THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN CLEANTHES' *Hymn to Zeus*

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ABSTRACT

Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus 15–17 is often cited in discussions of Stoic views on evil. However, even though the central section of the Hymn to Zeus is devoted purely to a description of the actions and attitudes of the 'bad people', scholars have not succeeded in giving an adequate explanation of the relationship between this section and the rest of the hymn, which is more generally concerned with the praise of Zeus and his works. The reference to evil is seen to function as a theodicy and thus indirectly as a continuation of Zeus' praise. I would suggest, however, that the problem of evil, and not the praise of Zeus, is the central focus of the hymn: the ultimate goal of the poem is to reintegrate the ξάκωλ (which indeed include most people) into Zeus' order.

The problem of evil presented the early Stoics with a conundrum. How is it possible for evil to exist in a world perfectly and providentially designed in such a way that all the parts are arranged for the good of the whole? Keeping in mind that Stoic monism allows for only a single active principle, does this not imply that the active principle itself, that is, God, is responsible for the existence of evil? Among the early Stoics, we know that Chrysippus treated the problem of evil and related issues at length in various works such as On Nature, On the Gods, On Fate and On Providence, but of his two main predecessors we have relatively little on this topic.

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An important exception is Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* in which the topic of evil figures prominently. In the only extant version of the *Hymn to Zeus* (Stob. Anth. 1.1.12 ed. Wachsmuth = SVF 1.537) the word 'bad' or 'evil' (xaxós) occurs four times: in vv. 17, 20, 22 and 26. The latter, I think, may safely be ignored as a scribal error, which leaves us with three instances. All three occur in the middle of the hymn—in fact, v. 20 is the exact centre of the 39 verses comprising the extant poem. The other two instances are more or less equidistant from this 'centre'. The topic of evil, however, is treated more extensively than these three instances of xaxós may suggest: it in fact preoccupies the poet from v. 15 to v. 31, and is again alluded to in the prayer at the end of the hymn.

The way the topic is treated in the hymn is problematic in two distinct, though related ways: on a poetic level, we have to account for the amount of space devoted to this topic and its position within the structure of the poem, while on a conceptual level, there are apparent difficulties to reconcile various statements about evil.

**The poetic question: Evil within a hymn to Zeus**

Let us first consider the poetic question: How do we explain the prominent central position and length of a section dealing with 'evil' in a hymn devoted to Zeus?


4. The most extensive recent treatment of the text of the hymn, including a description of the sole remaining manuscript, is by Zuntz (note 3). The reader is referred to this article (pp. 300-303) for a text of the poem. See also the text with a brief critical apparatus in Thom (note 3) 44-45.
Two issues are at stake here: (a) the appropriateness of the topic of evil in a hymn to Zeus and (b) the compositional integrity of the hymn. As background it may be helpful to keep in mind that many scholars recognise both the sincerely religious nature of the hymn, and its poetic qualities: According to Wilamowitz, it is 'a gem of truly religious poetry', expressing 'the warmest tones of Hellenic piety'; J. Adam calls it 'perhaps the noblest tribute of religious adoration in the whole range of ancient literature', while Festugière considers it 'one of the most moving remnants of ancient piety'. Otto Kern describes the poem as 'the most beautiful hymn in the Greek language', and even Günther Zuntz, who is in some respects very critical of the poem, staunchly defends its religious sincerity and compositional integrity.5

It should be noted at the outset that except for v.17, the first half of the poem, up to v.21, is purely concerned with a description and praise of Zeus' omnipotent government; one could easily conceive of a complete hymn continuing in this vein.6 Vv.18–21 indeed suggest a closure that could have been followed by a brief concluding prayer.7 The fact that the author chose to continue describing the actions of the xo:xol in another 10 lines (vv.22–31) surely begs an explanation. One possible solution is that this description functions as a theodicy: Even though Zeus' rule is good and perfect, the existence of evil still has to be explained. Putting the blame firmly on human shoulders and thus exculpating Zeus, may serve as an indirect continuation of god's praise. Such an explanation, however, is unsatisfactory: for one thing, the question of blame is not really an issue in the hymn; for another, the author pays too much attention to the actions of the xo:xol for this merely to have a subservient purpose in the hymn.

In a recent publication Kurt Sier proposes a more nuanced variation of the theodicy motif: referring specifically to vv.18–21, he suggests that what the xo:xol 'do in their folly'

lös t das ausgleichende, 'begradigende' Wirken des Zeus aus, der die

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6. Cf. Sier (note 3) 100: this section 'wirkt ... zunächst wie ein unpassender Exkurs'.

7. I am grateful to David Scourfield for pointing this out. The ἀλλά in v.18 is indeed frequently used to indicate the conclusion of hymns; see W.H. Race, 'Aspects of rhetoric and form in Greek hymns', GRBS 23 (1982) 12.
Evil is thus 'justified' by the fact that it allows god to prove his superior goodness. Although I agree with Sier in the crucial role he assigns to vv.18–21, I think his interpretation takes a too positive view of evil, especially in light of the negative evaluation of evil in the rest of the poem. We will, however, return to the meaning of vv.18–21 later; we first need to consider how the section on evil fits into the composition of the hymn as a whole. I give the following brief synopsis of its composition:

I. Invocation: Praise of Zeus  
   A. Zeus as ruler  
   B. Corresponding human reaction: praise  
       1-6  

II. Argument: Zeus' rule and human recalcitrance  
   A. Description of Zeus' rule  
      1. Obedience of nature  
      2. Contrast: human folly  
      7-14  
   B. Zeus creates harmony out of conflict  
      18-21  
   C. Human recalcitrance  
      22-31  
       1. Rejection of universal reason  
       2. Continual quest for diverging objects  
   7-31  

III. Prayer: Deliverance and insight  
    A. Plea for deliverance from ignorance and for insight  
       32-35  
    B. Goal of deliverance and insight: praise  
       36-39  

The composition has the typical tripartite structure of traditional hymns. Following Bremer, I shall call these parts Invocation, Argument, and Prayer. The hymn starts out in the Invocation (I) with praise of Zeus as all-mighty ruler of nature (vv.1-2). Because of the close relationship between
man and Zeus (v.4), the former has the right and obligation to praise Zeus continuously (vv.3–6).

The middle, Argument section (II), consists of three subsections, the first subsection (II.A) describing Zeus' rule (vv.7–17), the second (II.B) his ability to create harmony out of conflict (vv.18–21), and the third (II.C) man's disobedience and recalcitrance (vv.22–31).

In the first subsection (II.A) we find a description of the orderly obedience of nature in response to Zeus' guidance: the heavens gladly follow the promptings of his thunderbolt. By means of the latter he also directs the universal reason, which in turn permeates all things, such as the sun and the stars, creating order (vv.7–14). Both thunderbolt and the Logos are impressively qualified by means of epithets and relative clauses; as assistants of the supreme king Zeus they function as foil to the evil men which we meet later in the poem. At the end of this subsection (vv.15–17) we find the first reference to the problem of evil: in contrast to the absolute obedience and dependence of nature, there are bad people who in their folly act 'without Zeus'. This, however, leads to the second subsection of the Argument (II.B, vv.18–21): Zeus is able to create order out of disorder and unity in plurality, that is, his eternal Logos. (I shall discuss these verses in more detail later). The final subsection of the Argument (II.C, vv.22–31) describes the unfortunate fate of the foolish: Since they avoid the universal reason, that is, the unifying, rational order of the cosmos, they are constantly searching for good things, without being able

10. Time does not allow me to discuss the various conjectures proposed to solve the crisis in v.4: ἐξ σοῦ γὰρ γόνος ἐσμέν | ἔχων μίμησις λαχῶτας. The manuscript reading is metrically unacceptable; the problem may only be solved by replacing either ἔχων with a word with a short initial syllable, or ἐσμέν with a word with an elidable final syllable (Zuntz [note 3] 292). For a convenient summary of the conjectures put forward by various scholars up to 1966, see M. Marcovich, 'Zum Zeushymnus des Kleanthes', Hermes 94 (1966) 245–50. For new conjectures since this article see G. Zuntz, 'Vers 4 des Kleanthes-Hymnus', RAM 122 (1979) 97–98; Meijer (note 3) 33–34 n.19; W. Appel, 'Zur Interpretation des 4. Verses Kleanthes' Hymnus auf Zeus', Eranos 82 (1984) 179–83; Sier (note 3) 96–98. Whatever reading one chooses, it is apparent from the context that the second half of v.4 indicates the ground for a special relationship between god and human beings. When one, for example, accepts Bergk's conservative emendation δίου μίμησις ('copy/imitation of the universe') in v.4, the special position of man is based on his participation in the divine Logos which orders everything; cf., e.g., Ario Didymus apud EuB. Pracp. Eran. 15.15.3.1–2 ed. Mras = SFV 2.528.28–29: κοινωνίαν δὲ ὑπάρχειν πρὸς ἄλληλοις διὰ τὸ λόγου ματέχειν, δὲ ἔστι φύσις νόμος ('They [sic, god and man] have a fellowship with one another because they participate in the Logos, which is the law in nature').

11. θέμας (v.3) has this double meaning here.

12. The thunderbolt is probably symbol of the γόνος ('tension') which according to the Stoics is at work in all things, determining their boundaries and establishing internal cohesion. In other fragments Cleahtes explicitly identifies the thunderbolt with the ὀνοσ (SFV 1.497, 509).
to recognise that the good life consists in precisely that which they are foolishly fleeing from, namely, the universal law. Without internal order and discipline (ἦν νόου, v.26; οὐδὲνι χόρσμῳ, v.28), they pursue diverging goals exemplified by the conventional ways of life (βίοι): they are lovers of honour, wealth, and pleasure (φιλότιμος, φιλοχρήματος, φιλήδονος).13

The result is, however, that they are continually subjected to divergent influences, even though they strive for the complete opposite to happen, that is, to obtain a meaningful life.

In the final section of the hymn (III), the Prayer (vv.32–39), Cleanthes asks that human beings be delivered from their destructive ignorance and that they obtain the same insight (γνώμη) on which Zeus himself relies to rule the universe, that is, insight into the universal law and reason (vv.32–35). We will then be able to praise and honour Zeus for the honour conferred on us. This is not only our duty; it is at the same time the highest privilege for mortal and immortal alike always to praise the universal law (vv.36–39).

It is very evident that motifs of the Invocation are repeated in the Prayer, for example, the praise of Zeus and his works, his guidance of the universe by the universal law, and the privilege and duty of human beings. This use of inclusio at the beginning and end of Greek texts to mark the conclusion and to strengthen the internal cohesion is of course quite common. I think, however, that this inclusio has a more significant function: it creates the frame within which the content of the middle section has to be understood. The Invocation and Prayer both stress the necessity for a reciprocal relationship between god and man: because man is privileged by god, he should reciprocate with obedience and praise; praise of god is at the same time only possible because of man's privileged position.14 Obedience and its concomitant, praise, are, however, precisely what the χαξολ deny Zeus.

From the discussion thus far, the symmetry of the composition should have become obvious: As we have just seen, the Invocation (I) corresponds to the Prayer (III); in the Argument, the first subsection about the obedience of nature (II.A) contrasts with the third subsection about human recalcitrance (II.C). This leaves us with the middle section of the Argument (II.B) as a kind of centre or turning point. It is noteworthy that the corresponding parts are also more or less of equal length: Compare I (6 verses) with III (8 verses), and II.A (11 verses) with II.C (10 verses). The central subsection (II.B) in contrast consists of a mere 4 verses. Both in

14. The crucial role of reciprocity for understanding the Hymn to Zeus is emphasised by Festugière (note 3) 310–32.
terms of content and form the composition may therefore be schematised as $\alpha \beta \gamma \beta' \alpha'$. The symmetrical composition serves to emphasise the central subsection (ILB, vv.18–21): Zeus is able to provide order and to create unity where there is disharmony. The implication is that he is able to reintegration the $\varkappa\varkappa\varepsilon\iota\iota$ into the order manifested by nature in general. The way to do this is suggested by the prayer at the end: Zeus is requested to save men from their ignorance and to grant them insight, in order that they may be able to praise his order. ‘Praising the universal law’ (v.39) is a metaphor for assenting to, obeying, Zeus’ rule. We may conclude that although the praise of Zeus is the ultimate goal of the hymn, this goal can only be reached if the problem of the $\varkappa\varkappa\varepsilon\iota\iota$ is resolved. In poetic terms the $\varkappa\varkappa\varepsilon\iota\iota$ and the problem presented by them thus form an integral part, and indeed the central focus of the hymn.15

**Evil in the Hymn to Zeus: Conceptual problems**

Let us therefore next examine exactly what is said in the *Hymn to Zeus* about the ‘bad people’ and about ‘evil’ and how it relates to what we know about early Stoic doctrine on this topic. As a general principle, the hymn should best be investigated in terms of its own logic; in view of the fact that so little remains of Cleanthes’ writings, we should not assume that he necessarily agreed with other early Stoics such as Chrysippus, who tends to dominate our view of early Stoicism.

The first point to note is that from the perspective of the hymn there is not really such a thing as ‘cosmic evil’;16 everything in nature, presumably including natural disasters, diseases and pests, fits into Zeus’ overall plan. This view agrees with the Stoic concept of evil found in other sources, according to which the notion of cosmic evil is based on a limited human perspective: viewed from a sufficiently long-term perspective, all cosmic $\kappa\kappa\iota\alpha\iota$ turns out to have some purpose within the universe; pests, diseases and disasters all eventually contribute to the good of the world as a whole.17 Everything in nature, therefore, forms a constructive part of Zeus’ universal order (vv.7–16). This order and its underlying principle are variously referred to as Zeus’ $\nu\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron$, ‘law’ (v.2), $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\omicron\omicron\omicron$ $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\omicron$, ‘universal reason’ (v.12), $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\omicron$, ‘rational order’ (v.21), or $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\omicron\omicron\omicron$ $\nu\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron$, ‘universal law’ (vv.

15. Glei (note 3) 586 calls the theodicy question the ‘central problem’ of the *Hymn to Zeus*.

16. Zuntz (note 3) 298: ‘Kleanthes erkennt überhaupt nur das Sittlich-äible an.’

24, 39). The only discordant note is struck by the actions of the ἔξωκλ, the ‘bad people’, which constitute the only ‘evil’ according to the hymn.

What does Cleanthes tell us about the ἔξωκλ and their actions? First and foremost we hear that the ἔξωκλ commit these actions ‘without’ Zeus, ‘in their folly’ (vv. 15, 17). It would be a mistake to interpret these verses as a statement about free will and determinism, as many scholars do. As Brad Inwood points out, it would be strange indeed if bad people were freer, more autonomous and thus more responsible than good people. According to him,

‘without you’ [in v.15] is a highly ambiguous phrase. There is no need to make it refer to the issue of ‘freedom’. It may make more sense to interpret it as reference to normative values: bad men act contrary to the Right Reason which is identified with Zeus. Bad men are not acting more freely or responsibly than good men; all men act ‘rationally’ in this sense. Rather, bad men are acting apart from Zeus, without following normative Right Reason. They have, as Chrysippus said, ‘turned their back on Reason’.

This interpretation, I think, receives some support from the syntax and style of vv. 15 and 17 as well: ‘without you’ (σοῦ δίχα) becomes equivalent to ‘in their folly’ (σφετέρων ἄνολες). Acting without Zeus therefore means acting in ignorance, not according to ‘right reason’, or, in the hymn’s terminology, not according to the universal law or reason. Such an interpretation is also in line with various Stoic definitions of moral evil according to which the latter is described as ‘ignorance’ or behaviour ‘contrary to right reason’ or ‘reason gone astray’ (λόγος ἡμαρτημένος).

Moral evil therefore occurs as a result of errors of judgement concerning good and evil, because the ἔξωκλ base their actions on a ‘mistaken reason’ instead of making Zeus’ right reason the principal cause of their action.

The kind of behaviour resulting from such ‘mistaken reasoning’ is depicted in vv.22–31. Cleanthes notes with some irony that ‘though always desiring to acquire good things’, the ἔξωκλ ‘neither see nor hear God’s universal law, obeying which they could have a good life with understanding’ (vv.23–25). Bad people do not apply the correct criterion, namely, ‘God’s universal law’, in choosing between good and bad, with the result that they obtain the

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21. Long (note 1) 340; cf. also Zuntz (note 3) 298: moral evil results from wrong value judgements.
exact opposite of what they intended. Three stereotyped examples are given of what they mistakenly pursue as ‘good things’: glory, riches and pleasure. The problem with these objects of pursuit is not that they are bad in themselves, but that they do not contribute to the orderly, rational life, the εὐρος βίου, which is the wise man’s ideal. On the contrary, since these goals are based on passions instead of right reason, they lead to personal disorder and lack of harmony. Because the φασίδευσι have no unifying rational purpose, they are driven from one goal to another and thus lose control of their lives (vv. 26, 30–31):

κύτσι δ’ αὖθ’ ὑμισῶν ἄνευ νόου ἄλλος ἄλλα. 24
...
They rush without understanding, each after something else,
...
while striving eagerly that the complete opposite of these things happen. 25

Although Cleanthes does not present us here with a theoretical explanation of evil, but rather with a description of the psychological state of the φασίδευσι, it is possible to infer from these verses (i.e., 22–31) that moral evil is the opposite of the universal order depicted in vv. 7–16: it consists in incoherence, inconsistency, lack of harmony and unity. This was in fact a commonly held Stoic view, as Anthony Long indicates:

The Stoics saw clearly that moral principles impose the obligation of consistently being applied, and that a policy of acting inconsistently with any rules cannot be a moral one. ... The mark of Stoic goodness is not merely an intention or tendency to follow a policy consistently,
but successful fulfilment of that policy such that any failure labels the agent *kakon*, not *agathon*. It is all or nothing, since ‘to act rightly’ means *always* to act in accordance with *orthos logos* [right reason] and one failure is sufficient to falsify ‘the always’. Having no policy or not following the right one all the time are both alike instances of *inconsistency* with goodness, and hence bad. 27

This conclusion is important for our understanding of the last section of the poem to be discussed, namely vv.18–21:

έλλα ἱκαὶ τὰ περὶ σά ἐπιστασαι ἀρτιὰ δείναι
καὶ κοσμεῖν τάκοσμα, καὶ οὐ φίλα σοι φίλα ἐστιν
ἀλη γάρ εἰς ἐν πάντα συνήρμοκας, ἔσθλα χαροῖν,
ἄσθ’ ἔνα γλύνεσθαι πάντων λόγον αἰὴν ἔόντα.

But you know how to make the uneven even
and to put into order the disorderly; even the unloved is dear to you.
For you thus join everything into one, the good with the bad,
that there comes to be one ever-existing rational order for everything.

I have left these verses for last, because they are in many ways the most problematic. As we have seen earlier, these verses occupy a pivotal position between the description of the order of nature and the confusion of human action. They also follow immediately upon the statement that the *χαροῖ* act ‘without’ Zeus. We would therefore expect them to provide us with an important key for understanding the connection between Zeus’ perfect, harmonious rule and the badness of the *χαροῖ*.

The problem is, however, that there appears to be some tension between these verses and the surrounding context. 28 According to many scholars these verses reflect a Heraclitean worldview in which opposites such as even and uneven, order and disorder, loved and unloved, good and bad, are simply a matter of perspective; the Logos as world order combines both ends of the spectrum into one unity. 29 Heraclitus compares the unity of the Logos with the ‘back-stretched connection’ of a bow or a lyre, for which the tension between the two arm-ends is essential for the efficacy of the instrument. 30 In this view good and evil are essential aspects of a higher,

27. Long (note 1) 342–43 (quotation from p.343). He cites SVF 3.560; Cic. Tusc. 4.29.
dynamic unity. If this interpretation of vv.18–21 is correct, v.19b ('even
the unloved is dear to you'), for example, would mean that what is not
loved from a human perspective is still essential and meaningful from the
perspective of the all-encompassing Logos.31

Interpreted in this way, these verses are obviously not easily reconciled
with the statements in the immediately preceding and following verses,
which, according to Zuntz, is due to an incompatibility of the Heraclitean
and Stoic Logos doctrines.32 It would not be possible for the 
\( \alpha \alpha \zeta 0 \tau \) to act
'without' the Heraclitean Logos (v.17), since this Logos encompasses good
and evil. Likewise, the 
\( \alpha \alpha \zeta 0 \tau \) would not be able to shun the Heraclitean
Logos (v.22), for it is the basis of all being.33 If we accept the Heraclitean
interpretation of vv.18–21, we are forced to admit that Cleanthes here
used Heraclitean traditions because of their apparent similarities to his
own view, but without realising the real conceptual differences. However,
such an interpretation should be a matter of last resort; we should first try
to make sense of these verses in terms of the poem as a whole.34

Following immediately upon the problem stated in v.17, namely that
'what bad people do in their folly' disturbs the order Zeus established in
nature, vv.18–19a in my view are meant as an indication of the solution:
Zeus knows how to effect a change for the better. 'Uneven' and 'even',
'disorder' and 'order' are thus not opposite poles existing simultaneously
in a Heraclitean balance, but they indicate antecedent and subsequent states:
Zeus is able to change matters from a state of disorder to one of order.
If this is so, v.19b, 'even the unloved is dear to you', should also indicate a
potential change rather than merely a state of affairs. (This interpretation
is strengthened by the fact that the next sentence, vv.20–21, also refers to
change.) How should we then understand v.19b? To start with, from the
Greek 
\( \kappa \alpha i \ \nu \ \phi \iota \lambda \sigma \mu \nu \ \sigma o i \ \phi \iota \lambda \ \sigma \iota \iota \nu \ I \ think \ it \ is \ clear \ that \ \sigma o i \ \to \ you \ , \ should \ be \ read \ with \ both \ \nu \ \phi \iota \lambda \sigma \mu \nu \ \phi \iota \lambda ; \literally: 'what is not dear to you is
dear to you'.35 This paradoxical statement only makes sense if the verb 'is'

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32. Zuntz (note 3) 296–98.
34. Zuntz (note 3) 298–99, though strongly defending the Heraclitean interpretation,
onetheless denies that the hymn consists of 'ein zusammenhängloses Sammel-
surium traditioneller Motive'. However, he is not able to get past the 'fundamental
differences' between Cleanthes' own view and that of Heraclitus. Long (note 29)
1975–76:145–48 = 1996:49–51 argues, against Zuntz, that Cleanthes in these lines
consciously modified Heraclitus and that the thought here is inherently Stoic. Sier
(note 3) 105 also rejects the Heraclitean interpretation, although his alternative
differs from mine. Without denying a possible Heraclitean influence, other parallels,
such as Hes. Op. 7–8 and Solon fr. 4 West, may in fact be closer; see E. Cavallini,
Sier (note 3) 106–7.
35. Thus Sier (note 3) 103, n.20; contra Zuntz (note 3) 298.

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is used in a pregnant sense to mean 'become'. The 'unloved', that which
does not follow Zeus' order, can also become 'loved', 'orderly'.

The next two verses, 20-21, are perhaps more resistant to this line of
interpretation, and appear to offer the most support for a Heraclitean
interpretation. According to the latter view, the perfect tense συνήθισας
would refer to an existing state of affairs ('you have joined') in which good
and bad form part of a single everlasting Logos. Long and Sedley, for
example, translate these verses as follows: 'For you have so welded into
one all things good and bad that they all share in a single everlasting
reason' (emphasis added).36 A problem such an interpretation fails to
account for, however, is the present infinitive γίνεσθαι in v.21, the most
natural translation of which would be 'become' or 'come to be'. But the
all-encompassing order of the Heraclitean Logos does not 'come to be'; it
'is'.37 If we accept the normal reading of γίνεσθαι, logos in v.21 must refer
to something that comes into being as a consequence of the action referred
to in v.20:

For you thus join everything into one, the good with the bad,
that there comes to be one ever-existing rational order for everything.

I therefore take the verb συνήθισας to be emphatic rather than to indi­
cate a completed act and translate it with the present tense, 'you join',
because the translation 'you have joined' creates the impression that Zeus
predetermined the relationship between good and bad for all time in such a
way that they fit into one all-encompassing order. As we have seen
from the preceding verses, however, the theme is Zeus' ability to change
disorder into order; what is involved here, is not an eternally fixed system
in which good and bad both have their place, but rather Zeus' harmonising
power to reintegrate bad things after they have taken place. Vv.18–21 and
especially v.21 thus open up a teleological perspective instead of referring
to a doctrine of predetermination. Cleanthes holds out the hope that Zeus
is able to change the disorder resulting from the actions of the ἄνδρι
order and to restore the harmony of his rule.

How is this restoration effected? Since the evil of the ἄνδρι is the result
of ignorance regarding the good (vv. 17, 24, 26, 33), namely, to live in
harmony with the rational order established in nature, the solution is for
them to acquire insight into the principles of Zeus' rule (vv.33–35). By
internalising these principles they will be able to make right reason 'the
principal cause of their action'38 and thus live themselves according to the
universal law.

36. Long & Sedley (note 17) 327.
38. Long (note 1) 340.
It is clear that Cleanthes’ hymn itself is intended as part of this process of restoration: by reminding people of Zeus’ rule and by pointing to the solution of the problem of the xexoi, he already provides the very insight he asks of Zeus. However, merely giving people the correct facts are not enough; acquiring insight is a process (vv.33–35) for which Cleanthes requests Zeus’ assistance. What such a relationship between Zeus and man would mean for a Stoic, needs further investigation. This much is clear from the Hymn to Zeus, however: Cleanthes did not believe that the problem of evil could be solved without divine assistance; to make moral progress man needs god.

39. Cf. also Glei (note 3) 589–91. He oversimplifies the problem, however, by arguing that it is resolved by the hymn itself.

40. Festugiere (note 3) 324–25 also emphasises the importance Cleanthes attaches to continual divine assistance: ‘L’homme, sans doute, possède de Logos puisqu’il est doué de raison. Mais il ne peut faire correctement usage de sa raison que si Dieu chasse les ténèbres, illumine l’âme. La notion de grâce apparaît… [F]our entrer en contact intime avec Dieu, il ne suffit pas d’un lien original qui nous rattache à l’être divin (ici vv.3–5), il faut encore que la Divinité nous éclaire continuellement de sa lumière, sans quoi, malgré notre parenté avec le ciel, nous ne pouvons faire bon usage de notre esprit.’

41. Glei (note 3) 590, citing Wilamowitz (note 3) 1924:260–61 (cf. also 1925:317, 323, 325), is adamant that the prayer at the end in which Cleanthes asks for Zeus’ aid should not be taken literally—since man participates in the divine Logos, praying would simply mean addressing something within himself; thus also Sier (note 3) 106: the prayer is merely the religious projection of that which Zeus as the immanent Logos in any case already realises in the world, i.e. ‘to put into order the disorderly’. Contradictory as it may seem, however, we do find apparently sincere Stoic prayers; see M. Simon, ‘Prière du philosophe et prière chrétienne’, in: H. Limet & J. Ries (eds.), L’expérience de la prière dans les grandes religions, Actes du colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve et Liège (22–23 novembre 1978) (Louvain-la-Neuve 1980) 205–24. Cf. for the problem of Stoic religion in general, Mansfeld (note 5) 129–36.
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