merit and accomplishment in poetic composition. Written with energy and precision, the essay by Tsagalis is another clarion call to students of Hesiod for richer and more imaginative use of crucial developments in the fast-moving field of contemporary poetics and literary theory. With a wealth of erudite references to previous scholarship on the subject, Tsagalis seeks to show that the *Nautilia* section in Hesiod's *Works and Days* is microcosmic of a wider poetic code: for many poetic and thematic threads that make up the stark pattern of the *Works and Days* start from and run back to this remarkable segment. If read as a vastly ambitious metaphor for an un-Homeric poetic credo, these enigmatic lines, Tsagalis argues, offer us a moment of reflection on the various ways in which the astonishingly intimate biographical elements and the technical terms in the Hesiodic corpus are employed to redefine and reconfigure poetic *kleos*. The consistent allusions to seafaring and farming represent a grand expression of a profound cultural and social transformation in the archaic period; the Homeric assurances of heroic distinction and poetic accomplishment appear to have been seriously challenged by the new axioms of economy and commerce. This essay is the perfect mind opener for readers desiring a more conscious understanding of Hesiodic poetry and poetics. Similarly, Heckenlively cuts a new trail for future scholarship on the largely underestimated Pseudo-Hesiodic *Aspis* and gives specialists from other fields a view of the treasures that can be found in the *ecphrasis* of Heracles' shield. He suggests that in a manner similar to the Homeric account of Achilles' shield this prolonged description mirrors broader themes of the poem. In particular, the series of the horrors of war so skilfully depicted on the shield culminates in the peaceful image of a well-ordered city. Correspondingly, Heracles defeats the monster Cycnus after a terrible fight. In the light of these hopeful conclusions Heckenlively presses his point that the triumph of Heracles over Cycnus reflected as it is in the *ecphrasis* of the shield shadow forth the victory of poetry over death and oblivion through the constant recitation of the poem. It is therefore fair to say that this kind of analysis presented above, especially in the essays by Tsagalis and Heckenlively, can offer original insights and allow readers to pose new questions to the ancient texts.

Moving now beyond archaic epic poetry, Franco Montanari, «An Aristocratic Prophet: Pindar's *Olympian I*, and the Origins of the Olympic Games» (pp. 321-329), Simon Hornblower, «Victory-language in Pindar, the Historians and Inscriptions» (pp. 331-338), and Flora Manakidou, «Ἔθλα ἐπὶ Πολυφῆμῳ: Το βουκολικό προσωπείο του οδυσσειακού Κύκλωπα (Θεοκρίτου XI, VI, VII)» (pp. 339-379), explore issues of poetic authority, athletic agonistic language and intertextuality as they apply to Pindar and Theocritus. In his well-balanced essay Montanari considers the content and style of Pindar's *Olympian I* with emphasis on a specific ideology-driven innovation made to the Pelops legend. He persuasively argues that by refusing Tantalus' murder of Pelops Pindar removes «a stain that might tarnish the authoritative and unsullied sacrality of the figure that stands at the origin of the Olympic Games» (p. 328). Hornblower, on the other hand, builds on his challenging book *Thucydides and Pindar: Historical Narrative and the World of Epinikian Poetry* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004) to offer a stimulating analysis of the Kleomrotos inscription, which celebrates an Olympic victory of the second half of the sixth century BCE. Spanning a broad chronological range the essay considers the possible intertextual filiations between the Kleomrotos inscription, the earliest yet found naming an Olympic victor, Pindar's *Fourth Pythian* and Homer's *Odyssey*. In a similar vein Manakidou's in-depth study reflects a new interest in the detailed intertextual relationship between Homer and Theocritus and represents a major advance in our understanding of the three Polyphemus idylls (VI, VII, and XI) and their close connection with the *Odyssey*. Manakidou rightly suggests that many aspects of the Polyphemus poems gain added point if viewed in the light of Homeric intertexts. In her long essay not only does she break down our preconceived notions of bucolic poetry as a mere song-competition within a rustic context, but also uncovers the dynamic tension between epic poetry and Hellenistic versification, placing strong emphasis on the notorious figure of Polyphemus as an aetiological paradigm of all lovers and bards. What is most striking is the certainty of her scholarship and the ease with which she commands such great areas of knowledge as the Homeric epics and Hellenistic literature in an effort to explain how in his pastoral poems Theocritus recycles the poetry of Homer to serve his ambitious plan of competing with the master craftsman by means of an inventive reconfiguration of long-established poetic prototypes.

The last three essays of the collection shift the focus away from Greek literature to Virgil and Ovid as well as to a contemporary German dramatist, Christa Wolf, who draws her inspiration from the Homeric epics. There is, however, constant consideration of the entangled web of intertextual relations between those authors and Homer. More specifically, building on the notion of Homer as the primary model for subsequent literary texts, Theodoros Papanghelis, «Εἶδος και ιδεολογία στον πυγμαχικό αγώνα της

Αινειάδας (5. 362-484)» (pp. 381-388), Philip Hardie, «Warring Words. Ovid's Contest for the Arms of Achilles (*Met.* 13. 1-398)» (pp. 389-398), and Oliver Hellmann, «Zwei Bilder einer agonalen Welt: Christa Wolfs *Kassandra* und die *Ilias* Homers» (pp. 399-417), explore how Virgil, Ovid and Wolf draw copiously from the rich stream of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In his brief but well-argued study Papanghelis lays great stress on the intense intertextuality of *Aeneid* 5.362-484, in which Aeneas holds funeral games for his dead father Anchises. The intertextual affinities between Book Five of the *Aeneid* and the Homeric epics are unmistakable. With his usual refinement and nicety of expression Papanghelis shows how the masterly reworking of Homeric motifs is indissolubly linked with wider ideological issues pertaining to the aspirations and concerns of the Roman Empire. Similarly, Hardie investigates the ways in which Ovid engages «in a contest of imitative *aemulatio* with his literary predecessors» (p. 396), using *Metamorphoses* 13.1-398 as a case study. He convincingly argues that there is no rigorous line of demarcation between the various literary influences; on the contrary, they are adeptly fused and intermingled. It is clear then that the Ovidian Judgment of Arms that pits Ajax against Ulysses in a contest of extreme ferociousness is thrown into startling relief by the constant adaptation of Homeric and Virgilian themes. Last but not least, Hellmann shows how Christa Wolf reinvents the heroic model through a radical reconfiguration of the Cassandra myth. Wolf's work consists of a long heart-rending soliloquy delivered by Cassandra, in which the Trojan princess reviews and debates important political and moral questions. In fact, as the recollection of past ills brought on by ruthless antagonism among men hangs like a dark cloud over the troubled mind of Cassandra, the principal interest of her emotionally charged narrative centres upon the denunciation of the highly competitive nature of the Homeric ideal and, more generally, the disapproval of distinctly patriarchal assurances and assumptions.

All in all, in this volume a superb international cast of contributors presents fresh and often fascinating assessments of epic poetry. More than that, this thoroughly argued and richly influential collection invites readers to appreciate the brilliance of such diverse authors as Hesiod, Theocritus, Virgil, and Ovid, paying special attention to matters of poetic imitation and modern reception. The length of this review is a tribute wrung from a favourable witness to this broad spectrum of engaging and challenging discussions and interpretations of ancient texts. It is therefore only fair to conclude by saying that the essays collectively demonstrate advances in our knowledge of Greek poetry over the last fifty years and suggest novel ways in which we might begin to conceive of certain key aspects of the epic tradition.

Τερέζα Πεντζοπούλου-Βαλαλά (έπιμ.), *Γοργίας* [Ἀρχαῖοι Συγγραφεῖς, 10], Ἀθήνα, Ζήτρος, 1999, σελ. 399.

Ποῖος ἦταν πράγματι ὁ ρήτορας Γοργίας; Ἦταν σοφιστής ἢ μήπως ἦταν φιλόσοφος; Ἡ Τερέζα Πεντζοπούλου-Βαλαλά, καθηγήτρια τῆς Φιλοσοφίας στο Ἀριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ ἀντεπιστέλλον μέλος τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν, δημοσίευσε μία ἐκτενῆ ἔρευνα μὲ τὸν τίτλο «Γοργίας» στὴν ὁποία παρουσιάζει τὸν Γοργία ὡς φιλόσοφο. Ὁ τόμος περιλαμβάνεται στὴ σειρά «Ἀρχαῖοι συγγραφεῖς» τῶν Ἐκδόσεων «Ζήτρος» τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης καὶ ὁ ὁποῖος πρόσφατα ἤρθε στὰ χέρια μου καὶ εἶχα τὸν χρόνο νὰ μελετήσω.

Ἡ συγγρ. συμπεραίνει ἀπὸ τὸν πλατωνικὸ διάλογο «Γοργίας», ὅτι ὁ ρήτορας Γοργίας «ἐνέχεται» στὴ φιλοσοφία, εἶναι δηλαδὴ ἔνοχος, ὄχι μόνον ἐπειδὴ αὐτὸς ἀδιαφορεῖ γιὰ τὸ περιεχόμενο τῶν λόγων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπειδὴ ὑποστηρίζει ὅτι ἡ ἀλήθεια εἶναι ἀπρόσιτη στὸν λόγο. Ἡ δευτέρη ἐνοχὴ ἀποτελεῖ καὶ τὴν ἀθώωσή του, γιὰτὶ πράγματι ἡ ἀλήθεια εἶναι ἀπρόσιτη στὸν λόγο. Ὁ Γοργίας διαπιστώνει τὴν ἀσυμμετρία λόγου καὶ πραγματικότητας καὶ στρέφεται ἀπὸ τὴν ἀλήθεια στὴν ἀληθοφάνεια, ἀπὸ τὸ σημανόμενο στὸ σημαῖνον. Ἐφόσον ἡ ρητορικὴ γίνεται ἡ μέριμνα γιὰ τὰ σημαίνοντα, μετατρέπεται σὲ καταφύγιο τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ δημιουργεῖ τὸ παιχνίδι τῶν λόγων ποὺ προσδιορίζονται μόνον ἀπὸ τὴ χρήση τους.

Σύμφωνα μὲ τὴ συγγρ. ὁ Γοργίας εἶναι ὁ ὑπέρμαχος μιᾶς «σκεπτικῆς» μεταφυσικῆς ποὺ ἀναγνωρίζει τὴν ἀδυναμία τοῦ λόγου νὰ καταλήξει σὲ τελεσιδικες ἀπαντήσεις καὶ τὴ δύναμη τοῦ λόγου νὰ παραμένει ζητητικὸς καὶ ἐρευνητικὸς. Ὁ πυρήνας τῆς φιλοσοφίας τοῦ Γοργία εἶναι ἡ διαλεκτικὴ πρόταση γιὰ τὴν ἀδυναμία καὶ τὴ δύναμη τοῦ λόγου.

Ἡ ἀδυναμία τοῦ λόγου ἀποτελεῖ τὸ θέμα τῆς φιλοσοφικῆς πραγματείας τοῦ Γοργία «Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος» ποὺ μᾶς εἶναι γνωστὴ ἀπὸ δύο μαρτυρίες ἀρχαίων συγγραφέων. Σύμφωνα μὲ τὴ συγγρ., ὁ Γοργίας εἶναι ἓνας ἀπὸ τοὺς σημαντικοὺς ἐκπροσώπους τῆς προπλατωνικῆς φιλοσοφίας, ἐπειδὴ γιὰ πρώτη φορὰ θέτει τὸ μὴ ὄν ὡς θεμελιώδη ἔννοια τῆς φιλοσοφίας. Γιὰ τὸν Γοργία ἡ διάκριση μεταξὺ ὄντος καὶ μὴ ὄντος αἴρεται, ἀφοῦ αὐτὰ προσδιορίζονται μὲ ἀμοιβαία ἀναφορὰ καὶ «εἶναι» ἐξίσου καὶ τὰ δύο. Ἀντὶ γιὰ τὴν ταυτότητα τοῦ νοεῖν καὶ τοῦ εἶναι, τὴν ὁποία εἶχε προβάλλει ὁ Παρμενίδης, ὁ Γοργίας ὑπογραμμίζει τὴν ἀγεφύρωτη διαφορὰ μεταξὺ ἀφενὸς τοῦ λόγου ποὺ νοεῖ καὶ λέγει καὶ ἀφετέρου τῆς ἀπόλυτης οὐσίας τῶν πραγμάτων.

Τὸ δεύτερο μέλος τῆς διαλεκτικῆς πρότασης, ἡ δύναμη τοῦ λόγου, ἀποτελεῖ τὸ θέμα στοὺς δύο λόγους τοῦ Γοργία, δηλαδὴ στὸ «Ἐλένης Ἐγκώμιον» καὶ στὴν «Ἐπεὶ Παλαμήδους Ἀπολογία». Ὁ πρῶτος λόγος μετατρέπεται σὲ φιλοσοφικὴ πραγματεία γιὰ τὴν περατότητα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ἡ Ἐλένη δὲν εἶναι ἔνοχη. Ὁ ἔρωτας εἶναι μιὰ δύναμη μὲ θεία

προέλευση, αλλά είναι και αδυναμία, γιατί ο άνθρωπος δεν ορίζει ο ίδιος τη μοίρα του. Ἄν ἡ ποίηση προβάλλει τὴν Ἑλένη ὡς τραγικὸ ἄνθρωπο, ἀπευθύνεται στὰ συναισθήματα τῶν ἀνθρώπων ποὺ παρακολουθοῦν τὸ δράμα τῆς κοινῆς μοίρας. Συνεπῶς ὁ Γοργίας πρέπει νὰ ἀναγνωρισθεῖ ὡς ὁ τραγικὸς φιλόσοφος καὶ συνάμα ὡς ὁ πρῶτος θεωρητικὸς τοῦ τραγικοῦ λόγου. Στὴν «Ἐπεὶ Παλαμήδους Ἀπολογία» ὀρισμένα ἐπιχειρήματα τοῦ Γοργία, ὅπως ὅσα ἀναφέρονται στὸ ἀποκλειόμενο τρίτο, στὴν ἀπουσία ἰδίου συμφέροντος ἢ στὸν πρότερο ἔντιμο βίον, ἐνδιαφέρουν καὶ τὴ δικανικὴ ἐρμηνευτικὴ. Ὡστόσο τὸ κύριο θέμα εἶναι ἡ σχέση ἀλήθειας καὶ ἀναλήθειας. Ὁ Παλαμήδης γνωρίζει ὅτι δὲν εἶναι ἔνοχος. Αὐτὴ ὅμως ἡ ἀλήθεια δὲν εἶναι αὐταπόδεικτη καὶ ὁ Παλαμήδης, γιὰ νὰ πείσει τοὺς δικαστές, πρέπει νὰ τὴ μετατρέψει σὲ «δόξα», σὲ μὴ ἀλήθεια. Ἐπομένως ἡ πειθῶ ἀποκτᾶ καθολικὸ νόημα καὶ ἐπωμίζεται καὶ τὸ βάρος τῆς ἀλήθειας.

Ὁ τόμος περιλαμβάνει τὴν ἐκτενῆ μελέτη (280 σελίδες), τὰ ἀρχαῖα ἑλληνικὰ κείμενα, τὸν ἐπίλογο καὶ ἀναλυτικὴ βιβλιογραφία.

Ἡ βαθυστόχαστη μελέτη τῆς Γερέζας Πεντζοπούλου-Βαλαῶ γιὰ τὸν Γοργία ἀναδεικνύει τὸν ρήτορα σὲ ἐκπρόσωπο τῆς φιλοσοφίας ποὺ προβάλλει τὴν ἀμφισημία τοῦ λόγου. Πρόκειται γιὰ μιὰ εὐρύτερη θεώρηση ποὺ ἔχει τὶς ἀπαρχές της στὸν ἀρχαῖο ἑλληνικὸ πολιτισμὸ καὶ χαρακτηρίζει καὶ τὴν ἐποχὴ μας. Ὡπως ὑπογραμμίζει ἡ συγγρ. ὁ Γοργίας εἶναι ἓνας αὐθεντικὸς φιλόσοφος ὁ ὁποῖος εἶναι σύγχρονός μας.

