

JOHAN C. THOM

Cleanthes'  
*Hymn to Zeus*

*Studien und Texte zu  
Antike und Christentum*

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**Mohr Siebeck**

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# Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*

Text, Translation, and Commentary

Mohr Siebeck

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*For Sjarlene*



## Preface

Although the *Hymn to Zeus* is often cited as one of the most important documents of early Stoic philosophy – indeed the only text to survive more or less intact – it has not yet received a detailed treatment in a monograph by itself. Besides its indubitable philosophical interest, the poem also provides crucial evidence for the way philosophy came to function as a form of religion from the Hellenistic period onwards. The present study strives to pay due attention to the most relevant factors which make this poem exceptional: the philosophical and moral ideas conveyed in poetic form, the religious underpinning given to Stoicism, and the intricate interaction with the preceding literary tradition. Cleanthes offers his own philosophical answer to the human moral dilemma in terms of the Greek cultural heritage; the *Hymn to Zeus* should therefore not simply be interpreted against the background of Stoicism in general.

In the relatively long gestation period of this book I built up a debt of gratitude to numerous friends, colleagues, and institutions who contributed to its making by variously providing logistical assistance, intellectual stimulus, and moral support. Along with other projects, the research was completed during an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship at the University of Tübingen in 1995, where Thomas Szlezák was my host; a Summer Scholarship at the Center for Hellenic Studies in 1999, then directed by Kurt Raaf-laub and Deborah Boedeker; and a Membership in the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study in 2001 and 2002, with Glen Bowersock as director and Heinrich von Staden as my discussion partner. I also benefited from conversations with Hans Dieter Betz, Abraham Malherbe, Elizabeth Asmis, Hans-Josef Klauck, Margaret Mitchell, David Konstan, John Fitzgerald, and Chris Faraone. To them all my sincere gratitude.

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*e le Attività Culturali*. The University of Stellenbosch granted me study leave to further my research for this book, and the National Research Foundation of South Africa provided financial assistance.

Finally, this book, as so many other things, would not have been possible without the encouragement, support, and companionship of my wife Sjarlene. I dedicate it to her with gratitude and appreciation.

Stellenbosch, May 2005

Johan Thom

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## Abbreviations

The abbreviations used for ancient texts are based on the lists in *The SBL handbook of style* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999). Those not found in that publication may easily be identified with the assistance of the *Oxford classical dictionary* (3rd ed., 1996). Abbreviations not listed in either of these reference works are given below.

CAG	Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca. Berlin: Reimer.
<i>Carm. aur.</i>	<i>Carmen aureum</i> (the Pythagorean <i>Golden Verses</i> )
DGE	Adrados, F. R., ed. 1980–. <i>Diccionario griego-español</i> . Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto de Filología.
F	Codex Farnesinus III D 15 (Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli)
IG	Inwood, B., and L. P. Gerson. 1997. <i>Hellenistic philosophy</i> . 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett.
LFE	Snell, B., and others, eds. 1955–. <i>Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos</i> . Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
KRS	Kirk, G. S., J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield. 1983. <i>The Presocratic philosophers: A critical history with a selection of texts</i> . 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
LS	Long, A. A., and D. N. Sedley, 1987. <i>The Hellenistic philosophers</i> . 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<i>PDerv.</i>	<i>Derveni papyrus</i>
v., vv.	verse (i.e., line) number(s) of the <i>Hymn to Zeus</i>



## Part I

# Introduction

The *Hymn to Zeus* by the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes is one of the most intriguing texts to survive from the Hellenistic period.<sup>1</sup> It is the only complete writing we have of any early Stoic author and therefore of immense significance for the history of Hellenistic philosophy; it is one of the most important witnesses to the process of interaction between philosophy and religion which gained momentum in the Hellenistic period, and consequently also of interest for the history of Hellenistic and Greco-Roman religions; and it is an excellent example of the way the form and conventions of Greek hymns were applied in the post-classical period, which also makes the *Hymn to Zeus* an important text for the history of Greek literature. The poem is therefore often described in superlative terms, variously praising its religious, philosophical, or poetic qualities.<sup>2</sup> A detailed study of all three aspects (philosophical, religious, and literary) is essential for understanding the poem; a crucial issue in the interpretation of the *Hymn to Zeus* is indeed the way these aspects interact. How one understands the relationship between them determines one's view of the function of the *Hymn* and its ultimate meaning. The latter are in turn closely related to questions of genre and composition. All these questions have to be addressed before we can turn to a commentary

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<sup>1</sup> It is preserved in Stobaeus, *Anth.* 1.1.12; see the discussion of the text in § 5 below.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Adam (1908, 27): "perhaps the noblest tribute of religious adoration in the whole range of ancient literature"; Wilamowitz (1912, 203): "ein viel zu wenig gewürdigtes Kleinod wahrhaft religiöser Dichtung"; Kern (1926–1938, 3:98): "wohl der schönste Hymnos in griechischer Sprache"; Pohlenz (1940, 117, 122; reprint 1965, 1:87, 92): "dieses einzigartige Zeugnis stoischer Frömmigkeit, das von dichterischer Phantasie ebenso wie von religiösem Gefühl getragen ist und dabei in jedem Worte auf die rationale Theorie der Stoa Bezug nimmt"; "das individuellste Zeugnis altstoischer Frömmigkeit"; Festugière (1949–1954, 2:311): "une des reliques les plus touchantes de la piété antique"; Des Places (1957, 118): "[le] sommet de la prière antique"; Renehan (1964, 382): "the most famous philosophical hymn in Greek literature"; Glei (1990, 583): "Mann sieht, daß Kleantes die ganze Spannweite der literarischen Tradition von den Anfängen bis in seine eigene Zeit umfaßt, und daß sein Hymnus nicht die ekstatische Äußerung eines blinden religiösen Impulses ist, sondern ein hochartifizielles literarischen Gebilde"; W. D. Furley (1993, 39): "Cleanthes' hymn to Zeus ... represents an elevated combination of the tradition of hexameter hymns with the highest Stoic conception of Zeus' cosmic power"; Bremer (1998, 135): "one of the most venerable hymnic texts from antiquity."

on the *Hymn*. But let us first consider the author of the poem and when it was written.

### 1. Author and Date

Cleanthes of Assos, son of Phaenias, succeeded Zeno of Citium as second head of the Stoa when the latter died in 262/1 BCE.<sup>3</sup> Modern reconstruction of the chronology of Cleanthes is based principally on the evidence of Philodemus, together with the testimonia of pseudo-Lucian, Valerius Maximus, Censorinus and Diogenes Laertius.<sup>4</sup> According to Philodemus, Cleanthes was born during the archonship of Aristophanes (331/0 BCE),<sup>5</sup> and died during that of Jason (231/0 or 230/29).<sup>6</sup> These dates are confirmed by pseudo-Lucian, Valerius Maximus, and Censorinus, according to whom Cleanthes reached the ripe age of ninety-nine years.<sup>7</sup> The evidence of Diogenes Laertius (7.176 = *SVF* 1.474) is somewhat ambiguous, due to a textual variation:

τὰς λοιπὰς ἀποσχόμενον τελευτῆσαι ταῦτὰ Ζήνωνι, καθὰ φασί τινες, [ὀγδοήκοντα] ἔτη βίωσαντα καὶ ἀκούσαντα Ζήνωνος ἔτη ἑννεακαίδεκα ([...] FDP<sup>3</sup>: om. BP<sup>1</sup>).

... he went on fasting the rest of his days until his death at the same age as Zeno according to some authorities,<sup>8</sup> having spent nineteen years as Zeno's pupil. (trans. Hicks in LCL)

If we accept the reading of FDP<sup>4</sup>, the translation would read: "... until he died in the same way as Zeno [i.e., by suicide] ..., having lived eighty years

<sup>3</sup> I.e., during the archonship of Arrhenides; cf. Philodemus, *De Stoic.* V.9–14 Dorandi. For the date, see Dorandi (1981; 1991, 24–26).

<sup>4</sup> See von Arnim (1921, 558–559), Pohlenz (1948–1949, 1:26–27, 2:16), Verbeke (1949, 52–57), Dorandi (1991, 23–28), and Steinmetz (1994, 566–567).

<sup>5</sup> Philodemus, *Index Stoic. Herc.* XXIX.1–5 Traversa: γεγονέναι Κλε||άνθην ἐπ' ἄρχον[τος] | Ἀριστοφάνους καὶ | τὴν σχολὴν δια|κατα||σχεῖν ἐπ' τριάκ[ον]τα καὶ [δύ]ο (γεγονέναι Κλε- suppl. Comparetti) (“[They say] that Cleanthes was born while Aristophanes was archon and that he directed the school for thirty-two years”). For the date, see Meritt (1961, 88–91; 1977, 169).

<sup>6</sup> *Index Stoic. Herc.* XXVIII.9–11: τοῦ βίου | ἀπηλλάγη [ἐπ' ἄρχοντος Ἰ]άσονος (“His departure from life was in the archonship of Jason”). For the date, see Meritt (1977, 177; 1981, 96).

<sup>7</sup> [Lucian] *Macrob.* 19 (*SVF* 1.475); Valerius Maximus 8.7 ext. 11; Censorinus, *DN* 15.3; Diogenes Laertius 7.176 (*SVF* 1.474).

<sup>8</sup> According to some witnesses, Zeno reached the age of ninety-eight; others, again, have him die at seventy-two (Diogenes Laertius 7.28); cf. Verbeke (1949, 53–54). Dorandi however refers to a passage in Philodemus, *De Stoic.* V.9 according to which Zeno was 101 when he died (1991, 26). This age agrees with Dorandi's reconstruction of Cleanthes' chronology (with which I agree); see below.

and having spent nineteen years as Zeno's pupil." Among modern scholars, Pohlenz and particularly Steinmetz defend this reading, arguing that an age of ninety-nine is in itself suspect, and that a birth date of 331/0 would mean that Cleanthes was about fifty when he started his studies with Zeno (i.e., if the nineteen years Cleanthes studied with Zeno were those immediately preceding the latter's death).<sup>9</sup> This, in their view, appears unlikely. If we accept a total age of eighty years, Cleanthes was born around 310, started his philosophical training at twenty-nine years of age, and would have been forty-eight when he took over from Zeno.<sup>10</sup> As von Arnim has pointed out, however, it is not necessary to assume that Cleanthes spent the last nineteen years of Zeno's life as his student; he could have completed his studies earlier and subsequently acted as Zeno's assistant.<sup>11</sup> The evidence, on balance, therefore supports the following chronology:

- 331/30 Cleanthes is born.  
 262/61 Zeno dies; Cleanthes becomes scholarch.  
 230/29 Cleanthes dies.

This in fact means that Cleanthes was 101 when he died, and not ninety-nine, and that he was sixty-nine when he took over from Zeno.<sup>12</sup> The evidence does not allow us to determine how old he was when he attached himself to Zeno.

Most of what we know of Cleanthes' life is anecdotal.<sup>13</sup> He was a boxer before coming to Athens, and maintained an athletic physique throughout his life. As a student in Athens he had to support himself by doing manual labor, watering gardens by night (Diogenes Laertius 7.168). His hard work, austerity, and dedication gave him, perhaps unfairly, a reputation as a slow learner.<sup>14</sup> Because of this, and perhaps because of his relatively mature age, he was often the target of fun, which he good-naturedly succeeded in turning in his favor. His fellow-students, for example, called him a donkey, to which he replied that he alone was able to carry the burden of Zeno's teachings

<sup>9</sup> If Cleanthes was born in 331, it means that he was sixty-nine when he became Zeno's successor in 262. Subtracting the nineteen years as Zeno's pupil (Diogenes Laertius 7.176) gives us fifty.

<sup>10</sup> See Pohlenz (1948–1949, 1:26, 2:16) and Steinmetz (1994, 565–567).

<sup>11</sup> Von Arnim (1921, 559), followed by Isnardi Parente (1989, 1:213).

<sup>12</sup> See Dorandi (1991, 26–27). We may share Steinmetz's incredulity that Zeno handed over the school to a septuagenarian (1994, 566), but that does not disprove it.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. esp. Diogenes Laertius 7.168–74 (*SVF* 1.463), 176 (*SVF* 1.474). For a brief discussion of this material see Guérard (Guérard, Goulet, and Queyrel 1994, 408–410) and Steinmetz (1994, 566–567); more extensively, but also more fanciful: Verbeke (1949, 58–65).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Gleis's protest that someone who lead one of the most important Hellenistic philosophical schools could not have been slow of understanding (1990, 578).



(170). Zeno himself reportedly compared Cleanthes to hard tablets, difficult to inscribe, but retaining what has been written on them.<sup>15</sup> When he became ill at an advanced age, his doctors prescribed fasting, but even when his health improved, he decided to continue fasting until he eventually died (176).

Karl Schefold tentatively identified a bronze statuette from Brindisi acquired by the British Museum in 1865 as a representation of Cleanthes.<sup>16</sup> Although this identification is by no means certain, it is nevertheless an attractive hypothesis, providing us with some further insight into the character of our author. There are at least four replicas of this figure, either headless, or with alien heads.<sup>17</sup> The figure is that of a bearded man, seated, with his chin on his right hand; it gives the impression of a forceful and observant person.<sup>18</sup>

We have the titles of fifty-seven writings attributed to Cleanthes, about half of them on ethics, the others on physics and logic. Most of these writings are listed by Diogenes Laertius (7.174–75 = *SVF* 1.481).<sup>19</sup> Besides these prose writings, there are a number of poetic fragments, including the *Hymn to Zeus*, which are not listed by name.<sup>20</sup> Several characteristics of Cleanthes' contribution are relevant for understanding the *Hymn to Zeus*. The first is that he tried to find historical support for Stoicism in the work of the Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus, to whom he devoted a four-volume commentary, as well as in various poets.<sup>21</sup> In this he may well have followed the example of

<sup>15</sup> Diogenes Laertius 7.37 (*SVF* 1.301); cf. Plutarch, *Rect. rat. aud.* 47e (*SVF* 1.464).

<sup>16</sup> *British Museum Catalogue of Bronzes*, no. 848; see Schefold (1943, 146–147, 213, no. 2). Cf. further the evidence cited by Queyrel (Guérard, Goulet, and Queyrel 1994, 414–415).

<sup>17</sup> See Richter (1965, 2:189–190).

<sup>18</sup> The statuette is described in detail by Esdaile, although she suggests that it represents Aristippus (1914, 47–59, esp. 47).

<sup>19</sup> In addition to the fifty in Diogenes' list, Steinmetz mentions seven other titles that are known from quotations (1994, 567–569), while Guérard has six (Guérard, Goulet, and Queyrel 1994, 410–412).

<sup>20</sup> See esp. Steinmetz (1994, 569). The poetic fragments include *SVF* 1.527, 537, 557, 559–62, 570, 573, 583, 586. Cf. further the material collected by Festa (1932–1935, 2:75–94) and the ten fragments published by Powell (1925, 227–231).

<sup>21</sup> For Cleanthes' commentary on Heraclitus, see Diogenes Laertius 7.174 (*SVF* 1.481). We do not have any extant fragments that may with certainty be ascribed to this work, but in Arius Didymus ap. Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 15.20.2 (*SVF* 1.519) Cleanthes uses his exegesis of Heraclitus to undergird Zeno's physical doctrines, which may be characteristic of the general approach in his *Interpretations of Heraclitus*. See also Long (1975–1976, 137, 150–151; reprint 1996, 39, 54) and Steinmetz (1994, 568, 569). For the influence of Heraclitus on early Stoics, Cleanthes in particular, see Long (1975–1976, 133–156; reprint 1996, 35–57) and Hahm (1977, 80–81). For his use of poets, cf. Philodemus, *Piet.* 13, p. 80 Gomperz (Diels, *Dox. Graec.*, 547.16–26; *SVF* 1.539): ἐν δὲ τῷ δευτέρῳ [sc. περὶ θεῶν Χρῦσιππος] τὰ τ(ε) εἰς Ὀρφέα (καὶ Μ)ουσαῖον ἀναφε(ρόμ)ε(ν)α καὶ (τ)ὰ παρ' (Ὀ)μήρω καὶ Ἡσιόδ(ω) καὶ Εὐρι(π)ίδῃ καὶ ποιηταῖς ἄλλοις, (ώ)ς κα(ί) Κλεάνθης, (π)ειρᾶτα(ι

Zeno.<sup>22</sup> The second is that Cleanthes was considered the most religious of the early Stoics.<sup>23</sup> He also had a special interest in theology and developed arguments for the existence of the gods.<sup>24</sup> He thirdly emphasized the importance of poetry to express the truth about the gods. He is criticized for this view in a fragment from Philodemus' *On Music*:

εἰ μ[ὴ] τῶι π[α]ρὰ Κλεάν[θ]ει λέ[γειν] [ῖσ]α θελήσουσιν, ὅς φησιν | [ἀ]μείν[ο]ν[α] |  
τε εἶναι τὰ ποιητικὰ | καὶ μ[ουσ]ικὰ παραδείγματα | καὶ τοῦ [λόγ]ου τοῦ τῆς  
φιλοσοφίας ἰκανῶς μὲν ἐξαγγέλλειν δυναμένου τὰ θεῖα καὶ | ἀ[ν]θ[ρ]ώ[π]ινα[ν].  
μὴ ἔχοντος δὲ | ψειλοῦ τῶν θείων μεγεθῶν | λέξεις οἰκείας, τὰ μέτρα καὶ | τὰ  
μέλη καὶ τοὺς ῥυθμοὺς | ὡς μάλιστα προσικνεῖσθαι | πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῆς τῶν |  
θείων θ[ε]ωρίας, οὗ καταγελαστότερον οὐ ῥαῖδιον εὐρεῖν. | “οὔτε γὰρ αἰ διάνοιαι  
μὲν οὐκ ὠφελῶ[ν]σιν, ὅταν δὲ μελω[δ]ηθῶσι[ν], ἐξ ἀμ[φ]οτέρ[ο]ν ἢ | παρόρ[μ]ησις  
[γίν]εται· καὶ γὰρ | ὑπὸ διανοη[μ]άτων αὐτῶν | γίνετ’ οὐδ[ὲ] μετρία, μετὰ δὲ | τῶν  
μελῶν μ[ε]ρίζων.”

... if they do not wish to make statements similar to that of Cleanthes, who says that poetic and musical examples are better, and that even though philosophical discourse is able to express divine and human matters adequately, it does not as prose have expressions proper to sublime divine objects, while meters and melodies and rhythms come closest to the truth of the contemplation of the divine – a more ridiculous statement than which is not easy to find. [Cleanthes says]: “It is not that ideas [alone] are not helpful, but when they are set to music, the stimulus comes from both sides; for while there comes a more than just moderate stimulus from the thoughts themselves, accompanied by melodies it is even greater.” (Philodemus, *Mus.* 4, XXVIII.1–22 Neubecker; in part in *S/V* 1.486)<sup>25</sup>

συνοικειοῦ(ν) ταῖς δόξαις αὐτῶν(ν) (“In the second book [sc. of *On the gods*, Chrysippus], just like Cleanthes, attempts to relate the works attributed to Orpheus and Musaeus and those of Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, and other poets, to their own ideas”).

<sup>22</sup> Zeno interpreted an oracle he received as a young man, namely, “to be in contact with the dead” (εἰ συγχρωτίζοιτο τοῖς νεκροῖς), to mean that he should study ancient authors (Diogenes Laertius 7.2). For Zeno’s use of earlier philosophers and poets, see Long (1975–1976, 133; reprint 1996, 35) and Steinmetz (1994, 520). The titles of his works include *Pythagorean Matters*, *Homeric Problems*, *On Listening to Poetry*, and *On Hesiod’s Theogony* (ibid., 521–24). For his interest in Heraclitus, cf. the suggestions by Long (1975–1976; reprint 1996, 35–57, passim) and Schofield (1999, 81).

<sup>23</sup> Cf., e.g., Festugière (1954, 111), Nilsson (1967–1974, 2:261), Long and Sedley (1987, 1:332), Annas (1996), and Sedley (1998).

<sup>24</sup> “Cleanthes explicitly set off theology from the rest of physics, or from physics in the narrow sense” (Algra 2003, 151). For Cleanthes’ arguments for the existence of the gods, see Dragona-Monachou (1976, 71–108).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the translation by Neubecker (1986, 112–113): “... wenn sie nicht Ansichten äußern wollen, die mit der Behauptung des Kleantes übereinstimmen: besser seien die Lehrbeispiele, wenn sie dichterische und musikalische Form hätten, und obschon die Sprache der Philosophie hinlänglich imstande sei, Göttliches und Menschliches darzustellen, so entbehre sie doch als Prosarede der Ausdrücke, die göttlicher Größe angemessen seien, Versmaße und Melodien und Rhythmen aber kämen der wahren Betrachtung des

Poetry is in fact a more effective medium of communication in general, because of the discipline imposed by it:

*nam, ut dicebat Cleanthes, quemadmodum spiritus noster clariorem sonum reddit, cum illum tuba per longi canalis angustias tractum patientiore novissime exitu effudit, sic sensus nostros clariores carminis arta necessitas efficit.*

Cleanthes used to say: “As our breath produces a louder sound when it passes through the long and narrow opening of the trumpet and escapes by a hole which widens at the end, even so the fettering rules of poetry clarify our meaning.” (Seneca, *Ep.* 108.10 = *SVF* 1.487; trans. Gummere in LCL)<sup>26</sup>

A fourth characteristic of Cleanthes’ work is the cosmological basis given to ethics by limiting Zeno’s *telos* formula of “living in accordance with nature” to refer to the nature of the universe only (Diogenes Laertius 7.89).<sup>27</sup> Finally, he taught a more austere ethics than either Zeno or Chrysippus.<sup>28</sup>

At which stage of Cleanthes’ career the *Hymn to Zeus* was written remains an open question.<sup>29</sup> Earlier attempts to date the *Hymn* on the basis of the possible literary relationship between the *Hymn to Zeus* v. 4a (ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γένος ἐσμὲν, “For we have our origin in you”) and Aratus, *Phaen.* 5a (τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος εἶμὲν, “For we are his offspring”) have proven unsuccessful. Wilamowitz, for example, considers the *Phaenomena* to be influenced by the *Hymn*,<sup>30</sup> and further holds the view that Aratus’ poem was written at the request of Antigonus Gonatas, which means that it should be dated shortly

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Göttlichen am nächsten – eine lächerlichere Behauptung als diese ist nicht leicht zu finden. (Er sagt nämlich): ‘Nicht, daß die Gedanken | allein uns keinen Nutzen brächten; wenn sie aber in musikalische Form gebracht sind, geht der Ansporn von beiden Elementen aus; er ist auch durch die Gedanken selbst nicht gering, in Verbindung mit Melodien aber stärker.’”

<sup>26</sup> Seneca’s quotation contains a wordplay on the double meaning of *clarior* (“louder.” “clearer”). It is difficult to determine whether this was already the case in Cleanthes’ statement, but a word like *σαφέστερος* could have been used in the same way.

<sup>27</sup> See further p. 115 in the Commentary.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Steinmetz (1994, 575) and the Commentary on vv. 27–29.

<sup>29</sup> That Cleanthes was the author cannot be doubted. He is clearly identified as such in the margin of codex Farnesinus next to the text of the poem. The only attempt to call the authorship of the *Hymn* into question was by Mohnike (1814). His publication was unavailable to me, but see the criticism by Petersen (1829, 1–6).

<sup>30</sup> According to Wilamowitz, Aratus is dependent on Cleanthes, for “nur die Stoa macht den Menschen zum Geslechtsgenossen Gottes.” This idea could not have originated with Aratus, since he was no philosopher; the *καὶ* in Aratus’ verse already indicates that he is the one reciting (1895, 196–197 with n1). (For a different interpretation of the *καὶ* see D. Kidd 1997, 166). See also Pasquali (1911, 115), Festugière (1949–1954, 2:317) (although he admits the possibility that the opposite relationship may obtain in 317n5), Nilsson (1967–1974, 2:262), Stark (1963, 364n6, 365), and more recently D. Kidd (1997, 166).

after 276 BCE.<sup>31</sup> If Cleanthes' *Hymn* is indeed earlier, he had to have written it within his first few years as a student of Zeno, assuming that he studied with Zeno in the last nineteen years of the latter's life.<sup>32</sup> Festa however argues that the *Hymn* is a product of Cleanthes' philosophical maturity and written only after he took over as head of the Stoa; consequently he contends that Cleanthes was influenced by Aratus.<sup>33</sup> As we shall see, the constitution of the text of v. 4 of the *Hymn to Zeus* is much too uncertain to draw any definite conclusions about its literary relationship with *Phaen.* 5; it is not inconceivable that the copyist of codex Farnesinus (the only extant MS containing the *Hymn to Zeus*) allowed himself to be influenced by Aratus' text when copying v. 4.<sup>34</sup> A further complicating factor is the uncertainty of the date of the *Phaenomena* itself. Although the idea that the *Phaenomena* was requested by Antigonos Gonatas is nowadays considered an ancient fiction,<sup>35</sup> the most recent editor of the work, Douglas Kidd, thinks this story "at least ... suggests that the *Phaenomena* was written at Pella in the years following 276."<sup>36</sup> If this is the case, and if Aratus was indeed influenced by Cleanthes, the *Hymn to Zeus* could have been written ca. 280, when Cleanthes was about fifty, but before he became head of the school. This remains, however, nothing but speculation.

The fact that Cleanthes wrote a poem about Zeus is not surprising, considering the importance he attached to poetry as the appropriate mode for expressing the truth concerning the divine. It remains to be seen, however, why Cleanthes wrote a hymn in particular.

## 2. Genre, Style, Function, and Setting

The title *Hymn to Zeus* has a modern provenance; Stobaeus only indicates the author of the poem in his *Anthology*. Cleanthes nevertheless indicates the genre of the poem implicitly by using the root ὕμν- several times, both in the beginning (καθ' ὑμνήσω, v. 6) and at the end, indeed in the very last word of

<sup>31</sup> See also Knaack (1896, 392).

<sup>32</sup> Wilamowitz (1889, 3; 1895, 197–198; 1912, 203).

<sup>33</sup> Festa (1935, 173–174); cf. also Pohlenz (1948–1949, 2:62) and Des Places (1964, 138). Dependence by Cleanthes on Aratus is accepted by Webster (1964, 36, 37, 216), Glei (1990, 581–582), and Steinmetz (1994, 578). Others are agnostic: according to Ludwig the chronological relationship between the two poems cannot be determined with certainty (1965, 27), while for James "the question of chronological priority between Cleanthes' hymn and Aratus' poem ... seems ... to be unresolvable" (1972, 28). In Hose's view, the two poems were written at more or less the same time (1997, 62).

<sup>34</sup> See the Commentary on v. 4 on p. 62 below.

<sup>35</sup> See Ludwig (1965, 27, 32) and Fantuzzi (1996, 958).

<sup>36</sup> D. Kidd (1997, 5).

the poem (ὕμνοῦντες, v. 37; ὕμνεῖν, v. 39).<sup>37</sup> What is more, the poem clearly manifests the form and motifs of a traditional cult hymn, most important of which is the fact that the *Hymn to Zeus*, like the traditional hymn, has a threefold structure of Invocation (vv. 1–6), Argument (or Praise) (vv. 7–31), and Prayer (vv. 32–39).<sup>38</sup> In the traditional cult hymn the Invocation typically contains an indication of whom the author intends to address. The precise identification of the god was considered of utmost importance in order to establish the channel of communication.<sup>39</sup> This was accomplished by using the correct name or names, and listing all the relevant attributes of the god. The Argument section of a hymn serves to evoke the presence of the god and provides an argument on the basis of which the prayer can be made. The means used to accomplish this include repeated addresses to the god, references to his or her powers, reminders of earlier benefits, accounts of the god's actions, and narratives concerning the god.<sup>40</sup> The Prayer section is the climax of the hymn as a whole; both the two previous sections serve to lay the groundwork for an appeal to the god's goodwill and assistance.<sup>41</sup> As will become clear in the discussion of the composition, this description of the different parts of a hymn is directly applicable to the *Hymn to Zeus* as well.

We also find other elements characteristic of traditional hymns throughout the poem.<sup>42</sup> These include (a) the repetition of the second person singular pronoun (vv. 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 15, 18, 19, [33], 34, 35, 36, 37);<sup>43</sup> (b) references to Zeus as origin of all things (v. 2) and as father (v. 34);<sup>44</sup> (c) the hyperbolic style expressed by derivatives and synonyms of words such as πᾶς, πολὺς, μόνος and αἰεὶ (vv. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 20, 21, 23, 32, 35, 37, 39),<sup>45</sup> as well as by the antithetical formula “from you, without you” (vv. 4, 15)<sup>46</sup>

<sup>37</sup> See Difabio de Raimondo (2000, 22).

<sup>38</sup> For the traditional form of a hymn, see Wünsch (1914), Keyßner (1932), Bremer (1981), Berger (1984, 1149–1171), Thraede (1993), Burkert (1994), W. D. Furley (1993; 1998), and Furley and Bremer (2001, 1:1–64). See also the valuable bibliography on hymns collected by Latke (1991). For the terminology used for the tripartite structure, see esp. Bremer (1981) and Furley and Bremer (2001, 1:51). In the latter publication the authors also propose the Greek terms *epiklēsis*, *eulogia*, and *euchē*. Norden already adopted the term *eulogia* for the middle section (1923, 149).

<sup>39</sup> Furley and Bremer (2001, 1:52).

<sup>40</sup> See Furley and Bremer (2001, 1:58–59); also Wünsch (1914, 145).

<sup>41</sup> See Furley and Bremer (2001, 1:60) and Wünsch (1914, 145).

<sup>42</sup> For these conventional elements see the detailed study by Keyßner (1932).

<sup>43</sup> The so-called “Du-Stil”; see Norden (1923, 143–163).

<sup>44</sup> Keyßner (1932, 14–28, esp. 16–17, 22–23).

<sup>45</sup> Keyßner (1932, 28–48).

<sup>46</sup> Keyßner (1932, 29). This formula is first discussed by Norden (1923, 157n3, 159n1, 349–350).

and by the repetition of the causal conjunction γάρ (vv. 3, 4, 11, 20);<sup>47</sup> (d) the explicit mention of the power of the god (vv. 6, 8), the honor associated with it (v. 36), the symbol of his power (v. 9–10), and expressions indicating his might, such as χύδιστος (v. 1) and βασιλεύς (v. 14);<sup>48</sup> (e) references to the god's assistance, deliverance and beneficence (vv. 32–35), and to the “good life” made possible by him (v. 25);<sup>49</sup> and finally, (f) the emphasis on the reciprocal relationship between the god and the one praying (vv. 36–37).<sup>50</sup>

As may be expected in a hexameter hymn, typical epic forms occur throughout the poem, but Cleanthes did not hesitate to use and adapt expressions from non-epic sources as well.<sup>51</sup> His meter has been described by one commentator as “rather rough-hewn verse,” especially because of several awkward hiatuses (e.g., vv. 10, 18, and perhaps 33),<sup>52</sup> but on the whole the poem reflects the work of a competent craftsman. Especially impressive are the well-balanced composition and the way Cleanthes succeeded in combining traditional literary and religious material with philosophical ideas.<sup>53</sup> Some of the more obvious sources he used in the *Hymn* are Homer, Hesiod, Solon, Heraclitus, and Orphic-Pythagorean material.<sup>54</sup>

The *Hymn to Zeus* is, of course, not simply a traditional cult hymn. It was after all the philosopher Cleanthes who wrote it, and the Zeus to whom the *Hymn* is addressed, is for a Stoic not merely the chief Olympian deity, but the active principle in the Stoic system. We may therefore expect this hymn to belong to the genre of philosophical hymns, which are addressed to personifications of impersonal principles, or to traditional deities allegorized as principles of nature.<sup>55</sup> Examples of philosophical hymns are the hymn to Eros in the early Academy, Aristotle's hymn to Virtue, Ariphron's hymn to Health

<sup>47</sup> Keyßner (1932, 29).

<sup>48</sup> Keyßner (1932, 48–84, esp. 53–60, 79–84).

<sup>49</sup> Keyßner (1932, 104–107, 124–125, 158–159).

<sup>50</sup> Keyßner (1932, 134).

<sup>51</sup> See James (1972, 28–33) and Difabio de Raimondo (2000). These forms will be discussed in more detail where appropriate in the Commentary.

<sup>52</sup> Hopkinson (1988, 132). His meter also displays other irregularities that Alexandrian poets tried to avoid; see Cunningham (1977).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Webster (1964, 217): “It is good hymn-writing by a competent poet with real religious feeling.”

<sup>54</sup> See the discussion in § 4 below and the Commentary, *passim*.

<sup>55</sup> For the philosophical hymn in general, see Meunier (1935), Giordano (1957), Des Places (1957), Thraede (1993, 933–935), W. D. Furley (1993, 38–41; 1998, 790–791), and Furley and Bremer (2001, 1:47). For the *Hymn to Zeus* as philosophical hymn see, e.g., Giordano (1957, 45–55), Renehan (1964, 382), Untersteiner (1980, 54–57), W. D. Furley (1993, 39–40; 1998, 790–791), and Burkert (1994, 12).

(Hygieia),<sup>56</sup> and Proclus' hymns in late antiquity. Such hymns represent a movement that started in the fourth century BCE, that is, a trend in which worship of traditional Olympian gods is replaced by the "cultic deification of abstract forces."<sup>57</sup> Even though the deities invoked in philosophical hymns are non-traditional, these hymns usually still conform to the formal requirements of cult hymns. A notable exception is that the Prayer section is often omitted (cf., e.g., Aristotle and Ariphron's hymns), as Menander Rhetor also observes concerning "scientific hymns" (ὕμνοι φυσιολογικοί): "In these hymns there is no need of a prayer at all" (εὐχῆς δὲ οὐδέν τι πάνυ χρῆ ἐπὶ τούτων, 1.337.25–26; trans. Russell and Wilson). It is therefore not insignificant that the Prayer forms a substantial part of Cleanthes' *Hymn* (eight out of thirty-nine verses).

The Prayer section in the *Hymn to Zeus* indeed creates problems for viewing the work as merely a philosophical hymn. Some scholars have argued, however, that the prayer at the end of the *Hymn* is inconsistent with Stoic philosophy, and that it should not be taken at face value. They point out that within Stoicism Zeus represents the active principle of order and rationality that permeates the whole of the cosmos. He is in fact often identified with aspects of the physical world, such as nature, reason, providence, fate, or the law of nature, or even with the world itself. Because human beings participate in this universal reason which permeates the world, it is not meaningful for them to petition Zeus as if he were a separate, transcendent deity. The insight requested of Zeus in the Prayer may indeed be found within ourselves; it is not necessary to look for it elsewhere. Furthermore, because Zeus himself is identified with fate, and because we are part of this causal sequence of events, whether we want to or not, it is useless to try to change fate by praying.<sup>58</sup> While earlier classicists such as Wilamowitz still viewed the *Hymn* as an expression of the human need for religiosity, despite the fact that it is in conflict with the philosophical doctrines of the Stoic school,<sup>59</sup> other more

<sup>56</sup> For recent discussions of Aristotle and Ariphron's hymns, see Furley and Bremer (2001, 1:224–227, 262–266).

<sup>57</sup> Parker (1996a, 235); see also Furley and Bremer (2001, 1:47).

<sup>58</sup> See Algra (2003, 174–175), who cites Seneca, *Nat.* 2.35. Cf. also Hadas (1959, 203): "The logic of the Hellenistic philosophies virtually precluded the possibility of prayer. The Stoics believed in a divine providence which regulated all things, and nothing could therefore be changed by prayer.... Men must follow providence in any case, and all that is left to pray for is that he follow willingly."

<sup>59</sup> See Wilamowitz (1925–1926, 1:323, 325): "Es bedarf geringer Überlegung, einzusehen, daß dem Feuer, das zugleich Vernunft, Notwendigkeit und Vorsehung war, das Prädikat der Gottlichkeit zukam, aber auch, daß dieser Gott zugleich materiell und ganz unpersönlich war, so daß ein Gebet an ihn nur in der Ergebung in die Notwendigkeit und in der schrankenlosen Bewunderung der ewigen allweisen Weltordnung bestehen konnte."

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Unless indicated otherwise, editions of ancient texts are those listed in L. Berkowitz and K. A. Squitier, *Thesaurus linguae Graecae: Canon of Greek authors and works* (3rd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), or published in the Loeb Classical Library.

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