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LINGUAGGI, RAPPRESENTAZIONI E IMMAGINARI**



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AUDIBLE EMOTIONS: THE AESTHETICS OF ANCIENT GREEK SPEECH RHYTHM RATIONALIZED

di *Ronald Blankenburg*

1. Introduction

This contribution argues for a more critical approach of *ethos* (ἦθος), the alleged emotional effect of rhythms in spoken or recited ancient Greek.¹ Starting out as a doctrine concerning the different musical ἀρμονίαι and the peculiar ‘psychagogical’ effects that they aroused, positively or negatively affecting the education of young people, the discussion of *ethos* gradually widened beyond the moral and paedeutical value of music, to encompass prosodic aspects of speech. In rhetorical manuals from antiquity, *ethos* is commonly attributed to stylized speech, that is, to metrical text.² Descriptions of *ethos* vary, as do the descriptions of its effects and the correspondences with specific meters and rhythms.³ In stylistic and rhetorical terms, rhythms are labelled ‘noble’ or ‘ignoble’ based on metrical surface structures: a preponderance of long or short syllables appears to be leading in that

¹ I thank the anonymous reviewers of *Siculorum Gymnasium* for their helpful comments and suggestions.

² The notion of *stylized speech* was developed by BAKKER 1997 to account for the variance in stylistic level when considering the *Iliad*’s likeness to natural unplanned speech’s chunks on the one hand, and its obedience to the patterns of metrical surface structure on the other. Stylized speech was thus coined as terminology for natural speech that was to an extent reformatted through prosodic phenomena not necessarily inherent to the language, such as metrical rhythms, prosodic artificialities, and performers’ preferences (TARTAROVSKI 2015; BLANKENBORG 2018). As such, the terminology ‘stylized speech’ may equally be extended to the rhythmically phrased utterances in a prose environment (cf. HUTCHINSON 2018, pp. 1-16).

³ MARTIN 1953 describes the *ethos* of various metrical texts, such as songs and utterances. WEST 1992, pp. 246-253 discusses *ethos* as the character and emotional effect of musical composition, pertaining to both harmonic intervals and rhythms. A recent evaluation of *ethos* in Greek poetry is found in WALLACE 2010.

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respect, as does the rhythmical weight of the prepausal syllable.⁴ Alternatively, scholarly focus shifts to the emotional impact of *ethos*, a focus that is still regularly found in modern scholarship.⁵ This dichotomy in the approach of *ethos* in studies on style and rhetoric, both ancient and modern, between a moralising and an emotional label, also reflects a difference in starting point: a label based on metrical surface structure starts from analysis of the material presented, whereas the focus on *ethos*' emotional impact expresses, or presupposes, a perception-based point of view, with reference to the performative qualities of rhythms.⁶ Against the background of the ongoing debate on literacy, orality, and their intertwining, the different approaches and evaluations of *ethos*, both from antiquity and in our times, require more than the mere acknowledgement of their existence in studies on musical and rhetorical composition: as the study of *ethos* is more and more tied in with the modern, technical discourse on style and register, *ethos* itself should be reassessed accordingly.⁷ Given the absence of comparable terminology in the stylistic and rhetorical manuals from antiquity, *ethos* may be described using modern terms, and with reference to psycholinguistics. It may thus be possible to come to a more nuanced and adequate appropriation of the impact of *ethos* as suggested in the handbooks.⁸ For modern scholars and audiences, it is not so easy to gauge such impact in written text: the qualities of ancient Greek meter and rhythm have been reduced to abstract notions of syllabic quantity, and the aesthetics of metrical text are tied in with the

⁴ The various rhythms are discussed by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (ca. 60 BCE-7 AD) in chapter 17 of his *De Compositione Verborum*, 168.5-176.5 ed. Roberts. Editions of Greek texts from which passages are taken are listed in the bibliography. Translations are by the author.

⁵ Labelling specific realisations rather than metrical prototypes of rhythms, e.g. DALE 1968, p. 63 on resolved anapaests: «uncommon metrical resolutions are associated with stress».

⁶ Defined as 'sensation' in music (D'ANGOUR 2015, cf. MATHIESEN 1984), or a 'multisensory experience' (DUNCAN 2011, pp. 579 on English prose rhythm).

⁷ BIBER, FINEGAN 1994, pp. 4-7.

⁸ For that reason, the terminology *ethos* has been abandoned of late by many scholars on meter and rhythm, cf. BLANKENBORG, *forthcoming*.

analysis of prosody.⁹ In their judgments and political discussion on the morality and value of music, philosophers like Plato and Aristotle describe how ἀρμονία are perceived and interpreted,¹⁰ but witness accounts by native speakers of the perception of ancient Greek metrical text are virtually absent.¹¹ How to critically approach the stylistic concept, as expressed in speech rhythm, of *ethos* then? How to evaluate the prosodic format's supposed impact of metrical utterances? In this article, I will argue that, from the inconsistencies and incongruences in the technical treatises from antiquities, it becomes clear that the 'emotional' approach of speech rhythm should be interpreted as a metaphor:¹² an image to capture the sensation that is felt when a perceptibly rhythmic sequence of words appears within an environment that features a different metrical surface structure, or no such structure at all.

2. Emotions in Greek metrical text

Emotions and emotional expressions in linguistics have seen a considerable increase in interest over the past three decades.¹³

⁹ Cf. WEST 1982 s.v. *ethos*.

¹⁰ The first mention of *ethos* in ARISTOT. *Pol.* 1341b-1342a, cf. VATRI 2016. Aristotle's remarks may have been influenced by the poet-musicians Damon (as were Plato's, WALLACE 2010) and Lasus (WEST 1992, p. 246; BRANCACCI 2018, p. 28).

¹¹ Cf. NAGY 2010 on the particulars of the rhapsodic performance of Homeric poetry in Plato's *Ion*.
¹² WISKUS 2018, pp. 932-933 describes *ethos* in philosophical terms as 'the state or condition of one's soul'. In a comparison between ancient Greek and Chinese musical education, WANG 2004, p. 89 translates *ethos*, as the aspect of human character influenced by such education, as 'human disposition'.

¹³ AUCHLIN 2000, p. 77 thus positions the discussion of *ethos* in both a illocutionary and a perlocutionary perspective: «Au travers de quelques uns de ses emplois, en rhétorique, en pragmatique, en stylistique, voire en didactique, l'*ethos* est conçu comme plus ou moins dialogal (Vs. monologal), plus ou moins focal (Vs. encadrant), plus ou moins moral (Vs. technique), plus ou moins conventionnalisé (Vs. émergent), plus ou moins intra-discursif (Vs. mondain), plus ou moins abstrait (Vs. concret, charnel)... Cette labilité de contenu justifie la prudence que préconise Le Guern (1977); elle pointe également quelques limites, quasi paradoxes et circularités théoriques de la notion, qui amalgame des ordres de faits quelles sciences du langage récentes ont, plutôt, patiemment cherché à distinguer et à séparer (tout en se rendant incapable de les ré-articuler): il y a une part illocutoire et une part perlocutoire de l'*ethos*; ses moyens vont des choix lexicaux, au choix des arguments, en passant par le type de structuration discursive (mettre la conclusion, l'argument, le contre-argument, dans un ordre ou dans l'autre peut être décisif pour l'*ethos*), mais aussi le rythme et le débit; l'*ethos* s'élabore comme un "hologramme expérientiel", sur la base d'une perception com-

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With regard to ancient Greek texts, however, the study of emotions remained, and remains, very limited in scope: much rewarding research on emotions in linguistics is based on native-speaker involvement and perception ('perceptual categorisation'),¹⁴ a research requirement that cannot be fulfilled for ancient Greek.¹⁵

When compared to successful and fruitful recent research based on native-speaker perception, the questions to be asked with regard to ancient Greek texts ought to resemble the following: how may a proper definition of a specific emotion be deduced from written material?¹⁶ What is the proper methodological framework for the interpretation of emotions expressed through text?¹⁷ Does grammar reduce emotions to conceptual metaphors?¹⁸ Is written emotion confined to spontaneous-speech corpora? Is the perception of emotion cross-culturally variable?¹⁹ Are written emotions to be found in the pragmatics of text?²⁰ It

plexe qui tire ses informations du matériau linguistique et de son environnement (sa substance, etc.), en fonction de leur potentiel d'activation des axes affectifs de l'intérêt, de l'admiration, et de la confiance; la mobilisation de ces dimensions affectives chez l'interprète-expérimenteur étant une condition à l'émergence d'un effet d'ethos». In the introduction to their edited volume, Baider and CISLARU (2014, p. 1) distinguish between emotions as a rhetorical tool, an organisational device, and a way to control people's behaviour. They consider the articulation of 'fact' and 'value' in the affective domain, especially within the framework of appraisal theories, as one of the underlying themes in the relevant literature. In her chapter in the *HSK Handbook on Language and Emotions*, «based on current research on the triad of language, literature, and emotion in cognitive linguistics, (neuro-)psychology, and cognitive poetics and stylistics», IGL 2020 specifically «sheds light on stylistic strategies of structuring texts in a rhythmical way and their potential emotive qualities».

¹⁴ LILJA 2012.

¹⁵ 'Emotions in linguistics' excludes the identification and description of emotions as features of human behaviour (as listed in. e.g., KONSTAN 2006), as well as the evaluative comments on the experience of, e.g., song by a poet or his characters (cfr. the appreciative reflexions on music in Homer, Hesiod, melic lyric, and choral music, considered «unquestionably linked to the emergence of philosophy» by BRACCACCI 2018, p. 5).

¹⁶ Cf. BRACCACCI 2018.

¹⁷ Currently, the approach of ancient Greek text as performed and performable is advocated in Performance Studies, cf. WOODRUFF 2016; BLANKENBORG 2018.

¹⁸ Cf. BLANKENSHIP 2019, pp. 37-38.

¹⁹ As they are gendered in literary representation, cf. ALLARD, MONTLAHUC 2018, pp. 27-30.

²⁰ AUCHLIN 2000, p. 94 expects that the pragmatics of *ethos* in spoken language may be found to an extent in grammar: «Les connaissances, implicites, qui constituent notre savoir linguistique, sont, par la science, réputées explicites et systématisables. Les dispositions mentales qui permettent que notre identité vécue s'articule verbalement ne sont pas moins implicites ou cachées, ni moins stables, moins constructibles, moins accessibles, ni donc moins dignes d'intérêt, que les connaissances grammaticales. Elles constituent en partie l'objet d'une pragmatique expérimentielle qui reste largement à construire».

may strike the reader that at least some of these generic questions may well be dealt with regard to ancient Greek, despite the fact that the language is no longer ‘spontaneously spoken’. Especially the issues on written emotions’ interpretation, and the notion that grammar (in the broadest sense) may reduce emotions to conceptual metaphors, are potentially promising for the study of emotions in ancient Greek written texts. In this contribution, I approach the issue of emotion with reference to arguably the most perceptible aspect of ancient Greek: the rhythmical profile of its metrical texts. Meter is tied in closely with phonology, the written representation of audible phenomena in performance.²¹ In ancient Greek, this seems particularly the case, as phonology has been smoothed over in the textual tradition in order to maintain the visualisation of syllables’ metrical requirements.²² When referred to as stylistically or rhetorically evidencing or suggesting a specific *ethos*, ancient Greek meters qualify as a pragmatic marker for the capacity of written texts to express and transfer emotions. The modern dismissal of rhythmical *ethos* outside musical composition, however, necessitates a more cautious approach of the relation between meter and ‘characterisation’.

Greek meter is not in itself designed to evoke emotions; *pathos* in texts may be by content moulded by various rhetorical techniques.²³ Nevertheless, meter does contribute to the text’s status as ‘special speech’.²⁴ As Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 3.8, 1408b) puts it, «all utterances, metrical and non-metrical, are rhythmical», but meter results in rhythmical profiles that differ considerably, and deliberately, from the profile of natural, unplanned speech. As Aristotle observes in passing, everyday Greek speech is rhythmically iambic (υ -, *da-DUM*), as is almost every natural accentual-syllabic language, worldwide.²⁵ Performance of metrical text, however, is often not iambic. Metrical text types that are iam-

²¹ ARVANITI 1991.

²² STEINRÜCK 2005.

²³ KONSTAN 2006, pp. 3-40.

²⁴ BAKKER 1997.

²⁵ DEVINE, STEPHENS 1994, pp. 89-90, 98-99.

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bic, like tragedy's *episodia*, or trochaic, like the spoken passages from comedy, supposedly imitate everyday speech, despite their metrical rigidity as special speech.²⁶ Prose rhythms, perceptible metrical phrases in a non-metrical environment, tend to be limited to cretics (– u –) and 1st and 4th paeons (uuu – / – uuu).²⁷

Other metrical shapes potentially deviate much further from the everyday iambs: dactyls (– uu), anapaests (uu –), ionics (uu – – / – – uu), spondees (– –), pyrrhichs (uu), chorees/tribrachs (uuu), molossi (– – –), amphibrachs (u– u), palimbacchi (– – u), and bacchi (u– –),²⁸ especially when these metrical shapes are sequenced into larger, repetitive lines.²⁹ In performance, reciting or singing the lines from Greek poetry must have had an estranging effect: the deviation of spoken or sung language from the everyday iamb may have been both accompanied and strengthened by music.³⁰ The first extant examples of performable Greek poetry, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (ca. 800 BCE) are built from dactylic hexameters (|– uu|– uu|– uu|– uu|– uu|– –|, *DUM-diddy DUM-diddy DUM-diddy DUM-diddy DUM-diddy DUM-diddy DUM-dum*), reflecting a rhythm that was associated, through metrical inscriptions and oracles, with the notion of permanency and imperishability.³¹ Other works of early Greek poetry like Sappho's (ca. 600 BCE), Simonides' (7th century BCE), and Pindar's (ca. 518–435 BCE), boast a plethora of metrical schemes and variants (mostly built around the Aeolic

²⁶ WEST 1982, pp. 77–78.

²⁷ HUTCHINSON 2018, pp. 5–6.

²⁸ GENTILI, LOMIENTO 2008, p. 225; WEST 1982, pp. 103, 111 (following Hephaestion). Dionysius of Halicarnassus labels – – u *bacchius*, and u – – *hypobacchius*.

²⁹ Together with the cretic (– u –), Dionysius of Halicarnassus labels these shapes the 'fundamental rhythms' (174.22–176.4 ed. Roberts). As his examples are largely built up from lines featuring words that take the exact shape of the eponymous label, his understanding of 'rhythm' proves to equal 'word shape'. Dionysius' list of rhythms reflects a tradition from antiquity, going back to Aristoxenus (4th c. BCE), a pupil of Aristotle. Hellenistic grammarians identified nine metrical 'prototypes': diiamb (|u – u–|), ditrochee (|– u – u|), dactyl, anapaest, choriamb, antispast (u – – u), ionicus a minore, ionicus a maiore, paeon-creticus (GENTILI, LOMIENTO 2008, p. 29; cf. LIDOV 2004). Later scholars on musical and metrical theory have further identified the dochmius (X – – X–), the ionics and paeons mentioned above, the choriamb (– uu –), and the epitrites (a four-syllable foot featuring a single short, e.g. – – u –, = 3rd epitrite) (WEST 1982, pp. xi–xii, 18–23).

³⁰ WEST 1982, pp. 20–22; GENTILI, LOMIENTO 2008, p. 27.

³¹ BLANKENBORG 2020.

choriamb |– uu –|), but metrical analysis of their work is usually applied to classify a poem or a song as belonging to a (sub-)genre, in accordance with the poem's content.³² The effect on the listener of the meter itself, the *affect* of prosody, unfortunately does not receive much attention in the commentaries and analyses from antiquity.³³

With the exception of Dionysius: in his stylistic and rhetorical treatise *De Compositione Verborum*, Dionysius discusses twelve different rhythms with regard to their capacity to have emotional effect:

ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τοὺς ῥυθμοὺς ἔφην οὐ μικρὰν μοῖραν ἔχειν τῆς ἀξιωματικῆς καὶ μεγαλοπρεποῦς συνθέσεως, ἵνα μηδεὶς εἰκῆ με δόξῃ λέγειν ῥυθμοὺς καὶ μέτρα μουσικῆς οἰκεία θεωρίας εἰς οὐ ῥυθμικὴν οὐδ' ἔμμετρον εἰσάγοντα διάλεκτον, ἀποδώσω καὶ τὸν ὑπὲρ τούτων λόγον.

(*De Comp. Verb.* 168.5-9 ed. Roberts)

As I claimed that the rhythms play a major part in the most dignified and impressive composition – lest anyone should think that I speak improperly when I introduce into non-rhythmical and non-metrical speech rhythms and meters that pertain primarily to musical theory –, I will present a discussion of these as well.

Without using the terminology *ethos*, but with explicit reference to the characterisation of rhythms in musical theory, Dionysius attributes emotive qualities to word-shapes and rhythms,

³² A notable illustration in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' discussion of Simonides' *Danae*-song (*PMG* 543, 278.4-280.17 ed. Roberts): 'From lyric poetry we have the example from the work of Simonides. The lines are written down according to sense-pauses, not the cola Aristophanes or another metrist imposed, but the ones prose requires. Focus on the poem and read it out loud from pause to pause, and be warned that the rhythm of the ode will elude you, and that you cannot guess the strophe, the antistrophe, nor the epode: to you it will look like one continuous piece of prose.'

³³ Plato has Socrates discuss the various aspects of performance in *Ion*, but, again, prosodic artistry and its impact remain underexposed (cf. NAGY 2010, footnote 11 above). In modern scholarship 'affective prosody' focuses on the alleged anticipatory effect of verse-end enjambement, cf. BLANKENBORG 2016.

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both in metrical and non-metrical text types: his claim is that such evocative features of prosody may serve rhetorical purposes.³⁴ His description, in general, favours long syllables over short syllables, especially in prepausal or word-final position. A few examples of his judgements: spondees (– –) are considered «to possess great dignity and solemnity» (ἀξίωμα δ' ἔχει μέγα καὶ σεμνότητα πολλήν, 170.2-3 ed. Roberts), iambs (υ –) are 'not without worth' (οὐκ ἀγεννής, 170.7 ed. Roberts), the molossus (– – –) counts as «elevated, most dignified, and having a mighty stride» (ὕψηλός τε καὶ ἀξιοματικός ἐστι καὶ διαβεβηκῶς ἐπὶ πολὺ, 172.2-3 ed. Roberts), the anapaest (υυ –) «possesses much solemnity»³⁵ (σεμνότητα δ' ἔχει πολλήν, 172.11 ed. Roberts), the cretic (– υ –) «is not without worth» (ἔστιν οὐκ ἀγεννής, 174.11 ed. Roberts), and the hypobacchius (υ – –)³⁶ «has dignity and grandeur» (ἀξίωμα ἔχει καὶ μέγεθος, 174.19 ed. Roberts). Ending in a (prepausal) short syllable, the pyrrhich (υυ 'neither impressive nor solemn' οὔτε μεγαλοπρεπής ἐστὶν οὔτε σεμνός, 168.18 ed. Roberts), the trochee (– υ 'more effeminate than the iamb and less worthy' μαλακώτερος θατέρου καὶ ἀγεννέστερος, 170.9 ed. Roberts), the tribrach (υυυ 'ordinary and lacking solemnity and worth' ταπεινός τε καὶ ἄσεμνός ἐστι καὶ ἀγεννής, 170.20 ed. Roberts), and the amphibrach (υ – υ 'restless, with much femininity and everydayness' διακέκλασται τε καὶ πολὺ τὸ θῆλυ καὶ ἀγεννές, 172.7-8 ed. Roberts) are understood to evoke no, or only negative feelings. Dionysius allows for two notable exceptions: two rhythms that end in a short syllable but are nonetheless

³⁴Dionysius follows ARISTOTLE, *Poet.* III.8, and the *Elementa Rhythmica* (*Ῥυθμικὰ στοιχεῖα*) of Aristoxenus. ROBERTS 1910, 168 n.5 supposes that 'his general standpoint probably comes nearer to that of Aristophanes of Byzantium and Dionysius Thrax: he is, that is to say, primarily a metrist and a grammarian, and at times looks upon the rhythmists and musicians with some distrust.' Nonetheless, Dionysius claims to touch on metrical and rhythmical questions as 'it is through the rhythms that are worthy and most suitable and possessing grandeur that composition becomes highly appropriate and worthy and impressive' (διὰ μὲν τῶν γενναίων καὶ ἀξιοματικῶν καὶ μέγεθος ἔχόντων ρυθμῶν ἀξιοματικὴ γίνεται σύνθεσις καὶ γενναία καὶ μεγαλοπρεπής, 176.8-10 ed. Roberts).

³⁵Rhetorically, it may be used 'where it is necessary to lend a sense of grandeur or *pathos* to the issues at hand' (ἔνθα δεῖ μέγεθος τι περιτιθέναι τοῖς πράγμασιν ἢ πάθος, 172.11-12 ed. Roberts).

³⁶Cfr. footnote 28 above.

labelled with positive terms. The dactyl (– υυ), despite its preponderance of short syllables, is ‘very solemn, and most suitable for beautifying the utterance, the heroic line [the hexameter] is mostly adorned by it’ (πάνυ δ’ ἐστὶ σεμνὸς καὶ εἰς τὸ κάλλος τῆς ἔρμηνείας ἀξιολογώτατος, καὶ τό γε ἥρωϊκὸν μέτρον ἀπὸ τούτου κοσμεῖται ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, 172.16-18 ed. Roberts); the bacchius (– – υ)³⁷ «is very manly and appropriate for solemn language» (ἀνδρῶδες πάνυ ἐστὶ τὸ σχῆμα καὶ εἰς σεμνολογίαν ἐπιτήδειον, 174.17 ed. Roberts). Unfortunately, Dionysius’ comments only imply that the speech may be deliberately stylized through rhythmical patterning; they do not provide clues as to how this stylisation takes effect.³⁸ In other words, *ethos* through skilful and wilful application of meter and rhythm is acknowledged, without an indication of *ethos*’ efficacy beyond the mere label.³⁹

3. The terminology *ethos*

A search for *ethos*’ efficacy requires a detour via music, the original context of the ancient doctrine of *ethos*, and a possible accompanist of rhythm.⁴⁰ Arguably,⁴¹ Aristotle was the first to

³⁷ Cf. footnote 28 above.

³⁸ Despite *perception* (ἀίσθησις) as the leading principle of study, cf. GENTILI, LOMIENTO 2008, p. 61.

³⁹ An example of the confusion Dionysius’ comments cause when he *does* give an indication, is his statement, on the one hand, that a preponderance of long syllables speeds up the tempo of speech of a Homeric line, whereas on the other hand a preponderance of short syllables has equal effect (on *Il.*11.598, 204.10-206.1 ed. Roberts); cf. TARTAKOVSKI 2015, pp. 65-71; BLANKENBORG 2017.

⁴⁰ The prevailing assumption is, mostly, that rhythm is inherent in the language: in ancient Greek poetry it is contained in and defined by the colon, the identifiable rhythmical phrase (itself based on music and hence metrically defensible, cf. FLEMING 1999). Rhythm is taken to be the effect of the number and distribution of elements within the colon; MAAS 1962 and DALE 1968 consider rhythm characterized by the durations of the elements, Sicking 1993 and Cole 1998 simply by their pattern. Rhythm may also be understood as a result of metrical phrasing. A variant of this is the assumption that the rhythm was really in the accompanying music (GENTILI 1950; WEST 1982), not in the language at all. GENTILI, LOMIENTO (2008, p. 27) discuss rhythm as verbal rhythm without musical accompaniment, combined with melody in sung poetry only.

⁴¹ MAAS 1962, C vii denies that *ethos* was linked to meter in archaic and classical Greek poetry. WEST 1992, pp. 246-253 argues that the Pythagoreans allegedly classified different types of music producing different effects, based on harmonic intervals, rhythm, and number ratio’s. He considers Damon, as referenced in Plato, as the ‘first writer we know of who expounded them in detail’. Plato’s comment on the calming or rousing effects of rhythm and their educational value (*Pr.* 326a-b, *Resp.* 399a-c, 400a-c, 401d, 424c, *Tim* 47d-e, *Leg.* 654e-655d, 660a, 668a-670c, 798d, 812c) explicitly or implicitly go back to the teachings of Damon, and pertain only to rhythms as an element of music.

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link *ethos* to prosody via music: in *Pol.* 1341b-1342b, still speaking of musical harmonies and the value of their ‘character’ for education, he describes the *ethos* of the Doric musical scale as ‘virile’, of the Lydian scale as ‘decorous’, and of the Phrygian as ‘wild’. Subsequently, he finds proof for his statement in poetry (1342b): the meter of the dithyramb is best accompanied by the Phrygian mode, itself particularly suitable for the flute. Ps.-Ar. *Probl.* 19.49 links *ethos* to pitch.⁴² As did Plato, Aristotle may be following Damon (born ca. 500 BCE), who probably linked *ethos* to musical harmony:⁴³ Plato’s Socrates cites Damon (*Resp.* 399e-400c) as an authority on the appropriateness of musical rhythms as ‘imitations of sorts of life’. Elements of word prosody come in when Socrates discusses whether words had to adapt to melody instead of the other way around.⁴⁴ As Aristoxenus (*Elementa Rhythmica* 12.8ff.) identified rhythm as based on beat and measurable syllable-duration rather than on the distribution of syllables and the structure of the foot, music moved away from meter, and grew into a separate discipline, closely related to the issue of rhythm. For Aristoxenus, meter and rhythm/music were thus distinct characteristics of speech, and as such they remained for the ensuing school of the *rhythmikoi* (Hephaestion’s *Enchiridion de Metris* [2nd century AD], Aristides Quintilianus’ *De Musica* [late 3rd century AD]).⁴⁵ The *metrikoi* on the other hand (among them, Dionysius of Halicarnassus) kept discussing rhythm and meter as the same thing,⁴⁶ hence implying that properties of language could be discussed in musical terms.

⁴² WALLACE 2010.

⁴³ As a Pythagorean, cf. WEST 1992, pp. 246-248; WALLACE 2015, pp. 194-200.

⁴⁴ GENTILI, LOMIENTO 2008, p. 40. Plato’s Socrates advocates that the foot conform to speech and not the speech to the foot and the tune (*Resp.* 400a), but Damon likely argue for the opposite, a trend that already existed for some time, cf. Pratinas’ (PMG fr. 708.1-3, featuring almost fully resolved anapestic dimeters and ‘trimeters’) famous protests against attempts to yield to the rhythmic-melodic design of the flute (cf. PMG fr. 799 and PMG fr. adesp 1033; BLANKENBORG, *forthcoming*).

⁴⁵ *Mus.* 2.15: ‘the ἐπιβρατος disturbs the soul with its double thesis, and lifts the mind upwards with its long arsis.’

⁴⁶ Ivi, p. 42.

In more recent scholarship, *ethos*' efficacy is regularly described in terms that are reminiscent of those applied to render the emotional effect of music. Dale famously states that «uncommon metrical resolutions are associated with stress»,⁴⁷ and considers dochmii (*di-DUM DUM di-DUM*) as carrying «an inherent emotional expression».⁴⁸ Maas observes that «characters of low social standing (except the Phrygian in the *Orestes*) are never given lines in sung meters, but are given instead anapaests, like the nurse in the *Hyppolytus*, or hexameters, like the old man in the *Trachiniaiæ*».⁴⁹ West mostly follows Dionysius («Long syllables were felt to produce an effect of grandeur in themselves»)⁵⁰ and Ephorus (cretics are «most energetic»),⁵¹ but equally associates trochees with «scenes of heightened tension»,⁵² and labels dochmii «always urgent or emotional».⁵³ Edwards ascribes paeons' (*di-diddy-DUM*) «terrifying qualities».⁵⁴ Anapaests, a meter closely associated with movement (the *parodos* of the tragic chorus, the humming of birds, the encouragement of men at tug-of-war [*Peace* 513], dancing [*Wasps* 979]),⁵⁵ may evoke audiences' emotions associated with such movements.⁵⁶ When it comes to the emotional effects of the various rhythms in performance, the recent manuals are no more in agreement than were those from antiquity. Sometimes the number and sequencing of more resonant syllables are granted the ability to evoke emotional response («affective prosody»);⁵⁷ more often, however, the prosodic shape is considered the mirror image of the text's content.

⁴⁷ DALE 1968, p. 63.

⁴⁸ DALE 1968, p. 254.

⁴⁹ MAAS 1962, §76.

⁵⁰ WEST 1982, p. 55 n. 66.

⁵¹ Ivi, p. 55.

⁵² Ivi, p. 78.

⁵³ Ivi, p. 108. 'Sotadeans', a very flexible form of stichic tetrameter verse allegedly cultivated by the poet Sotades in the 280s and 270s BCE, is 'associated with low-class-entertainment, especially of the salacious sort, though also used for moralizing and other serious verse' (WEST 1982, p. 144).

⁵⁴ EDWARDS 2001, p. 96.

⁵⁵ BLANKENBORG *forthcoming*.

⁵⁶ The shift to anapaests in Aristophanes' *Peace* 897-898 'no doubt serves to underline [...] the sex act itself' (MASTERTON, SORKIN RABINOWITZ, ROBSON 2015, p. 321).

⁵⁷ Cfr. WEST 1982, p. 55 n.66 on spondees, a conception widely diffused in modern metrical phonology, cfr. NESPOR, VOGEL 1986; MCCARTHY, PRINCE 1998.

4. 'Aesthetic rhythm'

Ethos aims to capture various elements of music (harmonies, rhythm) as aesthetic categories, in an attempt to account for the educational value of musical composition. Notions concerning the calming or arousing effects of music changed over time, as musical theory itself developed in the centuries from Damon to Dionysius. The application of theories that combine music and ethics into paideutic tools and prescriptions allowed the Pythagoreans, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoic philosophers to extend musical *ethos* to the domain of politics and moral education. Both the intertwining of music and meter in the tradition of the *metrikoi*, and the distinction between music/rhythm and meter in that of the *rhythmikoi*, facilitated the application of musical terminology to describe and analyse the properties of language and the characteristics of speech. As a property of language in stylized, metrical speech, *ethos* evokes and elicits emotional response in a way that is comparable to the emotional effect of musical composition. The rhythm that is represented, and generated, by metrical surface structure, even when not put on a par with musical realisation,⁵⁸ appeals to audiences' emotional response.⁵⁹ In addition to contributing to the identification of text types, metrical surface structure alone also strengthens the experience and expectation of emotional *affect* already suggested by content. Early Greek hexameters, for example, were suggestive of the presence of the divine, as the hexameter doubled as the language of permanency due to its use in funerary and dedicatory inscriptions, and its continuing use for rendering, among other utterances, the wisdom sayings of the legendary sages, and of the oracle of Delphi. It remained the preferred format for didactic literature and epic narrative when Greek was outflanked by Latin. The emotional expectations elicited by the

⁵⁸ See footnote 40 above.

⁵⁹ BLANKENBORG 2020.

hexametric format were to be fulfilled by the utterances' content. Reverse, as a «situational context», content was interpreted and experienced in accordance with the expectations roused by the prosodic format.⁶⁰ Other formats were suggestive of different expectations concerning text type and emotional effect. Iambs and trochees stay close to everyday, unplanned speech; their expected impact on listeners was to be experienced as transfer and exchange of information. Stylized as meter, iambs developed from mockery into invectives.⁶¹ Anapaests were suggestive of bodily movement.⁶² Lyric meters subordinated the syllables of natural language to the requirements and expectations of musical accompaniment.⁶³

Expectations with regard to the emotional effect of musical composition and prosodic format changed together with developments in literature, musical theory, and the scholarly evaluation of both. With regard to literature and text, the identification, definition, and assessment of *ethos* became more abstract as materials that could be studied and enjoyed in written form required out loud reading, recitation, or performance to evoke effects that were in essence aural. Dionysius' rhetorical and stylistic approach of the emotional impact of rhythm reduces centuries of music's and prosody's appreciation and evaluation

⁶⁰ BLANKENBORG 2017.

⁶¹ WHEELER 2015.

⁶² Cfr. footnote 49 above.

⁶³ As he discusses properties of language in musical terms, Dionysius comments on the outcome of a centuries-long development:

ἡ μὲν γὰρ πεζὴ λέξις οὐδενὸς οὔτε ὀνόματος οὔτε ῥήματος βιάζεται τοὺς χρόνους οὐδὲ μετατίθησιν, ἀλλ' οἷας παρῆλθεν τῇ φύσει τὰς συλλαβὰς τὰς τε μακρὰς καὶ τὰς βραχείας, τοιαύτας φυλάττει· ἡ δὲ μουσικὴ τε καὶ ῥυθμικὴ μεταβάλλουσιν αὐτὰς μειοῦσαι καὶ παραυξοῦσαι, ὥστε πολλάκις εἰς τάναντία μεταχωρεῖν· οὐ γὰρ ταῖς συλλαβαῖς ἀπευθύνουσι τοὺς χρόνους, ἀλλὰ τοῖς χρόνοις τὰς συλλαβὰς.

De Comp. Verb. 128.15-130.2 (ed. Roberts).

«Non-metrical prose does not violate the syllable weights of any noun or verb, nor their interchangeability, but it keeps the syllables, long and short, as it received them by nature. Music and arrangement change them through shortening and lengthening: as a result they regularly pass into their opposites. They do not regulate the rhythmical weights in accordance with the syllables, but rather assimilate the syllables to the rhythmical weights».

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to gender-biased ethic terminology, that has proven hardly illuminating, let alone useful, for subsequent generations of scholars. Contemporary classical philology therefore considers the terminology *ethos* unusable for the evaluation of prosodic properties of language as it is applied to speech arbitrarily and abstractly in ancient and modern manuals, commonly reflecting poetry's semantics rather than establishing rhythmical *ethos* as an independent prosodic influence on the state of mind of the listening audience.

When reassessing the *ethos* of rhythm in ancient Greek metrical text, modern aesthetic theory may be more helpful in analysing prosody's emotional appeal. Acknowledging her definition as 'work in progress', and investigating the possibility that 'a forward dash could icon [...] an emotion' in contemporary poetry,⁶⁴ Lilja defines rhythm as

a quality created in the perception of a work of art. Form impulses are patterned into *gestalts*, audible and visual. Rhythm concerns the relationship within and between the form elements of a work of art. Of particular interest is whether or not they balance. Inclinations to imbalance in the sequences cause movements and directions within the *gestalts* (dynamic repetition). 'Rhythm' signifies the (perception of) contrast between balance and movement, rest and conflict in a work of art, as in a poem.⁶⁵

Lilja's definition turns the *ethos* of rhythm into a cognitive-interactional tool that is realised in the dialogue between producer/product and recipient.⁶⁶ Applied to ancient Greek

⁶⁴ Cfr. TSUR 2009.

⁶⁵ LILJA 2012, p. 291.

⁶⁶ AUCHLIN 2000, pp.87-79 emphasises exchange between the sender (including the written object) and the receiver: «Pour celui qui parle, l'ethos est un "outil cognitivo-interactionnel" dont la portée s'exprime en je: ethos, c'est le nom de la distance qu'il convient que je prenne face à deux évidentes béances de mon identité de parole dans le dialogue: l'extériorité de la langue que je dois habiter et qui (sur)détermine mon geste et ma posture énonciative en même temps qu'elle la rend possible; et l'extériorité de l'appréhension à laquelle mon geste ostensif donne lieu (selon le postulat dialogal de l'ethos). Que je prétende m'affranchir de cette double ouverture, il n'y a plus

metrical text, Lilja's definition 'between balance and movement' suggests that metrical rhythm deliberately pushes the listening audience to the edge – between a balanced perception that meets expectations, and the experience of the unexpected through a 'forward dash'. The «balanced perception» may be compared to the 'situational context', a phonostylistics qualification for a particular linguistic environment that is conditioned by a fixed set of extra-linguistic factors.⁶⁷ A close tie between performative context and aberrant rhythm, like the «language of permanency» through hexameters, the marching step through anapaests, or the delivery of invective via iambic stylized speech, evokes a specific communicative situation in which the unusual and the expected blend.⁶⁸ Performance of metrical text creates a situational context that is recognisable both from its form and its content: hexametric poetry deals with the stories or wisdom of old, as iambs and trochees are reminiscent of everyday speech, and lyric poetry reflects on the emotional ups and downs of life.⁶⁹ The aberrant rhythm suits the specific content, and, in due course, the performer will suit the prominence pattern of the situational context rhythm.⁷⁰

de dialogue (je perds le dialogue); mais que je m'y livre comme à un mystère et m'y engloutisse, il n'y a plus de moi. L'ethos, ainsi, est un "objet d'acquisition perpétuelle": c'est une problématique que les sujets parlants rencontrent tardivement dans sa dimension réflexive, à laquelle l'accès est facilité, parce que mis en crise, par l'acquisition de l'écrit (YESSOUROUN 1994), mais dont il serait faux de penser qu'elle peut être dominée, maîtrisée ou dépassée, puisque la réalité de l'ethos est dans l'échange et appartient à l'interlocuteur».

⁶⁷ JOBERT 2014.

⁶⁸ MARTIN 2014. The prosodic format is especially unusual, as unplanned ancient Greek speech is inherently iambic according to ARIST., *Rhet.* 3.8, 1408b.

⁶⁹ BLANKENBORG 2017.

⁷⁰ Often a matter of timing rather than metrical surface structure, cf. TURK, SHATTUCK-HUFNAGEL 2014 who suggest that speech timing patterns are used to aid utterance recognition: recognition requirements are balanced against requirements such as rate of speech and style. ARVANITI 2009 further argues «that the metrics are unreliable predictors of rhythm which provide no more than a crude measure of timing. It is further argued that timing is distinct from rhythm and that equating them has led to circularity and a psychologically questionable conceptualization of rhythm in speech. It is thus proposed that research on rhythm be based on the same principles for all languages, something that does not apply to the widely accepted division of languages into stress- and syllable-timed». KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI and De Chanay (KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI, DE CHANAY 2007, p. 331) emphasize the role of gestures and physical expression in addition to prosody, cf. MEINECK's 2018, pp. 180-203: «somatosensory words».

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In a 2008 conference paper, Auchlin considers phonostylistics and *ethos* as pragmatic phenomena,⁷¹ closely tied in with the experience of discourse as they are partly ‘coded’ in language. The function of prosody, he states is

d’énacter l’expérience du sens, i.e. accomplir l’intégration du sens comme un fait corporel et sensible (ce que la prosodie fait apparaître du genre d’activité verbale en cours, du type de contact engagé, de la nature de la relation, de l’appartenance du locuteur à un groupe social, etc.).⁷²

Prosody thus provides a sense of ‘spatialisation’, to be conceived as a metaphor:

La symphonie que j’écoute avec mes écouteurs en stéréo est pratiquement la même dans chaque écouteur; si je passe l’enregistrement en mono, la symphonie est encore la même, mais la perception spatiale a disparu. Notre perception auditive traduit les micro-différences entre les canaux droit et gauche en une perception spatiale, et l’expérience auditive franchit un seuil qualitatif, le son étant perçu dans un espace, et non plus sur un plan (mono). De façon à peine métaphorique, un tel seuil qualitatif me semble en jeu dans l’expérience ordinaire du discours. Nous ne traitons pas la parole comme un flux unifié mais comme un faisceau de flux distincts ; leur co-occurrence, leur déploiement « parallèle », se traduit en l’élaboration d’un espace, et en son parcours, par une projection corporelle, qui le dote d’une texture et d’une consistance.⁷³

With examples from recited literature and from unplanned speech, Auchlin draws attention to the way intonation units both

⁷¹ AUCHLIN 2008, p. 2 : «phénomènes pragmatiques émergents, comme le sont, chacun à sa manière, l’éthos, et le phonostyle».

⁷² Ivi, p. 4.

⁷³ Ivi, p. 7.

meet and confuse audience's expectation, the confusion resembling Lilja's «forward dash»: within a regularised, repetitive and prosodically predictable whole, the shape and size of intonation units either meets or contradicts (illocutionary) expectations. In his examples: what appears to be a question, turns out to be an assertion. The utterance's content is signified by a «vocal gesture».

Transferred to ancient Greek metrical speech, the concept of *ethos* as a «spatialised metaphor» for a «vocal gesture» facilitates discussion of metrical speech's characterisation beyond the notion of syllables' quantity and the analysis of rhythmical weight. Both are well established in scholarly literature, but do not univocally contribute to the understanding of metrical text's character. With regard to syllables' quantity it remains unclear whether ancient Greek's dichotomy of syllables in «(rather) short» on the one hand, and «(rather) long» on the other, reflects a perceptible dichotomy that justifies a fully quantitative account of Greek meter.⁷⁴ If rhythm is understood as language's timing mechanism in ancient Greek (as in almost any other language),⁷⁵ durational differences are suggestive of distinctive sonority rather than measurable syllable lengths. Either way meter and rhythm as descriptive tools do not pass aesthetic or moral judgement on their topic of description.

The «vocal gesture» may, though, especially when combined with Dionysius' definition of *rhythmos* as the word shape. In *De Compositione Verborum*, Dionysius links his judgements to the frequency, the perceptibility, and the repetition of individual rhythmical word-shapes. Not the overall structure of the line,⁷⁶ but the demarcating quality of individual word-shapes determines

⁷⁴ As in, e.g., GENTILI, LOMIENTO 2008, p. 27.

⁷⁵ DEVINE, STEPHENS 1994.

⁷⁶ Though he does cite lines whose overall metrical structure corresponds with the metrical word-shape he wishes to focus on, and lend its name to the overarching verse: hence he illustrates the bacchian line with bacchius word-shaped words, and the molussus-verse with molossi. In other examples, like that of the dactyl and the cretic, there is hardly any, or no such correspondence.

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rhythm's capacity to evoke emotions. In larger metrical and rhythmical wholes, the perceptible, smaller words and phrases perceptibly stand out. Shaped as intonational phrases,⁷⁷ the (phrase-concluding) *rhythmoi* are the main determinant of *ethos* in a rhetorical approach to the 'character' of metrical text. Whereas the metrical-rhythmical environment creates a situational context, the demarcated and demarcating *rhythmoi* constitute the *ethos* – either as meeting the expectations connected to the wider environment, or as a 'forward dash', presenting an unexpected prosodic turn mirrored in the experience of a vocal gesture. Such a disruptive vocal gesture confronts the listening audience with the realisation that they perceive, e.g., anapaestic rhythm in a dactylic environment, trochaic sequencing in iambic trimeters, or gnome-like *paroemiacs* in stichic dactylic hexameters.⁷⁸ Thus the terminology of music's arousing and calming effects may describe the impact of word rhythm on the hearer.

5. Conclusion

Whether meeting or disrupting expectations, perception of *rhythmoi* in the performance of ancient Greek metrical text had an effect on the listener. The experience of, for example, a dactyl, a *rhythmos* closely connected to the language of permanency manifested in epic and funereal inscriptions, evoked what Dionysius rhetorically labels the 'heroic', just like the palimbacchius evoked the 'virile', and the amphibrach made palpable the 'feminine'. With his qualifications, and with a deliberate reassessment of terminology originally designed to evaluate the emotional effect of musical composition, Dionysius commented on the prosodic shape of individual words or word groups, rather than on the emotional effect of larger metrical-rhythmical wholes like

⁷⁷ GOLDSTEIN 2014.

⁷⁸ Reading a colon that you would associate with one rhythmic type as something else was labelled *metarrhythmisis* in antiquity. Modern scholarship refers to the phenomenon as *dovetailing* (NAGY 1974) or (using another term from antiquity) *epiploke* (COLE 1998; BLANKENBORG forthcoming).

the verse, the stanza, the strophe, or the epyllion. Rhythmical word shapes could thus equally constitute «affective prosody» in an otherwise non-metrical environment. The capacity of ancient Greek speech rhythm to be affective, and to evoke an emotional response from the listening audience, is to be included in the reference to *ethos* in antiquity, a denomination regularly translated as ‘characterisation’, implying moral as well as aesthetic judgement. Attempts to explain *ethos* in metrical speech with reference to ancient Greek’s dichotomy of syllables’ quantity or the analysis of the patterning of poetry’s rhythmical elements has led to arbitrary allotment of emotional impact to specific metrical surface structures, and persistent judgements on prosody’s ‘affectiveness’, more often than not contradicting the (lack of) *pathos* suggested by the text’s content. The recently developed notion of ‘aesthetic rhythm’, that describes rhythm in terms of balance and movement, and combines the linguistic signifiers with physical vocal gestures, better describes prosody’s effect on the listeners: in the idiosyncratic combination of prosody and content, *rhythmoi* may either strengthen or confuse the listener’s physical experience of the utterance, and hence guide, or contradict, expectations. *Ethos* is then a metaphor rather than an affect: *ethos* signifies the experience of prosody, and formulates this physical experience in terms of emotion.

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