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THE DEBATE ON UNDETECTED CRIME AND AN UNDETECTED FRAGMENT FROM
EURIPIDES' SISYPHUS

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In his *Life of Euripides* Satyrus preserved the following two iambic trimeters (P.Oxy. 1176, fr. 39, ii, 8-14 = Eur. fr. 1007c Nauck-Snell):

- λ]άθραι δὲ τού[τ]ων δρωμένων τίνας φοβῆι;
- τοὺς μείζονα βλ[έ]ποντας ἀ[ν]θρώπων θεοῦς.

The lines are not explicitly attributed to Euripides in the papyrus, but in a biography of the poet no such attribution is needed.¹ The two trimeters, separated in the papyrus by a high stop, are obviously spoken by two different speakers, the second responding to the first. Immediately following the quotation of these lines, one of the interlocutors in the conversation which constitutes the biography makes the following comment (fr. 39, ii, 15-22):

εἴη ἂν ἡ τοιαύτη ὑπόνοια περ[ὶ] θεῶν [Cω]κρατική² τῶι γὰρ ὄντι τὰ
θνητοῖς ἀόρατα τοῖς ἀθανάτοις εὐκάτοπτα.

What does Satyrus mean by calling the 'conception of the gods' (ὑπόνοια περὶ θεῶν) Socratic, and what can this tell us about the fragment?

The connection between Euripides and Socrates drawn by Satyrus is one of a number of such references to be found in the biographical and anecdotal tradition of Euripides.³ None of these references, including the one under discussion, has historical value as evidence of a real connection between the two or of influence of one on the other.⁴ Thus, if any sense is to be made of Satyrus' remark about the Socratic conception of the gods, we must begin from an understanding of the fragment, and proceed to consider why Satyrus might have viewed it as Socratic.

¹ Several other fragments of Euripides are introduced in this *Life* in the same manner, e.g. fr. 37, ii, 19-28 = Eur. fr. 593 N.; fr. 38, iii, 8-21 = Eur. fr. 1007a, b N.-S.; fr. 39, vi, 4-15 = Eur. fr. 1007e N.-S.

² There is no doubt that Satyrus wrote Cωκρατική. Not only is there room for only two letters, but just previous to this passage Satyrus seems to have been speaking of Socrates (fr. 39, i, 26-27): τὸν Cω[κρά]τη.

³ Cf. the preceding column of this papyrus (fr. 39, i, 21-35), Cic. *Tusc.* 4.63, Aul. Gell. *NA* 15.20.4, Ael. *VH* 2.13, Diog. Laert. 2.44 (cf. Philochorus *FGrH* 328 F 221), Vit. Eur. 11-15 Méridier, *Suda* s.v. Εὐριπίδης. It is quite possible, as with so much in the Euripides vita, that these references ultimately stem from Old Comedy: Diog. Laert. 2.18 quotes three fragments of Old Comedy which he claimed assert the connection between Euripides and Socrates (Teleclides fr. 39-40 Kock, Callias fr. 15 Kassel-Austin, Ar. fr. 392 K.-A.; cf. Ar. *Ran.* 1491-1499). However, Diogenes may be misrepresenting the sources; see G. Arrighetti, ed., *Satiro: Vita di Euripide*, *Studi classici e orientali* 13 (Pisa 1964) 113-115.

⁴ The likeliest case of real interaction between the philosopher and the poet remains the debate over incontinence; see T. Irwin, 'Euripides and Socrates' *CP* 78 (1983) 183-197.

Previous commentators on this fragment have explained the 'Socratic conception of the gods' with reference to the notion of divine omniscience.⁵ Although divine omniscience is relevant, and will be referred to again below, it is not alone sufficient to account for the biographer's reference to a 'Socratic conception of the gods'. Others before and after Socrates asserted divine omniscience.⁶ Indeed divine omniscience is not actually asserted or necessarily implied in the fragment. The point in the fragment is slightly different than mere divine omniscience and derives from a specific, clearly discernible context.

The second speaker in the fragment admits that he fears the gods because, he claims, they see the deeds of men which escape the notice of other men. The point of the fragment must be inferred from this statement. The criminal who has gone undetected by his fellow men is still liable to be detected and punished by the gods. Thus, a man who is emboldened to commit a crime in secret ought to fear divine punishment, and think twice before committing such a crime. The second speaker conceives of the gods as the effective and vigilant enforcers of moral sanctions. On the basis of this interpretation we can make good sense of Satyrus' description of this conception of the gods as Socratic.

The advisability of committing undetected crime was a matter of considerable debate among intellectuals of the late fifth century.⁷ The representation of this debate in the fourth-century Socratic literature clearly divided Socrates and his sophist opponents. The Socrates of this literature, the Socrates to whom Satyrus is in essence referring, had a decided view on this subject. This view would have been well known to Satyrus and his audience as a mark of Socrates' difference from those who looked to *physis* as the standard of behavior. Satyrus could refer without ambiguity to the fragment's Socratic conception of the gods because Socrates' position on the question of undetected crime achieved a distinctive status in a famous setting.

The classical *physis* view is best illustrated by Antiphon, though Plato's Callicles and Thrasymachus would both have concurred.⁸ Advising that one ought to transgress the laws if there are no human witnesses, Antiphon completely ignored the possibility of divine vigilance.⁹ Xenophon's Socrates, on the other hand, asserted divine omniscience (Mem.

⁵ So Arrighetti (above, n.3) 115, following H.Gerstinger, 'Satyrus' ΒΙΟC ΕΥΠΙΠΙΔΑΟΥ', Wiener Studien 38 (1916) 60. The latter cites Xen. Mem. 1.1.19 and 1.4.18 without elaborating. In both passages from Xenophon, Socrates is reported to assert divine omniscience.

⁶ E.g. from early Greek literature: Hom. Od. 4.379, Hes. Op. 267-269 (cf. West ad 267), Sol. 13.25-28 West, Xenophanes DK 21 B 24. Most of the assertions of divine omniscience from the fourth century which do not stem from the context to be described below refer strictly to the divine sanction of oaths: Xen. An. 2.5.7; Dem. 19.239-240; [Dem.] 59.126; Lyc. 79,146; so also Socrates ap.Xen.Mem. 1.1.19.

⁷ See now M.Nill, *Morality and Self-Interest in Protagoras, Antiphon and Democritus* (Leiden 1985) 5458. In addition to the passages cited below, cf. Democritus DK 68 B 30, 181,264, and, from the fourth century, Xen. Mem. 4.4.21, Archytas of Tarentum DK 47 B 3.

⁸ Cf. Pl. Grg. 484a2-b1, 492b2-c8; Rep. 1.344a3-c4. The position of Plato's Thrasymachus as restated by Glaucon and Adimantus is discussed just below.

⁹ DK 87 B 44 fr. A 1.12-2.23; cf. also B 12, where τὴν πρόνοιαν must refer to divine providence.

1.4.18) not for the sake of mere theological instruction, but as a premise for inculcating the same practical lesson as that expressed by the second speaker in the Euripidean fragment (Mem. 1.4.19):

οὐ μόνον τοὺς συνόντας ἐδόκει ποιεῖν ὅποτε ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων
 ὀρώιντο, ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἀνοσίων τε καὶ ἀδίκων καὶ αἰσχρῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ
 ὅποτε ἐν ἔρημίαι εἶεν, ἐπέιπερ ἠγγήκαιντο μηδὲν ἄν ποτε ὧν πράττοιεν
 θεοὺς διαλαθεῖν.

In Mem. 1.4.1 Xenophon had set out to show that Socrates is able not only to direct men towards virtue (προτρέψεσθαι μὲν ἀνθρώπους ἐπ' ἀρετήν), but to compel them to it (προαγαγεῖν δ' ἐπ' αὐτήν). It is in this morally compelling sense that the fragment's conception of the gods is Socratic.

Plato's Socrates provides an interesting contrast. The impulse to commit undetected crime was most forcefully described in the beginning of Rep. II. Glaucon assures the potential criminal of absolute secrecy by imagining the ring of Gyges (359c-360d). Adimantus fortifies the dilemma by allowing the undetected criminal any of three advantageous beliefs about the gods: either the gods do not exist, or do not observe human crimes, or can be bought off afterwards with the proper ritual (365de). Adimantus insists that Socrates assume in his response that the gods do not observe the undetected crimes (366e, 367e); hence, a claim of divine vigilance or omniscience is ruled out from the start per hypothesim. Of course, the Republic still claims to prove that crime, even if undetected, does not pay. Vigilant gods, however, make a brief return at the very end of the Republic (10.612c7-613b8). In Laws X no such constraint applies as that laid down by Adimantus in the Republic. Responding to those who do not believe that the gods concern themselves with human affairs,¹⁰ the unnamed, Socrates-like Athenian proves that the gods do observe and punish all human crimes (899d-905c). Plato's Socrates, more complex than Xenophon's on this question as on most others, would nevertheless seem to the popularizing biographer to inculcate the same lesson as Xenophon's Socrates and as the second speaker in the two-line fragment of Euripides.

Once the fragment preserved by Satyrus is interpreted as I have demonstrated, a certain likelihood is made evident that it comes from the same scene as the famous atheistic fragment ascribed in the sources to both Euripides' Sisyphus and an unnamed work by Critias.¹¹ I do not claim that my juxtaposition of the two fragments, one of which is certainly Euripides, constitutes in itself a decisive argument that the atheistic fragment comes from Euripides'

¹⁰ A late report ascribes such a view to Thrasymachus, DK 85 B 8.

¹¹ Euripides' Sisyphus: Aëtius 1.7.2 (ap. Diels, Dox. Gr. 298); Critias: Sext. Emp. Math. 9.54. I know of no ancient source that mentions or implies a Sisyphus play by Critias. See A. Dihle, 'Das Satyrspiel Sisyphos', *Hermes* 105 (1977) 28-42 for a discussion of the sources of this fragment and the traditional problem of its disputed authorship. I shall use the text of this fragment as printed in TrGF 1.43 F 19 (with one exception; see n. 17 below), even though it is attributed there to Critias.

satyr play of 415. In the absence of further evidence it remains possible that the couplet in Satyrus comes from any of the lost plays of Euripides; however, certain features indicating that the couplet and the atheistic fragment belong together ought not to pass unnoticed. Furthermore, I venture to suggest that the two fragments belong together in the conviction that Dihle has proved that Euripides is the author of the atheistic fragment.¹² But the suggested juxtaposition presented here does not presuppose any particular argument for Euripidean authorship of the atheistic fragment; it merely presupposes the self-evident plausibility of Euripidean authorship. Insofar as this juxtaposition is found convincing, it should be added to the arguments for Euripidean authorship presented by Dihle and others advanced by Scodel.¹³

I propose combining the two fragments for the following reason: with respect to the dramatic situation, the diction, and the issues of the contemporary debate on undetected crime, the main point of the atheistic fragment is an extraordinarily apt response to the second speaker in the couplet from Satyrus.

The first speaker in the couplet is the same as the speaker of the atheistic fragment, Sisyphus himself.¹⁴ It is not impossible that the second speaker in the couplet is a pious, but unsophisticated Heracles whom Sisyphus is leading astray.¹⁵ In any event, the second speaker is the pious foil to the impious Sisyphus. When the second speaker responds that he fears the gods in consequence of secret crime, Sisyphus is moved to undeceive the gullible fellow and free him from the needless belief about the gods which constrains his behavior. Lines 9-26 of the atheistic fragment contain the heart of Sisyphus' response.¹⁶ The sequence would appear thus:

Cíc.	λάθραι δὲ τούτων δρωμένων τίνας φοβῆτι;	
- - -	τοὺς μείζονα βλέποντας ἀνθρώπων θεοῦς.	
Cíc.	[a lacuna of at least one line, but probably not many lines]	
	... lines 1-8 of TrGF 1.43 F19 ...	
	ἔπειτ' ἐπειδὴ τὰφανῆ μὲν οἱ νόμοι	
	ἀπεῖργον αὐτοὺς ἔργα μὴ πράσσειν βίαι,	10
	λάθραι δ' ἔπρασσον, τηνικαῦτά μοι δοκεῖ	
	< x - > πυκνός τις καὶ σοφός γνώμην ἀνήρ	

¹² Dihle (above, n.11). D.Sutton, 'Critias and Atheism' CQ n.s. 31 (1981) 33-38 rejects, but does not reply to, Dihle's arguments. A full response to Dihle, in which the atheistic fragment is re-assigned to Critias, has now been published by M.Winiarczyk, 'Nochmals das Satyrspiel "Sisyphos"' Wiener Studien 100 (1987) 35-45. In an appendix to this article I briefly indicate why Winiarczyk has failed to upset Dihle's argument.

¹³ R.Scodel, *The Trojan Trilogy of Euripides*, Hypomnemata 60 (Göttingen 1980) 122-137, esp. 128.

¹⁴ According to Aëtius 1.7.2 (ap. Diels, *Dox. Gr.* 298), Sisyphus himself delivers the atheistic speech.

¹⁵ From Eur. fr. 673 N. we know that Heracles appeared in Euripides' Sisyphus, though we have no idea of what the plot was, or how great a role Heracles played. Cf. Scodel (above, n.13) 122-123.

¹⁶ Thus, Sextus seized upon the point of these lines to serve as his introductory summary of the entire speech (Math. 9.54).

<θεῶν> δέος θνητοῖσιν ἔξευρεῖν, ὅπως
 εἴη τι δεῖμα τοῖς κακοῖσι, κἄν λάθραι
 πράσσωσιν ἢ λέγωσιν ἢ φρονῶσί <τι>. 15
 ἐντεῦθεν οὖν τὸ θεῖον εἰσηγήσατο,
 ὡς ἔστι δαίμων ἀφθίτῳι θάλλων βίῳι
 νόῳι τ' ἀκούων καὶ βλέπων, φρονῶν τε καὶ
 προσέχων τὰ πάντα¹⁷ καὶ φύσιν θείαν φορῶν,
 ὃς πᾶν τὸ λεχθὲν ἐν βροτοῖς ἀκούσεται, 20
 <τὸ> δρώμενον δὲ πᾶν ἰδεῖν δυνήσεται.
 ἐὰν δὲ σὺν σιγῇ τι βουλευήσῃς κακόν,
 τοῦτ' οὐχὶ λήσει τοὺς θεοὺς· τὸ γὰρ φρονῶν
 <χ -> ἔνεστι. τούσδε τοὺς λόγους λέγων
 διδαγμάτων ἡδικοτον εἰσηγήσατο 25
 ψευδεῖ καλύψας τὴν ἀλήθειαν λόγῳι.
 ... lines 27-42...

In the section of the atheistic speech quoted here Sisyphus discusses the problem of controlling undetected crime (9-11). The second speaker in the couplet feared gods who were more observant than men. In response, Sisyphus takes up the notion of vigilant gods (16-19) and expands it by presenting a detailed picture of divine omniscience (20-23). Thus, the notion of divine omniscience which may have been implied by the second speaker in the couplet, even if unconsciously, is made explicit. These omniscient gods were invented for the sake of promoting the very fear to which the second speaker has fallen victim (12-15). In lines 24-26 Sisyphus explicitly declares that the doctrine of divine vigilance and retribution is a lie. Hence his pious interlocutor has nothing to fear if he commits his crime in secret. Nothing in the rest of Sisyphus' speech that I have not reproduced weakens this main point and its intended impact on the second speaker in the couplet.¹⁸

The aptness of the atheistic fragment as a response to the couplet is reinforced on the level of diction. The key terms of the couplet - secrecy, fear, (criminal) deeds, divine perception - are all taken up in the response. To express secrecy Sisyphus twice uses the key word λάθραι (11, 14) which he used in the initial question in the couplet. The cognate verb is used in line 23. In the couplet Sisyphus asked τίνας φοβῆι; In the atheistic fragment Sisyphus first speaks of δέος and δεῖμα of the gods (13-14), but later of φόβου (29, 37;

¹⁷ τὰ πάντα is the emendation of Grotius in place of the paradosis τε ταῦτα, which was maintained by Snell in the first edition of TrGF 1. The emendation has the great merit of eliding an otiose conjunction and was defended by Dihle (above, n.11) 41. Cf. n.20 below.

¹⁸ In the beginning of the passage Sisyphus spoke of the original state of uncontrolled crime among men (1-4) and the successful imposition of laws to control visible crime (5-8). In the concluding portion of the passage Sisyphus explains that the gods were located in the heavens to increase the awe felt by men (27-40).

not quoted above). The diction of line 21 closely recalls the terms in which the problem was originally phrased in the couplet: the divinity can see every deed.

If my reconstruction is correct, and Satyrus recalled or had before him the original context of the couplet when he quoted it, his reference to Socrates is especially apt. Sisyphus himself of course rejects the gods, but the detailed picture of divine omniscience which he presents as myth is precisely what both the 'Socratic' speaker of the couplet and the literary Socrates of Satyrus' imagination would have accepted as true. The terminology used by Sisyphus to describe divine omniscience is remarkably similar to the way Xenophon's Socrates describes divine omniscience. Although parallels for certain aspects of Sisyphus' diction can be found elsewhere, in no two other sources for divine omniscience from the fourth century or earlier is the similarity so close. Defining what he means by divine omniscience, Socrates specifies that the gods know (Mem. 1.1.19):

τά τε λεγόμενα καὶ πραττόμενα καὶ τὰ κτηνὶ βουλευόμενα.

This recalls Sisyphus, lines 14-15:

κἄν λάθραι
πράσσων ἢ λέγων ἢ φρονώσι(τι)

and lines 20-23:

ὅς πᾶν τὸ λεχθὲν ἐν βροτοῖς ἀκούσεται,
ἄνθρωπον δὲ πᾶν ἰδεῖν δυνήσεται.
ἐὰν δὲ σὺν κτηνὶ τι βουλευήη κακόν,¹⁹
τοῦτ' οὐχὶ λήσει τοὺς θεούς·

In the other place where Xenophon's Socrates defines what he means by divine omniscience, he says (Mem. 1.4.18):

γινώσκει τὸ θεῖον ὅτι τοσοῦτον καὶ τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν ὥσθ' ἅμα πάντα ὁρᾶν
καὶ πάντα ἀκούειν καὶ πανταχοῦ παρεῖναι ...

This recalls Sisyphus, lines 16-19:

ἐντεῦθεν οὖν τὸ θεῖον εἰσηγήσατο,
ὡς ἔστι δαίμων ἀφθίτῳ θάλλων βίῳ
νόωι τ' ἀκούων καὶ βλέπων, φρονῶν τε καὶ
προσέχων τὰ πάντα²⁰

It is impossible to say for certain whether Xenophon is relying directly on the Sisyphus passage or both Xenophon and Euripides are using the common language of late fifth-century intellectuals. It is easy to understand how Satyrus would have viewed Euripides as the imitator of 'Socrates'.

¹⁹ The similarity of line 22 to Xen. Mem. 1.1.19 was noticed by Scodel (above, n.13) 132.

²⁰ Cf. n.17 above. In the addenda in the second edition of TrGF 1, R.Kannicht compared Xen. Mem. 1.4.18 and Pl. Leg. 901d (following A.Henrichs, *The Atheism of Prodicus* Cronache Ercolanesi 6 (1976) 16).

Satyrus' reference to Socrates is apt for another reason. Sisyphus and his interlocutor are recreating, in a loose but reasonable sense, the debate on undetected crime which Satyrus readily identified with the sophists and Socrates. The second speaker in the couplet is the Socrates to Sisyphus' Antiphon (or Callicles or Thrasymachus). If in fact the Socratic couplet preserved by Satyrus did not precede Sisyphus' atheistic speech, some other lines of virtually the same import must have.

Appendix: Brief Reply to Winiarczyk

In a recent article Winiarczyk claimed to have upset Dihle's account of the doxographical tradition concerning the atheistic fragment ascribed in the sources to both Euripides and Critias.²¹ Dihle had claimed to show that Euripides was the author. Winiarczyk has now claimed to show that Critias was the author. For reasons set out below, Winiarczyk's account is fundamentally flawed. Dihle's account therefore remains intact.

Concerning the style of the fragment, the confusion of Euripides and Critias, and the supposition of a Sisyphus play by Critias, Winiarczyk adds nothing new.²² Winiarczyk's entire case rests on a re-appraisal of the doxographical tradition, especially the so-called catalogues of atheists. Here Winiarczyk considers three pieces of evidence: 1) Epicurus fr. 27.2 Arrighetti²; 2) Cic. ND 1.117-119; 3) Theophilus of Antioch ad Autolyicum 3.7. I leave out of account here Winiarczyk's problematic claim of a mixed tradition of atheist-catalogues.²³ The essential question is whether Winiarczyk has properly treated the three pieces of evidence he adduces.

From item 1, Epicurus fr.27.2 Arrighetti², which as the earliest catalogue includes Prodicus, Diagoras, and Critias, Winiarczyk infers that Epicurus attacked Critias for asserting the human origin of religion. Therefore, Epicurus must have known Critias as the author of the atheistic fragment.²⁴ Winiarczyk has erred in his initial inference. The fragment does not indicate why Epicurus attacked these three 'atheists'. In the case of Prodicus we know from reliable evidence that it was probably for asserting a human origin of religion.²⁵ Winiarczyk himself has shown that Diagoras was not an atheist in any sense, ancient or modern, and became known as an atheist to account for his famous impiety against the

²¹ Dihle (above, n. 11); Winiarczyk (above, h. 12).

²² Winiarczyk (above, n. 12) 43-45.

²³ Winiarczyk (above, n.12) 41; cf. M.Winiarczyk, 'Der erste Atheistenkatalog des Kleitomachos' *Philologus* 120 (1976) 32-46. Winiarczyk himself notes the problems inherent in such abstract *Quellenforschung* (above, n.12) 40, n.23.

²⁴ Winiarczyk (above, n. 12) 36-37.

²⁵ A.Henrichs, 'Two Doxographical Notes: Democritus and Prodicus on Religion' *HSCP* 79 (1975) 93-123; *id.*, (above, n.20) 15-21.

Mysteries.²⁶ Winiarczyk has assumed that Critias was attacked by Epicurus for the same reason that Prodicus was attacked; that is, on the basis of some atheistic theory he actually propounded. But why might not Critias have been censured for the same reason as Diagoras, viz. for having committed an impiety so great as to warrant the reputation of atheism? Winiarczyk does not raise the question. Dihle has shown that Critias' outrageous and infamous behavior as a tyrant would have been sufficient to create the reputation of atheism.²⁷ Of course Epicurus may have censured Critias for some third reason. Thus the Epicurus fragment adds nothing to the point.

Item 2, Cic. ND 1.117-119, is a well-known, often discussed passage. In this catalogue of atheists, Cicero elegantly and with true learning summarizes the nature of several types of atheism. The atheistic content of the Sisyphus passage is neatly summarized and assigned to *i qui dixerunt ...* (1.118). There is no dispute that Cicero is ultimately referring to the Sisyphus passage, but neither Critias nor Euripides nor anyone else is named as the author of this doctrine. Winiarczyk merely assumes that Critias belongs in Cicero's list here. No reason is offered.²⁸ Thus, no light is actually shed on either the Sisyphus passage or the tradition of atheist-catalogues.

Item 3, Theophilus of Antioch ad Autolyicum 3.7, is redundant as a source of information about the problem at hand. Far from telling us anything about Critias (whose name is merely mentioned with no offending doctrine specified), this passage is even worthless as a catalogue of atheists. The confusion of the author, who includes Plato and Pythagoras in his list, verges on the comical. The author has subordinated everything to his apologetic purpose. This passage indicates, if anything, how unreliable are all such catalogues, of whatever period, in the absence of reliable evidence concerning the so-called atheists.

Regarding our understanding of the doxographical tradition and the sources of the Sisyphus fragment, the situation stands as Dihle left it in 1977.²⁹

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²⁶ M. Winiarczyk, 'Diagoras von Melos - Wahrheit und Legende' *Eos* 67 (1979) 191-213, 68 (1980) 51-75.

²⁷ Dihle (above, n. 11) 31-32.

²⁸ Winiarczyk (above, n. 12) 38-39, esp. n. 18. If Clitomachus is indeed Cicero's unique ultimate source, as is admittedly possible, we still have no independent means of ascertaining whether Critias stood in Clitomachus' catalogue, and, if so, for what reason. An appeal to Sextus is, on this point, clearly unavailing.

²⁹ I am grateful to Jeffrey Rusten, Jefferds Huyck, and Albert Henrichs for their helpful criticism.