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RECONSIDERING ZEUS' ORDER: THE RECONCILIATION OF APOLLO AND HERMES¹

ABSTRACT: *This paper argues that the Homeric Hymn to Hermes explores competing ways of approaching the world through the figures of Hermes and Apollo. Apollo's reliance on the established world, partially marked by the knowledge of εἰδέναι, is insufficient in understanding Hermes, who aligns himself with the flexible capacity of νόος. Whereas Apollo eliminates his rivals in order to establish himself permanently, Hermes exploits unexplored potentials in order to create space alongside the established gods in the Olympian order. Ultimately, the newly forged friendship of Apollo and Hermes helps us understand the nature of Zeus more fully.*

I. Introduction

The presence of Apollo in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* may seem intrusive in a hymn designed to honor the god Hermes. Making his first appearance in line 185, Apollo occupies the stage alone for roughly ten percent of the lines, and he shares the stage with Hermes for the remaining roughly sixty percent. Several scholars have observed this peculiarity, and a variety of approaches to this dilemma have been explored.² In this paper, I will argue that the hymnist of *HH Hermes* focuses on the relationship between Hermes and Apollo in order to explore two competing ways of interacting with the world. Whereas he strongly ties Apollo to a world of preexisting factual information, especially by means of reference to seeing and the knowledge of the Greek term εἰδέναι (literally “to have seen”), he uses Hermes to push us to embrace alternate worlds created by his inventiveness, made possible through a νόος (“mind”) well suited to new ways of understanding.³ Through that inventiveness, Hermes not only brings change to the physical world, but also to the relationships that exist among the Olympians themselves, particularly those of Apollo and Zeus.

The *Homeric Hymns* are an ideal place to explore the tensions of the Olympian system. As J. Clay has demonstrated, the poetry of Hesiod works out the turbulent rise to power of Zeus, and the poetry

¹ I follow M. L. West, *Homeric Hymns, Homeric Apocrypha, Lives of Homer* (Cambridge 2003) for the text of *HH Apollo* and *HH Hermes*. All translations of Greek are my own.

² J. Clay (*The Politics of Olympus* [London 2006] 100–103) has an overview of scholarly approaches to this contest. In addition to Clay, S. Johnston (“Myth, Festival, and Poet: The Homeric Hymn to Hermes and Its Performative Context,” *CP* 97 [2002] 109–32, and “‘Initiation’ in Myth, ‘Initiation’ in Practice: The Homeric Hymn to Hermes and its Performative Context” in *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives: New Critical Perspectives* [New York 2003] 155–80) has explored connections between *HH Hermes* and Greek initiatory practices.

³ Throughout the discussion of *HH Hermes*, when I make reference to Apollo, I am referring to Apollo as he appears in this hymn. References to Apollo in connection with *HH Hermes* are not meant to be an all-encompassing reading of Apollo in Greek thought. I heed J. Clay’s (“Tendenz and Olympian Propoganda in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo” in J. Solomon, ed., *Apollo: Origins and Influences* [Tucson 1994] 23–36) suggestion that “Apollo is a complex, even ambiguous, figure, multifaceted rather than monolithic” (25).

of Homer explores the way that the world works once Zeus' rule has become stabilized. In the gap between these two (theogonic and epic poetry), there is space in which the problems of the Olympian order are worked out.⁴ In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, when Apollo is presented with an opponent who threatens to destabilize the order he wishes to impose on the cosmos (e.g. Pytho or Telphousa), he eliminates them and takes their names. In the *HH Hermes*, we are presented with another way for a god to gain recognition among the Olympians.⁵ Rather than destroying his opponents, Hermes allows Apollo to hold onto his τιμαί so long as he is willing to join in friendship. Through his own inventiveness, Hermes is able to open up parallel spaces within the established cosmos. As a result of Hermes' exploits, we are reminded of the importance of thinking about the Greek pantheon as a dynamic system in which our understanding of the cosmos comes from the complementary and competing attributes of the Olympian gods.⁶

The competing and complementary qualities of εἰδέναι and νόος as ways of understanding our world provide nice parallels to the relationship between Apollo and Hermes. It will be useful to discuss briefly the relationship between these two terms in archaic Greek poetry before turning to the *Homeric Hymns* in particular. Following this discussion, I will examine episodes from *HH Apollo* in which Apollo shares key characteristics of the knowledge of εἰδέναι. I will then argue that the hymnist of *HH Hermes* picks up on these qualities of Apollo, aligning him with εἰδέναι's emphasis on the past. In contrast, the hymnist aligns Hermes with νόος in order to highlight his ability to beguile

⁴ Clay (above, n.2) 15.

⁵ Whether or not the hymnist of *HH Hermes* would be familiar with *HH Apollo* is irrelevant to my argument. It seems reasonable to assume that some aspects of Apollo that we can glimpse in *HH Apollo* might be generally applied to Apollo in Greek thinking. In *HH Hermes*, Apollo has been used as a caricature against which the hymnist can contrast his main subject. Johnston 2003 (above, n.2) has a succinct summary of scholarship on the issue of the dating of *HH Hermes* (174 n.5). G. Kirk ("The Homeric Hymns" in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature Volume 1: Early Greek Poetry* [Cambridge 1985] 69–75), R. Janko (*Homer, Hesiod, and the Hymns* [Cambridge 1982]), and S. Eitrem ("Der homerische Hymnus an Hermes," *Philologus* 65 [1906] 248–82) place the date of the hymn sometime between the late sixth and early fourth century, with most opinions giving preference for a dating at the end of the sixth or beginning of the fifth century. Recently, R. Johnston and D. Mulroy ("The Hymn to Hermes and the Athenian Altar of the Twelve Gods," *CW* 103 [2009] 3–16) have made the argument that we should follow N. Brown's (*Hermes the Thief: The Evolution of a Myth* [Madison, Wis., 1947]) suggestion that the hymn be dated to the founding of the Altar of the Twelve Gods in Athens in 522/521 B.C.E., connecting Hermes' journey through Pylos with Peisistratid ancestry from Neleus, the father of Nestor.

⁶ See D. Jaillard (*Configurations d'Hermès: Une "théogonie hermaïque"* [Liège 2007]): *Si les pantheons ne sont reductibles ni à des amalgèmes arbitraires ni à des structures statiques à l'intérieur desquelles chaque divinité occuperait une place pré-définie, il faut tenter de comprendre comment s'opèrent, en leur sein, mouvements et déplacements, comment ils émergent et se recomposent au gré des communautés de dieux qui tissent l'histoire des cités* ("If pantheons are not reducible either to arbitrary mixtures or to static structures within which each divinity occupies a predefined place, one must attempt to understand how movements and displacements take place within them, how they emerge and are reformed to the liking of the communities of gods which weave the history of cities" 16).

the faculty of sight and to insist on a world of multiple, simultaneous possibilities.⁷ In the interaction between Apollo, driven by the visual knowledge associated with εἰδέναι, and Hermes, trusting in the ability of his νόος to challenge the permanence of the existing world, the hymnist presents us with a fuller understanding Zeus.

II. εἰδέναι and νόος/νοεῖν

If we look across archaic Greek poetry, we find that εἰδέναι is connected with visual perception, rooted in past experience, and maintains an enduring gnomic quality. As has often been observed, εἰδέναι is the perfect form of seeing (ἰδεῖν), and there remains a strong connection between this kind of knowledge and the visual in archaic poetry.⁸ Semonides (7.13–14) describes his dog woman as one who wishes to know (εἰδέναι) everything and, as a result, looks into (παπταίνουσα) everything. Homer provides a reminder of the importance of vision in the knowledge of εἰδέναι by combining forms of it with the adverb σάφα (clearly). Of the twenty-one occurrences of this adverb in Homer, fifteen occur with forms of εἰδέναι. The woman who informs the suitors about Penelope's trick is one who "knows it clearly" (*Od.* 2.108 and 24.144: σάφα ἦδη) because she has seen Penelope unraveling the weaving. Aias boasts to Hektor that "he will clearly know" (*Il.* 7.226: σάφα εἴσειαι) the bravery of the Danaans as a result of the duel. In other words, Aias promises that he will demonstrate what a Greek can do in combat so Hektor may come to know what Greek bravery is.

There is also the sense that humans are limited in this kind of knowledge as a result of limited scope of vision. Regarding the invocation of the Muses in *Il.* 2.485–486, B. Snell notes, "The goddesses are superior to men for the simple reason that they are always on hand, and have seen everything, and know it now—both notions are contained in the ἴστε of line 485 and in the ἴμεν of line 486."⁹ The omnipresence of the Muses allows them to witness firsthand what mortals cannot, and in this way their inspiration enables poets to have greater perspective.

We should see the unpredictability of the future in similar terms. Semonides (1.4) and Solon (13.65) both speak of our inability to know it because of this unpredictability. In order to further highlight the limited scope of human knowledge, Semonides draws a comparison between humans and cattle. Fixated on the ground for food, cattle are narrowly focused in their present pursuits. Likewise in comparison with the gods, humans are narrowly focused on the pursuits of a brief span of time, incapable of appreciating the full scope of Zeus' will.

⁷ Hermes' insistence on viewing the world as one of multiple, simultaneous possibilities may help us understand why the hymnist uses humor throughout the hymn. For a fuller description of this, see C. Bungard, "Lies, Lyres, and the Laughter of Surplus Potential in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*," *Arethusa* 44 [2011] 143–65.

⁸ See *Il.* 2.485–486, *Od.* 13.239, *Theogony* 370, *Works and Days* 187, *HH Demeter* 133, *HH Hermes* 376, *HH Aphrodite* 207.

⁹ B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought*, tr. T. G. Rosenmeyer (New York 1960) 136–37.

Homer poses storytelling as avenue to circumvent some of the limitations of human visual perception. Through storytelling, humans may come to know things beyond what they can observe. In *Iliad*, book 20, Aineias replies to Akhilleus' taunt,

ἴδμεν δ' ἀλλήλων γενεήν, ἴδμεν δὲ τοκήας,
 πρόκλυτ' ἀκούοντες ἔπεα θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
 ὄψει δ' οὐτ' ἄρ πω σὺ ἐμοὺς ἴδες οὐτ' ἄρ' ἐγὼ σοῦς.
 (20.203–205)

We know each other's lineage. We know our parents since we have heard the renowned words of mortal men, but by sight, you have not yet seen mine, nor I yours.

Aineias claims to know (ἴδμεν) Akhilleus' family through stories, but he feels the need to qualify what he means by ἴδμεν. Though these two warriors have never seen (ὄψει) each other's ancestors in person, Aineias claims that stories are a suitable replacement for firsthand experience. When autopsy is not possible because of constraints of space and time, the works of the poets provide a window through which one may come to know through seeing.

This leads to the next main aspect of the knowledge associated with εἰδέναι, namely the importance of the past. Mimnermos speaks of the joy of youth that comes from our lack of experience of/known (εἰδότες) either good or bad (2.4). Arkhilokhos can lead the dithyramb because he has experience/knows how to do so (120.2). Sappho calls upon her departing lover to reflect on their past because she knows how she was cared for (94.8). In the *Iliad*, both Athena and Hera seek to assuage Zeus by acknowledging that they know/have experienced his superior strength (8.30 and 8.463). Right before the quote above, Aineias tells Akhilleus that it is futile to try to frighten him because he knows/has experience in taunting words (20.201), a line echoed shortly afterwards by Hektor (20.432). In all of these examples, we see that the knowledge of εἰδέναι reflects upon the past's impact on the present. We can draw a link between the past and the present through εἰδέναι, and, as will become apparent shortly, there is a sense of permanence in this linkage.

Several uses of εἰδέναι introduce gnomic statements, implying a stable and timeless quality to this knowledge. Arkhilokhos observes that the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog one big thing (201). Though there may be countless iterations of foxes and hedgehogs, they remain predictable in their defining qualities. Alkaios twice uses εἰδέναι with perennial knowledge. He tells his addressee that one ought to throw gifts to prostitutes into the sea, and if someone does not know this, then he can persuade him so (117b.26–28). Similarly, he expresses his sure knowledge (οἶδ' ἦ μὰν) that if one moves gravel, he will get a headache (344). In both instances, the content of what one knows remains constant and unchanging over time. Once this knowledge comes into being, it persists through time.

We can see this sense of fixed knowledge through several uses of εἰδέναι in the *Iliad*. As Agamemnon responds to the broken truce, he claims to know (4.163: οἶδα κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν) that Troy, Priam, and his people will perish. Hektor later echoes Agamemnon word for word (6.447) as he explains to his wife why he must go out and fight. Finally, Akhilleus asks Xanthos about the point in prophesying death since he knows it his fate to die on the plains of Troy (19.421). As with the gnomic uses of εἰδέναι, we find in these examples an unchanging link between the past and the future. As the fates of Troy and Akhilleus have been fixed in the past for the future, so too the knowledge of them remains unchanging until they have come to pass, at which point they continue as events to be understood through εἰδέναι.

As we turn to thinking about the kind of understanding associated with νόος/νοεῖν, it will be useful first to contemplate a passage from the *Iliad* where νόος/νοεῖν and εἰδέναι are used in close association. As Hera goads Zeus in the opening book of the poem, she complains that he hides his plans from her, refusing to reveal them through speech (1.541–543). Zeus chastises her for desiring to know all of his plans (1.545–546) before promising her that she will be the first to know any thoughts that are right for gods to hear (1.547–548). He then ends by warning her about asking about plans that he wishes to devise apart from the gods using his νόος (1.549: νοῆσαι). In contrast to εἰδέναι that takes in publicly visible information, νόος may conceal the understanding of a person from outsiders.¹⁰ There is often a visual component to understanding connected with νόος, but, as B. Snell has argued, “*noein* does not involve the knowledge acquired through sight, as *eidénai* . . . but instead the significance of something that becomes clear upon looking at it.”¹¹ To νοεῖν someone or something is an act of decoding information that has been encoded by another. For example, understanding a divine omen is not simply an act of observation, but rather an act that involves the decoding of several pieces of information in conjunction with each other. Observing a flying bird is insufficient without taking into account other conditions (number or kinds of birds, direction, etc.).¹²

¹⁰ Similarly at *Iliad* 16.19, Akhilleus asks Patroklos to reveal his angst, not hiding it in his νόος, so they might both know (εἶδομεν).

¹¹ B. Snell, “The Forging of a Language for Science in Ancient Greece,” *CJ* 56 (1960) 53. For an overview of the study of νόος, see B. Snell, *Lexikon des Frühgriechischen Epos*, vol. 3 (Göttingen 2004). For more discussion on νόος as a faculty that analyzes the visual in order to direct response, see also K. von Fritz (“Nous, Noein, and Their Derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy [Excluding Anaxagoras]: Part II. The Post-Parmenidean Period,” *CP* 41 [1946] 12–34), T. Krischer (“Νόος νοεῖν, νόημα,” *Glotta* 62 [1984] 141–49), and J. Barnouw (*Odysseus, Hero of Practical Intelligence: Deliberation and Signs in Homer's Odyssey* [Lanham 2004]). For more on the connection between νόος and vision see K. von Fritz (“Noos and Noein in the Homeric Poems,” *CP* 38 [1943] 79–93), S. Darcus (“How a Person relates to νόος in Homer, Hesiod, and the Greek Lyric Poets,” *Glotta* 58 [1980] 39–44), and S. Sullivan (“Noos and Vision: Five Passages in the Greek Lyric Poets,” *SO* 6 [1988] 7–17 and “The Mind and Heart of Zeus in Homer and the Homeric Hymns,” *ABG* 37 [1994] 101–26).

¹² For more on νόος, signs, and decoding/encoding, see G. Nagy, “Sēma and Noēsis: Some Illustrations,” *Arethusa* 16 (1983) 35–55.

We can see the work of νόος in encoding and decoding through a comparison of Antinoos and Alkinoos from the *Odyssey*. As J. Leshner notes, the *Odyssey* is especially marked by moments in which characters see, but fail to notice, recognize, or realize what it is that they truly see.¹³ Despite several warnings, Antinoos (ἀντί-νόος) dismisses the danger that looms over him in Odysseus' household. After Odysseus strings the bow, he nods to his son who understands the significance of the nod and grabs his sword (21.431–434). Odysseus makes a proclamation and takes aim at Antinoos. In contrast to Telemakhos, Antinoos is about to enjoy a drink, unaware of his impending death (22.11–12).

Alkinoos (ἄλκῆ-νόος) is the only one who notices (ἐνόησεν) Odysseus weeping at the song of Demodokos (*Od.* 8.533). Blessed with a stout νόος, he is able to decode the significance of Odysseus' weeping. He recognizes that the mirthful banquet may be threatened by Odysseus' grief, and as a result, he bids Demodokos to stop playing the lyre. He bids his guest to become the focal point of entertainment, urging him to reveal his story. Through an application of νόος, Alkinoos is able to bring to light hidden information so that it may become known to his people.¹⁴

In addition to encoding and decoding, I would suggest that νόος has a markedly future orientation. Rather than representing understanding that is rooted in the past or is timeless in nature, νόος aims at specific goals that may be of temporary usefulness. Homer twice speaks of νόος as something that can achieve its τέλος (of Peleus vowing Akhilleus' lock to Sperkhios in *Il.* 23.149 and the suitors laying out a plan in *Od.* 22.215). Hesiod describes the journey of the Argonauts and the abduction of Medea as the fulfillment of Zeus' νόος (*Theogony* 1002: μέγαλου δὲ Διὸς νόος ἐξετελεῖτο), a phrase echoed by *HH Hermes* 10. Unlike εἰδέναι, which makes meaning of completed actions, νόος starts from an imperfect point and aims at a specific goal.

Because it is future-oriented, νόος lacks the fixity that we can associate with εἰδέναι. In her discussions of νόος in Homer, Hesiod, and the *Homeric Hymns*, S. Sullivan has noted several instances where flexibility and changeability are an essential component.¹⁵ I would draw particular attention to *Works and Days* 483–484 where Hesiod suggests that the νόος of Zeus is difficult to νοῆσαι (“to process with the mind”) because it is ἄλλοτε δ' ἄλλοις (“one thing at one time, another at another”). In a fragment of the *Thebaid*, Amphiarus encourages his son to have the νόος of the octopus so he might adapt his νόος to the people that he visits. We see through these examples that understanding that comes from νόος is more connected to the

¹³ J. Leshner, “Perceiving and Knowing in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*,” *Phronesis* 26 (1981) 14.

¹⁴ D. Frame (*The Myth of Return in Early Greek Epic* [New Haven 1978]) suggests that νόος comes from the root *nes-, roughly meaning “return to life and light.”

¹⁵ S. Sullivan, “The Psychic Term Noos in Homer and the Homeric Hymns,” *SIFC* 7 (1989) 152–95, and “The Psychic Term Nóos in the Poetry of Hesiod,” *Glotta* 68 (1990) 68–85; and “The Mind and Heart of Zeus in Hesiod,” *ABG* 38 (1995) 34–47.

circumstances of a particular moment rather than an absolute, timeless kind of knowledge.¹⁶

As we look forward to Apollo and Hermes, we will see that the key distinction between the knowledge of εἰδέναι and the understanding that comes from νόος maps nicely onto the way that the two gods approach the cosmos under Zeus. Where the knowledge of εἰδέναι evaluates the present in terms of the past (i.e., I have/have not seen this before), νόος articulates a response to the present for future action. Where the knowledge of εἰδέναι may represent timeless truths, νόος embraces the temporary. While the knowledge of εἰδέναι is comfortable with the familiar where objects fall into their proper categories, νόος is adept at dealing with the novel where situations demand different responses than they have in the past.

III. Apollo and εἰδέναι

As we look to *HH Apollo*, we find clear connections between the qualities of Apollo and εἰδέναι. Given his exceptional visibility, he makes a fitting god to connect with this kind of knowledge. The hymn opens with the whole company of Olympos fixated on his arrival with his shining bow. All gods watch in heightened anxiety to see what will happen until Leto hangs the bow on a golden peg and Zeus gives his son a golden cup. As the hymnist attempts to focus his audience's attention on Apollo, the visual elements set the stage for his entrance into the world.

If we think about the narration of Apollo's birth, we again note the hymnist's emphasis on the visual. In contrast to the birth of other gods, Apollo's draws the attention of the inhabited world. The hymnist takes the audience on a twenty-line circuit of the lands that Leto visits in search of his birthplace. Almost immediately after he is born, he bursts forth from his swaddling clothes, and when he walks on the earth, Delos suddenly flowers with gold (135–136). Even as a newborn god, Apollo's actions draw the visual attention of the world that he encounters.

The hymnist draws attention to the visibility of Apollo one last time as the god leads his new priests to Delphi. He leaps off the ship, looking like a star that shines at midday, throwing off sparks and lighting up the sky (440–442). As he enters his oracular shrine, he lights a flame to make manifest his might (444), and the whole of Krisa glows with his presence (445). When we deal with Apollo, we deal with a god who illuminates the world around him. We might think about Apollo's importance as an oracular god as one who can know the future because he is one who is able to bring to light the unknown. His presence is radiance.

Just as we might link Apollo to εἰδέναι through visual imagery, so too can we connect him through his altering of the past for the

¹⁶ Leshner (above, n.13) 10, suggests that "one knows something over or during a period of time while one can only realize, notice, or recognize at a particular time," assigning νοεῖν to the latter category.

purpose of the present. In the Pythian section, the hymnist draws attention to the turbulence of the past that becomes stabilized through the god's intervention. Sent by the spring Telphousa, who wishes to maintain preeminence over her site, Apollo arrives at Krisa and encounters Pytho, whom he summarily dispatches. Given the inset tale of Typhaon, which occupies 52 of the 76 lines devoted to Apollo's exploits against Pytho, we are encouraged to see Apollo's ephebic urge (eliminating threatening female figures) as a reflection and extension of Zeus' method of installing order to the cosmos.¹⁷ Just as Zeus must banish Typhaon in the *Theogony* as a final test of order versus disorder, so too must Apollo eliminate Pytho.¹⁸ In doing so, he ensures that it will be safe for mortals to come and access Zeus' will. The turbulence of the past comes to a close as Apollo ushers in a more stable environment for mortals.

When he eliminates his foes, he takes on new names. Following Apollo's insults to Pytho, the hymnist informs us, ἐξ οὗ νῦν Πυθῶ κικλήσκειται, οἱ δὲ ἄνακτα / Πύθειον καλέουσιν ("From this [rotting of the monster], now the place is called Pytho; people call the lord by the name Pythian," 372–373).

After Apollo has buried Telphousa in rubble as revenge, the hymnists tells us, ἔνθα δ' ἄνακτι / πάντες ἐπικλησιν Τελφουσῶ εὐχετόωνται, / οὐνεκα Τελφούσης ἱερῆς ἤσχυνε ῥέεθρα ("There, they all pray to the lord using the epithet Telphousian, because he disgraced the streams of holy Telphousa," 385–387).

A bit later in the hymn, Apollo dons his final epithet, Delphinian, when he tells the Cretan sailors he has abducted to remove their gear, construct an altar, and pray to him (496). Before doing this, Apollo makes it clear to the sailors that they must abandon their previous way of life.

Ξεῖνοι, τοῖ Κνωσὸν πολυδένδρεον ἀμφιμένεσθε
τὸ πρῖν, ἀτὰρ νῦν οὐκέθ' ὑπότροποι αὐτὶς ἔσεσθε
ἔς τε πόλιν ἐρατὴν καὶ δώματα καλὰ ἕκαστος
ἔς τε φίλας ἀλόχους, ἀλλ' ἐνθάδε πίονα νηόν
ἔξετ' ἐμὸν πολλοῖσι τετιμένον ἀνθρώποισιν . . .

βουλὰς τ' ἀθανάτων εἰδήσετε τῶν ἰότητι
αἰεὶ τιμήσεσθε διαμπερὲς ἤματα πάντα.

(475–479; 484–485)

Strangers, who used to dwell around deeply wooded Knossos, that was before, but now you, to the man, will no longer be returning again to your lovely city, beautiful homes, and dear wives. But here, you will keep my rich temple, honored by many people. . . . You will

¹⁷ For a larger discussion of Apollo and the ephebic urge, see N. Felson, "Epini-cian Apollo in Story Time: *Pythian 9*, *Olympian 6*, and *Pythian 3*," in *Apolline Politics and Poetics*, eds. L. Athanassaki, R. Martin, and J. Miller (Athens 2009) 149–68.

¹⁸ For a more in depth discussion of variations between the Hesiodic version of Typhon and the version here, see Clay (above, n.3) 30–33.

know the plans of the gods. By the will of them, you will always be honored continuously for all your days.

Through these epithets, Apollo reminds us of how his actions in the past impact the present world that we occupy. With each new epithet, we are reminded of the world before Apollo. There was a time when Pytho held the lands near Delphi, but now (ἐξ οὗ νῦν) she lives on in the name of a place and the god who slew her. Telphousa once flowed from her copious spring, but as a result of Apollo (ἐνθα δ'), her name belongs to Apollo. The Cretan sailors previously (τὸ πρῖν) went about their business as merchants and husbands, but now (ἀτὰρ νῦν) they have abandoned that life forever in order to be his priests, worshipping him by a name that recalls his appearance to them as a dolphin.¹⁹ When we call upon Apollo as Pythian, Telphousian, or Delphinian, we are invited to share in our knowing (εἰδέναι) the glorious deeds of the god.

Finally, we may connect Apollo to εἰδέναι through the notion of timelessness that one may equate with gnomic uses of εἰδέναι. When the young god bursts from his swaddling clothing, he proclaims: εἴη μοι κίθαρίς τε φίλη καὶ καμπύλα τόξα, / χρήσω τ' ἀνθρώποισι Διὸς νημερτέα βουλήν ("May the dear kithara and curved bow be mine. I will prophesy the unerring plan of Zeus to mortals," 131–132). Rather than negotiating for the lyre, bow, and prophecy, he proclaims these τιμαί by fiat. In doing so, he asserts his special prerogative to these without acknowledging potential counterclaims (e.g., previous owners of Delphi).²⁰ He may understand himself as a god of several τιμαί, but, as becomes clear through his acquisition of titles, he understands himself as *the* god of these τιμαί.²¹ By bypassing other claimants, Apollo ignores history and creates a timeless link between himself and the lyre, bow, and prophecy. It becomes difficult to think of these τιμαί without drawing an immediate link to Apollo.

The frequent use of the adverb αἰεὶ in *HH Apollo* should also link Apollo to the gnomic qualities of εἰδέναι. Just as gnomic knowledge

¹⁹ In discussing the choice of the Cretan sailors as priests rather than local recruits, A. Miller (*From Delos to Delphi: A Literary Study of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo* [Leiden 1986] 97) remarks, "We must conclude that [Apollo] regards the consequent deracination and forced retirement from ordinary human concerns as a positive advantage, promoting in the ministers a disinterested and single-minded devotion to their office." When we deal with Apollo, we are always faced with a god who bestows benefits to those he favors and harm to those who impede his goals.

²⁰ We might think particularly of the tradition that passes the Delphic oracle down from Earth to Themis, to Phoibe, and then finally to Apollo (see Aiskhylos' *Eumenides* 1–8, Pindar frag. 55, Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 1259–1269). Interestingly, the transition from previous owners to Apollo is usually violent, with Aiskhylos as an interesting outlier. For discussion on the historicity of this progression of Delphic prophetic deities, see C. Sourvinou-Inwood, "Myth as History: The Previous Owners of the Delphic Oracle" in J. Bremmer, ed. *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (Totowa, N.J., 1986) 215–41.

²¹ A. Miller (above, n.19) 54, comments on the poet's choice to have Apollo make this claim rather than narrating it through the poet's own voice. The result is that "the poet shows that Apollo is aware of his own complex diversity from his first moments of conscious being." We must also keep in mind the consequences of Apollo's self-aware diversity, namely the elimination of competing alternatives.

pertains to all ages, Apollo's actions are presented as everlasting. Of the seventeen occurrences of the word in the *Homeric Hymns*, thirteen are found in *HH Apollo*. As Apollo begins to establish altars and sanctuaries (248, 288, 497), he proclaims these as sites that will always exist. The hymnist reinforces the enduring qualities of the god, one of those who live forever (αἰειγενέτης), by linking the mythic past with the festive present. Through the festival, we are encouraged to reflect on the permanence of the changes instituted by Apollo in the past.

At the same time, the permanence of Apollo is not only announced by the god himself. During the negotiations between Delos and Leto, αἰεὶ plays an important role. Leto reminds Delos of her impoverished state before offering her the opportunity to be the home of one of her son's most important sanctuaries, where the smell of sacrifice will *always* spring up (58–59). In response, Delos expresses her reservations about accepting the offer. Her fear is not just that she will be kicked over by Apollo, but that she will *always* remain this way (74). As a guarantee of protection, she demands from Leto an oath, and Leto says,

ἴστω νῦν τάδε Γαῖα καὶ Οὐρανὸς εὐρὺς ὑπερθεῖν
καὶ τὸ κατειβόμενον Στυγὸς ὕδωρ, ὅς τε μέγιστος
ὄρκος δεινότητος τε πέλει μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν
ἢ μὴν Φοῖβου τῆδε θυώδης ἔσσεται αἰεὶ
βωμὸς καὶ τέμενος, τίσει δέ σέ γ' ἔσοχα πάντων.
(84–88)

Let the earth and the broad sky above now know these things, and the flowing water of Styx, which is the greatest and most terrible oath for the blessed gods: Here there will *always* be an altar smelling of incense and sanctuary of Phoibos. He will honor you exceedingly above all.

As Leto swears the most binding of oaths, one that is meant to assure eternal benefits upon the island, she opens with an appeal to Earth, Sky, and the water of Styx to know (ἴστω) her promise.²² These primordial deities are to bear witness to the privileged status of Delos among the sanctuaries of Apollo, a status that will forever improve the productivity of the impoverished island. Like Earth, Sky, and Styx, the hymn's audience continues to see and know the changes that *HH Apollo* narrates. We are reminded of the continuous link between the past and the present, and in recalling the history of Apollo's major sanctuaries, we are encouraged to view this history as one of stability.²³

²² Though fragmentary, Arkhilokhos 113.9 seems to use εἰδέναι to set up a similar point of timeless knowledge. See also Arkhilokhos 67.3.

²³ M. Detienne ("This is Where I Intend to Build a Glorious Temple," *Arion* 4 [1996–1997] 1–27) sees stability/fixeness in the use of βαίνειν to describe Apollo's actions. "The gesture of *bainein* also implies a certain static dimension: 'setting one's foot' has a static connotation that is conveyed by a series of words derived from the

IV. An Alternative Path to τιμαί: The Work of νόος

From the opening of *HH Hermes*, it is clear that a strong contrast is being developed between Hermes and his half-brother Apollo. Whereas Apollo's birth is exceptionally visible, creating permanent change in the world (e.g., Delos becomes anchored), Hermes' birth aligns the young god with the work of νόος, which conceals/encodes and demands deciphering. The hymnist tells his audience,

μακάρων δὲ θεῶν ἠλεύαθ' ὄμιλον
 ἄντρον ἔσω ναίουσα παλίσκιον, ἔνθα Κρονίων
 νύμφη εὐπλοκάμῳ μισγέσκετο νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ,
 ὄφρα κατὰ γλυκὺς ὕπνος ἔχοι λευκώλενον Ἥρην,
 λήθων ἀθανάτους τε θεοὺς θνητούς τ' ἀνθρώπους.
 (5–9)

[Maia] shunned the company of the blessed gods, dwelling inside her thickly shaded cave. There Kronion was mingling with the well-tressed nymph in the dark of night, while sweet sleep took hold of white-armed Hera. He escaped the notice of immortal gods and mortal men.

The description of Hermes' birth establishes the challenge he will present to the knowledge of εἰδέναι with its emphasis on the visual. His mother avoids the gaze of the other gods, keeping to her shadowy cave,²⁴ and the conditions of his conception escape the notice of the world. Unlike Apollo's birth, which drew the attention of the world, Hermes' birth is known only to his mother and father. The major project of this hymn is then how the unknown Hermes will make himself visible and thus become known.

The hymnist also quickly asserts a direct connection between Hermes and the capacity of νόος.

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ μέγαλοιο Διὸς νόος ἐξετελεῖτο,
 τῇ δ' ἤδη δέκατος μείζονος οὐρανῶ ἐστήρικτο,
 εἷς τε φῶς ἀγαγεν, ἀρίσημά τε ἔργα τέτυκτο.
 (10–12)

same root: *belos* meaning threshold, *bema* meaning tribune, the place to which an orator steps up, to speak; *embas* or *bēla* meaning a shoe or sandals; *bebēlos*, a trampled space, sometimes with sense of 'profane'; or *bebaios*, whatever is solid, securely placed (11).” Apollo sanctions and upholds boundaries, as M. Chappell (“The Homeric Hymn to Apollo: The Question of Unity” in A. Faulkner, ed. *The Homeric Hymns: Interpretative Essays* [Oxford 2011] 59–81) has reminded us in connection with Apollo's role in the *Iliad* (77). See especially *Il.* 21.461–467, where Apollo refuses to fight with his Olympian elder. We might also keep in mind versions of this myth that involve Delos as a floating island until it becomes fixed in connection with Apollo's birth. For sources of this myth, see F. Wehrli, “Leto” in *Realencyclopädie Pauly-Wissowa Suppl. V.* (Munich 1931) 555–76.

²⁴ In discussing the reasons why Maia avoids the company of the gods, E. Greene (“Revising Illegitimacy: The Use of Epithets in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes,” *CQ* 55 [2005] 343–49) has drawn attention to Hermes' maternal ancestry of rebellion. He is a child of Maia, daughter of Atlas and granddaughter of Iapetus, who shares Tartaros' gloom with Kronos.

But when the mind of great Zeus was fulfilled, then the tenth month was fixed in the sky, and Zeus brought him into the light. Remarkable deeds were done.

Reflecting on Zeus' νόος, Warden has pointed out that Zeus "with his *noos* is able to see and comprehend the pattern of events, past, present, and future. But his role is not passive . . . he does not merely comprehend the pattern of events, he molds and fashions it."²⁵ It is not enough for Zeus to understand the overarching construction of his cosmos as it has been established. He conceives with Maia a god who, like himself, will apply his νόος in order to refashion the world.²⁶ Unlike Apollo, who lays claim to τιμαί by appropriating the property of others, Hermes invents new uses for the already existing world. In so doing, he is able to craft for himself a space within the Olympian order to operate without wholly displacing those who have come before him.

The hymnist provides an illustration of this process as soon as Hermes leaves his mother's cave, intent on stealing Apollo's cattle. Though he has a clear goal in mind, Hermes quickly becomes distracted by the random appearance of a tortoise, which will soon become a lyre. Accounts of Hermes' cattle raid usually mention the invention of the lyre, but this usually happens after the cattle have been taken from Apollo.²⁷ As S. Shelmerdine suggests, this reversal urges us to reorient our thinking about the myth.²⁸ Rather than supplanting Apollo by stealing his property, the hymnist wishes to focus our attention on the ultimate friendship of the two young gods, facilitated by the charm of the lyre.²⁹

²⁵ J. R. Warden, "The Mind of Zeus," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 32 (1971) 7–8.

²⁶ We should keep in mind that it is Hermes to whom Zeus will turn when he needs to instill νόος in future creations. In the *Works and Days*, Zeus has Hermes provide Pandora with a κύνεόν νόον (67). Aisopos (Chambry 120) has Hermes giving νόος to men at the behest of Zeus. F. M. Cornford ("Hermes-Nous and Pan-Logos in Pindar, *Ol. II*," *CR* 26 [1912] 180–81) suggests that a connection should be made between Hermes and νόος at the end of Pindar *Olympian 2*.

²⁷ Schol., *Il.* 15.256 follows *HH Hermes* with invention of the lyre followed by cattle theft. In Sophokles' *Ikhneutai* (Radt fr. 314.284–331) and ps.-Apollodoros' *Bibliotheca* 3.10.2, the stolen cattle provide the hide for the later invention of the lyre. Other brief or fragmentary accounts of this myth include the Hesiodic *Megalai Ehoiai*, Antoninos Liberalis' *Metamorphoses* 23, Pausanias 7.20.4, and Nonnos' *Dionysiaka* 1.337–340.

²⁸ S. Shelmerdine, "Hermes and the Tortoise: A Prelude to Cult," *GRBS* 25 (1984) 202.

²⁹ In discussing Apollo's acquisitions in *HH Apollo*, A. Bergren ("Sacred Apotrophe: Re-presentation and Imitation in *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*," in *Weaving Truth: Essays on Language and the Female in Greek Thought*. [Washington, D.C., 2008] 131–60) argues, "The territorial epithets 'Pythian' and 'Telpousian' reflect not 'proper' naming, but the taking of another's 'property.' Apollo's name/place is stolen property, just as the cattle Hermes stole were Apollo's 'proper name.' By exposing his 'own' as originally 'other,' Apollo's theft denies any stable, originary opposition between the terms: the opposition is imposed out of a desire for ownership, but all we can 'own' is the property of another (155)." Hermes will exploit this, but instead of displacing his brother and becoming 'Apollonian' Hermes, he will invite his half-brother into an enduring relationship.

Throughout the tortoise episode, we are confronted with a world that does not add up neatly if we are relying primarily on what we see on the exterior of the tortoise. Even before we hear Hermes' reaction, the hymnist describes the movement of the tortoise as "walking with a swagger in its feet" (28: σαῦλα ποσὶν βαίνουσα). Though not made explicit, the hymnist hints at the future association of the tortoise-lyre with festive dancers.³⁰ We are presented with a contradiction (slow-moving herbivore ~ fleet-footed feasters), and we must move beyond our knowledge of what tortoises have always been in order to understand what Hermes plans to do with this tortoise.

Hermes establishes with his first word that the tortoise is something that will require an application of νόος. Referring to the tortoise as a σύμβολον, he acknowledges that there is more to it than its outward appearance would suggest. The external visual stimulus of the σύμβολον demands a response, and it is the job of the νόος to determine how we should respond to an unexpected find, just as Hermes does here in transforming the living tortoise into the resonating chamber of his lyre.

As he continues to address the tortoise, Hermes presents us with a series of contradictions. As a child of νόος, he proves himself adept at bringing together contradictory images. He says to the tortoise,

χαῖρε, φῆν ἑρόεσσα, χοροῖτύπε δαιτὸς ἑταίρη,
 ἀσπασίη προφανεῖσα. πόθεν τόδε καλὸν ἄθυρμα,
 αἰόλον ὄστρακον ἔσσο, χέλυς ὄρεσι ζώουσα
 (31–33)

Welcome, you lovely in shape, beating the ground in dance, companion of the feast, a glad tiding. Where did you get this beautiful plaything, this dappled shell that clothes you, tortoise dwelling in the mountains?

This lumbering herbivore is suddenly transported into the swift dancing of the feast. The tortoise's shell, a necessary defense against the outside world, is understood by the crafty god as an ἄθυρμα, a plaything. Rather than seeing the shell as an integral part of the living tortoise, Hermes recasts it as a glittering adornment.³¹ Remembering that the hymnist has already prepared us for the transformation of this tortoise into a lyre, we are put in a position to admire how quickly Hermes can craft a new context for thinking about tortoises.³²

³⁰ See Euripides' *Kyklops* 40 where Silenos speaks of his comrades as σαυλούμενοι as part of Bakkhos' entourage, and Aristophanes' *Wasps* 1173, where Philokleon refers to his dancing as σαυλοπρωκτιᾶν.

³¹ Though αἰόλον is appropriate for the dappled nature of the tortoise's shell, it should be pointed out that this adjective is often associated with swift animals (cf. *Il.* 12.167, of wasps, and *Il.* 19. 404 of horses). As M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant (*Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, tr. J. Lloyd. [Sussex 1978] 19) note, "Even if it is true that αἰόλος applied, for example, to the horse of Achilles, a bay with white socks, applies to the colour of its coat, the fact is that for the lexicographers and scholiasts who commented on the term it conveyed, first and foremost, the image of turbulent movement, of incessant change."

³² In lines 17–23, the hymnist sets out the series of events in Hermes' first days (plays lyre at midday and steals Apollo's cattle at night).

At this stage, it may seem that the future success of Hermes rests in his ability to envision what will happen better than Apollo was able to do when Telphousa sent him away, but we must acknowledge a key difference between the gods that emerges in Hermes' final words to the tortoise. Echoing the Hesiodic proverb, Hermes tells the tortoise that it is better to be inside since the outside world is dangerous (36). He does so right before he will disembowel the tortoise and transform it into a lyre. The issue at stake is what Hermes means when he says βέλτερον (better for the tortoise to come inside or better for Hermes if the tortoise comes inside). As we have already seen, the hymnist encourages us to understand the ambiguous and contradictory nature of the tortoise. The tortoise is a creature tied to the earth, and yet with its domed shell above and below, it can remind us of the whole cosmos (earth, sky, and the underworld). It simultaneously conjures the image of a particular, fixed point and the whole of the universe.³³ It is not surprising then that Hermes might employ the Hesiodic proverb in an ambiguous way in dealing with tortoise.

We can also see an important contrast between Hermes and Apollo here. If we think back to Apollo's dealings with the Cretan sailors, there is a marked emphasis on the split between their former lives and their future as priests of Apollo. Thanks to the prophetic gods, these men will hereafter be known as his priests, removed from other careers that might muddy our understanding of their place in the cosmos. In contrast, even as Hermes deprives this tortoise of its life, he is careful to remind us of two simultaneous benefits of the tortoise (37–38: charm against witchcraft and charmer). The tortoise has a role to play in both life and death, and Hermes is careful to link these two capacities. Hermes may institute a split (literally here by severing the tortoise from its shell), but, as L. Kahn suggests, the split does not reveal tension, a tear, or strife.³⁴ Instead, Hermes' split ultimately aims towards integration.³⁵ Even before Hermes embarks on the cattle raid, he has created a new potential for tortoises that will aid him in integrating himself into the Olympian order through friendship with Apollo.

As Hermes embarks on transforming the tortoise, the hymnist reminds us of the importance of νόος when dealing with the crafty god. If it is the function of νόος, as noted above, to reveal “the significance

³³ D. Jaillard (above, n.6) suggests: *autour d'elle se tissent des liens complexes entre les différent “étages” du cosmos, et entre les “qualités” contraires qui leur correspondent* (“around it are woven the complex connections between the different ‘levels’ of the cosmos and between the contrary ‘qualities’ which correspond to them” 170). Jaillard goes on to remind us that the earthbound tortoise is also the constellation Lyra.

³⁴ L. Kahn, *Hermès passe ou les ambiguïtés de la communication* (Paris 1978) 95: *ce n'est pas la scission que révèlent ces tensions, ce n'est pas la déchirure ni l'Eris.*

³⁵ L. Kahn (above, n.34) pushes us to see an important distinction between Hermes and another of Apollo's common contrasting gods, Dionysos: *si Dionysos est l'Autre, Hermès est simplement l'altérité incertaine; si Dionysos détroit la norme, Hermès la bouscule pour la reconstruire aussitôt* (“if Dionysos is the Other, Hermes is simply uncertain alterity; if Dionysos destroys the norm, Hermes jostles it to reconstruct it immediately,” 184).

of something that becomes clear upon looking at it,"³⁶ then it should not be surprising that the hymnist compares the process of turning a tortoise into lyre with a swift thought (ὠκὺ νόημα) passing through the chest of a worried man (43–44). Hermes has successfully moved beyond the external features of the tortoise in order to understand its charming potential. He has combined the tortoise shell with other once-living materials (cowhide, sheep gut, and reeds) in order to give all of these a voice in death, again calling into question the established norms.

V. Reacting to the World of Hermes' νόος

Later on, the hymnist gives us the opportunity to consider exactly how Apollo reacts to the disruptive tendencies of Hermes' νόος. Hermes understands that he has the power to confound those who try to understand him through conventional methods, especially the clues that one can observe through sight. When his mother accosts him about his nighttime activities and suggests that Apollo will treat him roughly (157–158), Hermes is quick to scold his mother for thinking of him like a child who knows little evil (164: παῦρα μετὰ φρεσὶν αἴσυλα οἶδεν). He is confident that Apollo will find something different and greater if he should come looking for him (177). In both of these instances, Hermes demands that his mother see him for more than he appears. Though he looks like a baby, the crafty god is more than he seems. Only a few days old, he has managed to steal Apollo's cattle without being noticed by the guard dogs. It is not enough to be keen-sighted and vigilant when dealing with Hermes.³⁷ One must be able to see beyond the surface in order to anticipate how one should react.

When we turn to the actual theft of the cattle, it becomes very clear that Hermes seeks to disrupt the expected signs by altering the appearance of the tracks left by him and the cattle. He twists the cattle around so the tracks look as if the cattle have headed back toward the meadow, and he fabricates sandals for himself out of tamarisk and myrtle that will disguise his own footprints. As we observed with the invention of the lyre, the crafty god once again multiplies the uses of the objects of the world. He is able to improvise and find new uses for preexisting items.

At the same time, we should carefully read the line that qualifies the sandals. The hymnist emphasizes the fact that the sandals that will alter Hermes' own tracks have not ever been spoken about or thought about (80: ἄφραστ' ἠδ' ἀνόητα). These sandals are the perfect weapon in Hermes' arsenal for confounding Apollo, who, as the following scenes reveal, relies heavily upon the familiar world that he has come

³⁶ B. Snell 1960 (above, n.11) 53.

³⁷ M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant (above, n.31) have pointed to an important contrast between Kronos and Zeus in the *Theogony* (80). Whereas Kronos, who is always on the lookout (466: ἀλασκοπιήν ἔχεν, ἀλλὰ δοκεύων), is deceived by Rhea, Zeus is able to banish Typhon because he is able to perceive the threat through his νόος (838).

to know (εἰδέναι). Improvising a way to disguise his tracks, Hermes creates something that has no previous history.³⁸

We should also note that these sandals are temporary; Hermes is quick to discard them as soon as he has finished his business with the cattle (139). In contrast to Apollo, who insists upon the permanence of the sanctuaries he institutes (*HH Apollo* 248, 288, 497), Hermes understands the usefulness of his inventions for specific, temporary purposes. He has not crafted the first sandal upon which all future sandals will be modeled.³⁹ Rather than taking the long view of the way that the past will persist indefinitely, Hermes is able to envision a possible use of tamarisk and myrtle without insisting that this is *the* way to use them. In making the unthinkable (ἀνόητα) sandals thinkable, Hermes creates a more flexible way to approach these materials.⁴⁰

When Apollo later comes upon the tracks of his cattle and Hermes' sandals, the hymnist makes an interesting distinction. Apollo initially takes note of the tracks (218: ἴχνια τ' εἰσενόησεν), and he remarks,

ὦ πόποι, ἦ μέγα θαῦμα τόδ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὀρῶμαι
 ἴχνια μὲν τάδε γ' ἐστὶ βοῶν ὀρθοκραϊράων,
 ἀλλὰ πάλιν τέτραπται ἐς ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα.
 (219–221)

Oh, my! I see this great wonder with my eyes. These here are the tracks of my straight-horned cattle, but they are turned back towards the asphodel meadow.

All three times that Apollo employs his νόος in this hymn, he deals with familiar visible signs. Here he draws upon his experience and immediately identifies the tracks as those of his cattle. He is in no way fooled by them though he must admit that it is a wonder that the tracks point to where the cows have come from, reversing the normal order of things. His νόος operates successfully so long as he deals with the realm of what he knows.

When we hear Apollo try to explain the tracks left by Hermes' sandals, the situation changes radically. Though Apollo's νόος is able to process the tracks as traces of the thief, it becomes clear that it is deficient when dealing with novelties. Looking at the tracks, Apollo says,

³⁸ Interestingly, the hymnist employs words (ἄφραστος and ἀνόητος) used minimally in Homer, Hesiod, or the *Homeric Hymns*. This is the only occurrence of ἀνόητος. Of the three uses of ἄφραστος, two occur in *HH Hermes* (here and 353), and one is found in a fragment of Hesiod (fr. 239 MW)

³⁹ See *HH Hermes* 57 where Maia is described as prettily sandaled (καλλιπέδιλον).

⁴⁰ The permanence and fixity that is associated with Apollo is problematic for Hermes. Within the hymn, we might look to 178–81 where Hermes threatens to steal the temple goods from Delphi. As D. Jaillard (above, n.6) suggests, *libérait les dépôts figés, fixés. Les biens qui l'intéressent sont ceux qui s'échangent, qui circulent* ("Hermes will free the frozen, fixed deposits. The goods which interest him are those which are exchanged, which circulate" 91). In discussing the cattle themselves, Jaillard reminds us that Hermes reconfigures the immortality of the cows by introducing them to procreation. Rather than individuals living on permanently, the herd will continue to exist as a result of countless generations of temporary cattle (143).

βήματα δ' οὐτ' ἀνδρὸς τάδε γίνεται οὔτε γυναικός
 οὔτε λύκων πολιῶν οὐτ' ἄρκτων οὔτε λεόντων
 οὔτε τι κενταύρου λασιαύχενος ἔλπομαι εἶναι,
 ὅς τις τοῖα πέλωρα βιβᾶ ποσὶ καρπαλίμοισιν.
 (222–225)

These tracks belong neither to man, nor woman, nor grey wolves, nor bears, nor lions. Nor do I expect at all that they are those of a shaggy-throated centaur, whoever walks such monstrous steps on his fleeting feet.

When confronted with something that he has not seen before, something he cannot know (εἰδέναι), Apollo is unable to provide a positive description of what he sees. Instead, he resorts to denying that they belong to the categories of the likely culprits for his missing cattle (men, women, wolves, bears, lions, or centaurs). If he could track his cattle to one of these particular culprits, he would presumably know how to respond to the situation, but because Hermes is able to confound the usual sight clues, he has an advantage over Apollo, ensuring that Apollo will need the help of Zeus to get the cattle back.

The contrast between Hermes, skilled in the shifting ways of νόος, and Apollo, reliant upon the past experience of εἰδέναι, is at the heart of the episode with the Old Man of Onkhestos. The only mortal character in the hymn, the Old Man occupies an interesting mediating role between the two gods. From the very beginning of the encounter, we need to recognize that the Old Man understands something deeper about the baby thief working his way up the road with backwards cattle. Presented with an unusual sight, the Old Man's νόος is set in motion (87: ἐνόησε) in order to figure out how to respond. We have already seen how Hermes frequently confounds the visual world that Apollo is committed to, and here he encourages the Old Man to think outside the established categories, καί τε ἰδὼν μὴ ἰδὼν εἶναι καὶ κωφὸς ἀκούσας, / καὶ σιγᾶν, ὅτε μὴ τι καταβλάπτῃ τὸ σὸν αὐτοῦ ("Though seeing, don't be seeing, and be deaf though hearing. Be quiet since you aren't in any way being harmed as far as your stuff goes," 92–93).

Presenting paradoxical images (a baby stealing cattle, cattle walking backwards), Hermes urges the Old Man to embrace the opportunity to occupy contrary positions simultaneously. He has an opportunity to become like the lyre that established Hermes' way of approaching the world early in the hymn. Whereas the lyre sings in death, the Old Man is told to repress those faculties we associate with the living. So long as he accepts this request, he will be able to aid Hermes in evading Apollo, who, as we will see, relies upon precisely these faculties in order to understand what has happened to his cattle.⁴¹

⁴¹ When Hermes later replies to Apollo's demand to be shown the cattle, he asserts that he cannot help Apollo because he has not seen, learned about, or heard about the cattle (263: οὐκ ἶδον, οὐ πυθόμην, οὐκ ἄλλου μῦθον ἀκουσα).

When Apollo finds the Old Man toiling away, he asks a simple question about whether or not he has seen a man with the cattle (199–200: ὄπωπας/ἀνέρα ταῖσδ' ἐπὶ βουσί), and this puts the Old Man in a tricky position. Technically he has seen the cattle thief, but contrary to expectation, the cattle thief was not a man, but a small child. Whereas Apollo is looking for firm information about what has been seen, the Old Man, heeding Hermes' warning, talks about the difficulties of sight, noting that “it is difficult to say everything one sees with the eyes” (202–203: ἀργαλέον μὲν, ὅσ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἴδοιτο, / πάντα λέγειν). Past experience will not be enough to understand what has occurred on this day, and the Old Man's response sets up an important contrast,

παῖδα δ' ἔδοξα, φέριστε, σαφές δ' οὐκ οἶδα, νοῆσαι,
 ὅς τις ὁ παῖς ἅμα βουσὶν ἐὔκραίρησιν ὀπήδει
 νήπιος, εἶχε δὲ ῥάβδον, ἐπιστροφάδην δ' ἐβάδιζεν.
 ἔξοπίσω δ' ἀνέεργε, κάρη δ' ἔχον ἀντίον αὐτῶ.
 (208–211)

I thought I noticed a kid—I do not know for sure—some kid following the broad-horned cattle, an innocent one. He held a staff. He walked back and forth, and he was driving them backward. They kept their heads facing him.

In the course of one line, the Old Man makes a contrast between firm knowledge, rooted in past experience (σαφές δ' οὐκ οἶδα), and the unstable world that the νόος must interpret (παῖδα δ' ἔδοξα . . . νοῆσαι). He may explain what it is that he has seen, but this may not be the kind of information that Apollo was looking for. Apollo is expecting a clear description of the direction that the man who stole his cattle has headed, but he receives information about the bizarre sight of a baby cattle thief driving cows backwards. Past experience will be insufficient for Apollo to track down his cattle. He will have to come to terms with his brother who beguiles traditional boundaries.

Though often overlooked, it should be pointed out that it is not clear that Apollo knows how to proceed since the information provided by the Old Man fails to provide a concrete answer to Apollo's question. We cannot say that he knows exactly where to go until he notices a bird (213: οἰωνὸν δ' ἐνόει ταυνοσίπτερον), which he interprets as a sign that Hermes is the thief. As above with the cattle tracks, Apollo makes use of his νόος in order to decode a source of knowledge that he is familiar with. Unlike his innovative brother who can transform the world through νόος, Apollo underutilizes his, applying it simply to the acquisition of factual knowledge. As B. Heiden has suggested, Greek mythic poetry is much more interested in person-to-person relationships than factual information, and Apollo seems to overlook this point before his reconciliation with Hermes.⁴²

⁴² B. Heiden, “Truth and Personal Agreement in Archaic Greek Poetry: The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*,” *Philosophy and Literature* 34 (2010) 413. Heiden later emphasizes the importance of the personal relationship in his reading of the discussions

He may be able to identify Hermes as the thief through an application of his νόος, but this information is insufficient in retrieving the cattle since Hermes' νόος is much more adept at changing the landscape as the situation requires.

The hymnist has successfully set up a tension between Hermes, who reorients the world so there will be a place for him in the future, and Apollo, who is committed to the way the world has always appeared. As the hymn shifts towards the future reconciliation of the brothers, the hymnist emphasizes the ways in which Hermes is able to confound knowledge based on appearance, but this is not simply to negate altogether the value of past knowledge embodied by Apollo. We must remember that the hymn ends with the harmonious union of Hermes and Apollo thanks to the intervention of Zeus. Through the respective energies of Hermes (future-oriented νόος) and Apollo (past-oriented εἰδέναι), we can come to a fuller understanding of Zeus.

VI. The Trouble with Appearances

As Apollo bursts into Maia's cave, Hermes notices (ἐνόησε) that he is angry about the cows (235–236). Perceiving through his νόος the need to respond to the impending attack from Apollo, Hermes is careful to alter his appearance so that he can claim he is an innocent baby. When Apollo demands that he be shown the cattle (254: μήνυέ) after a failed search to find them, Hermes willingly plays into Apollo's reliance upon visual evidence. As he says, "I have not seen/ do not know, nor learned about, nor heard a tale from anyone" (263: οὐκ ἶδον, οὐκ πυθόμην, οὐκ ἄλλου μῦθον ἄκουσα). Hermes echoes his request to the Old Man ("Though seeing, don't be seeing, and be deaf though hearing.") as he denies that he is likely to have the information that Apollo is requesting. He even insists that he simply does not look the part (265: οὐδὲ βοῶν ἐλατῆρι κραταῖφ φωτὶ ἔουκα), requiring Apollo to recognize him as a simple and harmless baby (268–269; 273–274). Because Apollo is not as proficient in his νόος with the unfamiliar, Hermes is able to stymie him by exploiting his own contradictory nature (simultaneously a baby and a cattle thief).⁴³ Though Apollo may threaten to banish Hermes, he will not regain his cattle unless he can overcome his younger brother's ability to disguise what should be easy to see.

about prophecy that occur later in the hymn. Those who trust only the birds fail to engage in a relationship with Apollo, and they subsequently suffer, though Apollo will gladly accept their sacrifices.

⁴³ O. Vox ("Apollo irato nell' Inno ad Ermes," *Prometheus* 7 [1981] 108–14) has shown that Apollo seems confused about what to do with Hermes in his threat to hurl him into Tartaros followed by the threat that Hermes will rule over the Little People in Hades. The threat of Tartaros is appropriate for immortals, but the threat of banishment to Hades is more appropriate for mortals (109). In Philostratos, the threat is only that Apollo will push Hermes under the Earth. L. Kahn (above, n.34) 60–61, notes that we see a similar confusion between god and mortal in Hermes' sacrifice of the cattle. As he creates no hierarchy of gods, he also blurs the clear boundaries between gods and mortals.

In setting out his case before father Zeus, Apollo continues to emphasize the gap between Hermes and the expectations one might have for what a thief looks like. He shows his frustration in dealing with the novelty of his younger brother. After describing Hermes as a mocker like he has never seen among gods or men (338–339), Apollo recounts the difficulty he has with the tracks left by the cows and Hermes' sandals. Though he can describe the tracks left by the cows in the black dust, he again speaks in qualified terms about the tracks left by Hermes. That impossible god (ἀμύχανος) walks on neither his hands nor feet (346–347), leaving tracks as if he were walking on trees (349). Just as Apollo was only able to describe the sandal tracks earlier in negative terms (not man, woman, wolf, bear, lion, or centaur), here Apollo can make only an approximation (like walking on tree branches).

Apollo admits Hermes' ability to beguile his reliance on visual clues. He tells his father that so long as Hermes and the cattle walked along the sand, the tracks remained very distinct (351: διέπρεπεν).⁴⁴ He once again struggles to explain what he has seen when Hermes and the cattle moved onto solid ground. He tells his father that their path became indecipherable (353: ἀφραστος). As when Apollo first attempted to process what he saw through his νόος, the all-knowing, prophetic god cannot ascribe the proper terminology for what he has encountered. So long as there is a clear visual trace, he is able to track the culprit and his cattle, but when the trace disappears, his only recourse seems to be to drag the culprit before Zeus in order that Zeus may bring about resolution.

As we turn to Hermes' response, we should note that he again embraces his contradictory nature by insisting that he be viewed as a simple baby (cf. the use of νήπιος in 210 and 406) while simultaneously proving himself adept at courtroom rhetoric, the mark of a much older and experienced person. As if to disguise his rhetorical trickery, Hermes claims that he will speak the truth (368: ἀληθείην), and in so doing, he appeals to the Greek sense that there is truth in children and wine. As the gods listen to his defense, they are put in the position of having to adjust their expectations. Hermes proves his divinity through the contradictory image of a child well-steeped in rhetorical skill.⁴⁵

There can be no denying that Hermes fails to speak ἀληθείην in his defense, as he omits his own deeds in favor of prefacing his

⁴⁴ Though compounds of *πρέπειν* are used elsewhere in early Greek poetry, this compound is not used elsewhere in Homer, Hesiod, or the *Homeric Hymns*, again suggesting the novelty of Hermes. Pindar does use it in *Ol.* 1.2 in discussing the brilliance of gold like fire. B. Snell (*Lexikon* above, n.11) notes several uses of *πρέπειν* and its compounds with verbs of sight.

⁴⁵ E. Szepes ("Humour of *Homeric Hermes Hymn*," *Homonoia* 2 [1980] 5–56) argues that Hermes' insistence on his status as child is an attempt to extract himself from the legal process. As a child, he could not be brought to court (43). Given the early emphasis by the hymnist on Hermes' desire to gain his rightful place among the gods (163–181), it seems equally important to understand this trial as an opportunity for Hermes to win approval from his father.

defense with Apollo's misdeeds (370–374).⁴⁶ The closest that he comes to making any statement about his own activity is hedged by the relationships that he desires to have with the community of the gods.

πείθεο, καὶ γὰρ ἐμεῖο πατὴρ φίλος εὐχεται εἶναι,
ὡς οὐκ οἰκαδ' ἔλασσα βόας ὡς ὄλβιος εἶην,
οὐδ' ὑπέρ οὐδὸν ἔβην τὸ δέ τ' ἀτρικέως ἀγορεύω.
(378–380)

Trust me that (you even boast that you are my dear father) I did not drive the cattle home in order to be rich.⁴⁷ I did not cross the threshold. I say this precisely.

Though he is correct to say that he has not driven the cattle to his home, perhaps the more important issue here is his appeal to Zeus for trust, strengthening that appeal with his parenthetical appeal to accept the role of Hermes' father.⁴⁸ As will become clearer in looking at Hermes' subsequent defense, Hermes is attempting to shift this trial away from an assessment of the facts, an assessment of what has or has not happened. He seems to be shifting the discussion away from the past and knowledge of the past (a complete understanding embodied in ἀλήθεια) towards a relationship with his father in the future.

Immediately following his request to Zeus, Hermes asserts that he respects the gods, loves Zeus, and stands in dreadful awe of Apollo (381–382). These claims for relationships he would like to have all preface the most important and most problematic statement in his defense, namely that he is innocent (383). This speech that should be without gaps, due to his claim to speak ἀληθείην, fails to address the question of whether or not he is responsible for Apollo's missing cattle. Rather than seeking to make claims that would prove his innocence, Hermes has opted to emphasize his desire to be a welcome member of the Olympian community in the future.

⁴⁶ T. Cole ("Archaic Truth," *QUCC* 42 [1983] 7–28) argues that ἀλήθεια applies to people who can speak with "completeness, non-omission of any relevant particular, whether through forgetting or ignoring (10)." R. Prier (*Thauma Idesthai: The Phenomenology of Sight and Appearance in Archaic Greek*. [Tallahassee 1989] 225) reminds us that this kind of truth provides a "general and unifying affirmation . . . that provides the 'whole truth.'" Prier makes a special point to distinguish between two kinds of Greek truth (ἔτεός versus ἀλήθεια). He argues that we should think of ἔτεός as that which divides the world into a yes-no dichotomy; it is or it is not. In contrast as suggested above, the emphasis of ἀλήθεια is in its sense of fullness. I would suggest that this kind of truth may be contradictory if the system that it responds to is in itself contradictory.

⁴⁷ I diverge from M. L. West (above, n.1) in v.379. If we read ὡς in the last clause, then Hermes' response adds one more loophole for him to slip through. If an opponent can prove that he did drive the cattle home, then he is still left with the argument that his reasoning was not for the sake of profit.

⁴⁸ E. Greene (above, n.24) is right to draw attention to the strategic address of Zeus as ζεῦ πάτερ in 368 (347). This is the first time that Zeus has presumably met Hermes and vice versa.

VII. New Relationships

As Heiden has recently argued, it is ultimately Zeus, not the facts of the case, that prevails. It is Zeus who must make a decision about what to do with his crafty son.⁴⁹ The issue of Hermes' guilt is set aside as Zeus urges his sons to resolve their dispute over the cattle. Whereas *HH Apollo* focused on the triumphant rise of Apollo at the expense of older beings, *HH Hermes* aims ultimately to accommodate both Apollo, a symbol for Zeus' cosmos as it has been, and Hermes, a symbol for what Zeus' cosmos may become. The hymn ultimately highlights the interdependence between these two gods.⁵⁰

Following Zeus' laughter, the hymnist informs us,

ἀμφοτέρους δ' ἐκέλευσεν ὁμόφρονα θυμὸν ἔχοντας
ζητεῦειν, Ἐρμῆν δὲ διάκτορον ἡγεμονεῦειν
καὶ δεῖξαι τὸν χώρον ἐπ' ἀβλαβίησι νόοιο,
ὅππῃ δὴ αὐτ' ἀπέκρυσσε βοῶν ἰφθίμα κάρηνα.
(391–394)

[Zeus] bid them both to have an equal-minded intention and to search—Hermes, as guide, to lead the way and to show, without any tricks of his mind, the place where he hid the stout heads of cattle.

It should be noted that Zeus has not made a pronouncement about what must be done once Hermes reveals the cattle. Though Hermes has the capacity to beguile Apollo's νόος, which has proven insufficient when dealing with the unexpected, Zeus urges his tricky son to set aside the powerful deceits of his νόος. Through his mediation, Zeus encourages his sons to set aside their feud and cooperate with a common purpose (ὁμόφρονα θυμὸν).⁵¹ The friendship which results unites insider and outsider, established and novel, what has been with what may be. Unlike other versions that emphasize conflict, this hymn focuses ultimately on the union that occurs after the older, established brother has fully accepted his younger brother into his community.⁵²

The reconciliation of Zeus' sons is facilitated by Hermes' performance on his newly invented lyre. Struck by desire for this novel

⁴⁹ B. Heiden (above, n.42) 421.

⁵⁰ A. Bergren (above, n.29) 156, suggests that "what the *Hymn to Hermes* reveals is the indecidability of the two gods: Apollo's desire for unique identity is a desire for what belongs to Hermes, just as Hermes' desire is for what belongs to Apollo."

⁵¹ The hymnist anticipates this union by his subtle phrasing. As the two gods approached Olympos, the hymnist explicitly names them both (327: Ἐρμῆς τε καὶ ἄργυρότοξος Ἀπόλλων). When they leave Olympos, the hymnist unites them, referring to them as the very beautiful children of Zeus (397: Διὸς περικαλλέα τέκνα). In this same passage, the hymnist reinforces their union through the use of the dual.

⁵² Discussing the ultimate reconciliation of the half-brothers, S. Johnston (above, n.2 2002 and 2003) has drawn attention to parallels between Apollo and the older males of a community in initiation practices. From the standpoint of initiatory practices, Hermes stands in clearly for the younger members of the community seeking full acceptance by the adult community. For the importance of cattle raids in initiatory practice, see A. Haft, "The Mercurial Significance of Raiding: Baby Hermes and Animal Theft in Contemporary Crete," *Arion* 4 (1996) 27–48.

instrument, Apollo questions his brother about its origins, and the hymnist once again reminds us of the opposition between the two brothers. He offers two possibilities for how Hermes acquired the marvelous lyre, reminding us of his connections to the past-oriented and timeless qualities of εἰδέναι. On the one hand, Hermes may simply have been born with it (440: ἐκ γενετῆς τὰδ' ἄμ' ἔσπετο), suggesting that it, like Apollo's τιμαί, is eternally linked to the god. On the other, he may have received it from a god or mortal as a gift (442), suggesting that the lyre predates Hermes. As we have seen elsewhere, Apollo struggles to understand the novel creation, failing to leave room for the possibility that Hermes himself has refashioned a tortoise in order to create the lyre that will help him win τιμαί from his older brother.

Yet there is the sense here that Apollo is beginning to appreciate the ways that Hermes changes traditional models. Immediately after offering origins for the lyre, he acknowledges the delightful novelty of Hermes' theogony. As he says to his half-brother,

θαυμασίην γὰρ τήνδε νεήφατον ὄσσαν ἀκούω,
ἦν οὐ πώ ποτέ φημι δαήμεναι οὔτε τιν' ἀνδρῶν,
οὔτε τιν' ἀθανάτων οἱ Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχουσι,
νόσφι σέθεν φηλήτα⁵³ Διὸς καὶ Μαιάδος νιέ.

(443–446)

Indeed, this is a wonderful [song], previously unuttered, which I hear, a song which I say no one of men or immortals, who have their homes on Olympus, has ever yet learned, apart from you, robber son of Zeus and Maia.

Apollo acknowledges the special status of Hermes who has done what no one else has done. The tricky god manages to sing something previously unuttered (νεήφατον).⁵⁴ He stands apart from anything that Apollo has experienced up to this point in time, and the result is delightful wonder. He accepts the legitimate claims of his half-brother to be a member of the Olympian community, acknowledging their common father, Zeus. In the past, Apollo was likely to eliminate his rivals. By eliminating opponents like Pytho and Telphousa, he was able to reinforce his claim to be the master of the bow, lyre, and prophecy. After he has interacted with Hermes, beguiled by his half-brother's ability to be more than he appears to be and bewitched by the seductive song of the lyre, Apollo welcomes a rival into a bond of eternal friendship, promising that no god or mortal will be dearer to him (523–526).

⁵³ Here I follow T. Allen's (*Homeri Opera Tomus V: Hymnus, Cyclum Fragmenta, Margiten, Batrachomyomachiam, Vitas Continens*. [Oxford 1912]) reading φηλήτα rather than M. L. West's φιλήτα. In the context of the cattle theft, it seems likely that Apollo would acknowledge Hermes' skills here.

⁵⁴ Again a word not used in Homer, Hesiod, or the *Homeric Hymns* outside of this passage.

This is not a one-way exchange, however. At the same time that Apollo praises Hermes for his ability to introduce innovation into the world, Hermes in turn affirms Apollo's vast knowledge of what has been. He promises Apollo the opportunity to incorporate the lyre into his databank of knowledge (466: *σήμερον εἰδήσεις*), which is a fitting offer for Apollo who knows everything well (467: *φρεσὶ πάντ' εὖ οἶδας*). Rather than discrediting the value of Apollo's knowledge of the past in favor of endless innovation for the future, Hermes welcomes the opportunity, as D. Jaillard says, "to substitute for the notion of order, which implies a certain fixity, the idea of an ensemble flexibly structured by the play of sharing between powers."⁵⁵ Rather than having clear boundaries between the domains of Apollo and Hermes, Hermes sees the strength of Zeus' cosmos in the interplay between himself and his half-brother, and as a result, they are joined in eternal friendship, jointly enjoying the lyre's music as they herd the cattle together.

VIII. Reconsidering Prophecy: A Practical Application of the New Relationship

Toward the end of the hymn, the hymnist raises the possibility that Hermes may also share prophecy with Apollo. If we look at this scene in relationship to the previous scene in which Hermes welcomed his brother into the art of the lyre, we hear an interesting echo and contrast. As noted above, Hermes welcomes Apollo as a fellow musician, and he specifically tells his half-brother that it is his prerogative to learn what he likes (474: *σοὶ δ' αὐτάγρετόν ἐστι δαήμεναι ὅτι μνοιναῖς*). Here toward the end of the hymn, Apollo insists upon his exclusive right to a form of prophecy that has direct access to the plan of Zeus, excluding Hermes and all other gods from learning it (534: *οὔτε σε θέσφατόν ἐστι δαήμεναι οὔτε τιν' ἄλλον/ἀθανάτων*). As a result of the oath he once swore, the system is forever locked into place with Apollo as the eternal mouthpiece of Zeus. Because of this exclusive relationship, Apollo can then grant or restrict access to the knowledge of what the father of gods and men has in mind (541–549). For those who inquire with Apollo in the approved fashion, listening to the sound of his voice, Apollo can bring great benefits. For those who seek to gain knowledge beyond his wishes, he will bring harm, though he will take their goods all the same. Though the plan of Zeus may be accessible to anyone, it is Apollo who is in the position to determine who will benefit and who will be harmed by the knowledge of that plan.

We should also listen to the way that Apollo describes the purpose of his exclusive prophecy. He indicates that his prophetic work is a matter of knowing the plan of Zeus (538: *εἴσεσθαι Ζηνὸς πυκινόφρονα βουλήν*). Using the future infinitive of *εἰδέναι*, the hymnist uses Apollo

⁵⁵ D. Jaillard (above, n.6) 89: *Substituer à la notion d'ordre qui implique une certain fixité, l'idée d'un ensemble flexible structuré par le jeu des partages entre puissances.*

to present one way of understanding the work of prophecy. As several scholars have discussed in recent years, prophecy is not an irrational art, but rather an attempt on the part of mortals to bring order to a potentially chaotic world.⁵⁶ Faced with the uncertainty of the future, mortals may desire surety that the plans that they have formed in the past will work out in the future as they have envisioned them. This may help us understand the role that Apollo's prophecies play in sanctioning the establishment of Greek colonies.⁵⁷ We might also look to the famous example from Herodotos' account of Kroisos. On the verge of attacking the Persians, the king wants to be sure that he will succeed. His trust in the Delphic oracle is rooted in its vast knowledge. The oracle knows not only "the count of the sands and the measure of the sea" (1.47.3: οἶδα δ' ἐγὼ ψάμμου τ' ἀριθμὸν καὶ μέτρα θαλάσσης), but it also knows that the king is at that moment boiling a tortoise and a lamb in a bronze pot. Because of the extent of the oracle's knowledge, Kroisos trusts that the oracle will be correct about the future.⁵⁸ From this view, prophecy is a project that seeks to constrain and control the unknowable future.

Yet the example of Kroisos suggests that prophecy is not simply a matter of knowing the future; Kroisos fails to take into account the notorious ambiguity of the Delphic oracle. Confident that the oracle refers to the Persians, the Lydian king fails to think that *a* great empire may in fact be his own. We might listen more carefully to the rest of the oracle's initial reply. Following its claim to know the seemingly unknowable, the oracle goes on to say that it "understands the dumb and hears the one who does not speak" (καὶ κωφοῦ συνήμι, καὶ οὐ φωνεῦντος ἀκούω). We seem to be in the contradictory world of Hermes who told the Old Man not to see though he sees and to be dumb though he speaks. If we are not careful, we may fail to understand what it is that the oracles tell us. Rather than providing factual information that we can interpret through sure and steady knowledge, the oracles tell us mortals about the plan or intention of Zeus, and as Heiden suggests, "an intention is not something visible, but an agent's disposition to make a certain choice affecting a

⁵⁶ S. Johnston ("Introduction: Divining and Divination" in S. Johnston and P. Struck, eds., *Mantikē: Studies in Ancient Divination* [Boston 2005] 11) suggests that "divination is an utterly human art, behind which one can glimpse not only the rules that participants have developed for its engagement, but also the rules by which participants assume (or hope) that the world works." Along similar lines, W. Burkert ("Signs, Commands, and Knowledge: Ancient Divination Between Enigma and Epiphany" in *Mantikē: Studies in Ancient Divination* [Boston 2005] 30) argues, "Divination is not irrational but rather an attempt, perhaps a desperate attempt, to extend the realm of *ratio*, the realms of knowledge and control, beyond the barrier of the future, and the barrier of death, into the misty zones from which normal knowledge and experience is absent."

⁵⁷ S. Johnston ("Delphic Apollo in the *Oresteia*," in *Apolline Politics and Poetics* [Athens 2009] 219–28) reminds us that roughly 7.5 percent of Delphic oracles that we have preserved refer to colonization. Interestingly, given Apollo's connection to the past, roughly 10.4 percent deal with calming the spirits of the dead, sometimes resulting in cult foundations.

⁵⁸ Recall as well that in *Il.*6.447, Hektor speaks with certainty (εὖ γὰρ ἐγὼ τόδε οἶδα) that Troy will fall as if it is a fixed outcome.

certain situation.”⁵⁹ Divination is not about correctly understanding the one correct answer to the riddle of the oracle so much as it is about weighing out the possible reactions of the gods to a particular human action.⁶⁰

I would draw our attention briefly to an interesting prophetic practice in which Apollo and Hermes play essential roles. As F. Graf has demonstrated, the so-called dice oracles consist of pillars with fixed responses corresponding to each role of the dice.⁶¹ The oracular voice must be that of Apollo which leaves Hermes the role of the mediator, conveying the message to the inquirer in a similar role to the prophets at Delphi, Didyma, or Klaros. Given the dynamic that we have seen in *HH Hermes* between these two gods, these roles could not be more fitting. The oracular texts predate the inquirer, and they remain unchanged even after the inquirer has departed. They comprise a fixed text that one may know (εἰδέναι), but knowing the possible responses is insufficient. It is the presence of Hermes that provides the variety in responses that would be suitable for a variety of inquirers. Like νόος which must assess the multivalence of any given situation, the chance roll of the dice determines which of the established responses will apply to the current inquirers question.

There is a tension in human thinking that gets focalized through divination. By having Apollo and Hermes negotiate over prophecy, the hymnist helps us focus on the struggle between two competing worldviews. We may want to see the world as established and stable, one that we can know for sure (εἰδέναι), but we may suspect that the world is more unpredictable than we thought, a world that will require us to respond through our use of νόος.⁶² By extension, the introduction of Hermes into the Olympian order and the newly formed friendship with Apollo help us understand something broader about Zeus himself. Looking at Zeus as the god who rules both αἰθήρ and ἄηρ, Vernant has suggested, “Those who are submitted to this sovereign power of Zeus feel the effects of its double and contradictory character. On the one hand this power embodied by the sky, with its regular movements and the periodic cycle of days and seasons, represents a just and ordered sovereignty. At the same time, it also comprises an element of opaqueness and unpredictability.”⁶³ Over the

⁵⁹ B. Heiden, “Eavesdropping on Apollo: Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*,” *Literary Imagination* 7 (2005) 241.

⁶⁰ Though many references to the Delphic oracle in literature highlight failure to correctly interpret the oracles, we need to remember that it is possible to ask Apollo to reconsider his answer (e.g., the Wooden Walls oracle in Herodotos).

⁶¹ F. Graf, “Rolling the Dice for an Answer” in *Mantikē: Studies in Ancient Divination* (Boston 2005) 51–97.

⁶² J. P. Vernant (“Hestia-Hermes: The Religious Expression of Space and Movement in Ancient Greece,” in J. Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* [London 1983] 127–73) famously explored a similar dynamic in the relationship between Hestia and Hermes, in which Hestia embodies the stability of the hearth and Hermes embodies the mobility of the outside world.

⁶³ J. P. Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Sussex 1980) 95. Looking at Yoruba mythology, L. Hyde (*Trickster Makes this World* [New York 1998] 117) notes,

course of the hymn, Apollo comes to respect the unpredictability in the Olympian cosmos introduced by Hermes. By embracing the shiftiness of his half-brother, Apollo actually comes to a better understanding of the full nature of his father.

Rather than *HH Hermes* being about a neat division of τιμαί that establishes a clear hierarchy (Apollo, god of cowherding and lyre music, versus Hermes, god of shepherding and pipe music), the hymnist very intentionally has the brothers head off with the herd together. Hermes' entry into the Olympian order does not restructure the cosmos at the expense of Apollo, but rather it welcomes the skills of both gods in harmony. The strength of Zeus is his ability to create a space in which both Apollo, crafting order in a disorderly world, and Hermes, constantly opening up new possibilities, can operate cooperatively.⁶⁴

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“Out of the friendship of Ifa and Eshu (like that of Apollo and Hermes at the end of the *Homeric Hymn*) we get no tragic opposition, then; we get, rather, the creative play of necessity and chance, certainty and uncertainty, archetype and ectype, destiny and its exceptions, the way and the no-way, the net of fate and the escape from that net.”

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