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Eteokleispolys: One/Many in Aeschylus' *Septem*

To read Aeschylus' *Septem* as a presocratic text requires more than noting isolated lines as "reminiscent of." The heptagonal cosmos that is Thebes is circumscribed by an unwitting Pythagorean, closing the city against the seven by a process in which an Empedoclean *Neikos* unites with *Philia* to create one out of two at each gate, a cosmic movement (*dinos*) controlled by Apollo, *heptamagetas*. Sicilisms in *Septem* contribute to the notion that Aeschylus' familiarity with the ideas of West Greek philosophical mystics was not casual. My paper examines one of these ideas, namely, Aeschylus' treatment of the one/many problem. A bonus of the study is a fresh understanding of lines 6: Eteoklees an eis polys kata ptolin/hymnoith'.

Plurality, defined by contraries, is conceived as dyad, then unity. In *Septem* contraries are concrete: Thebans/Argives, foreigner/native, male/female; or common, but more abstract: public/personal, words/symbols; or theoretically posited: odd/even, difference/sameness, separateness and unity. The resolution of contraries into one at the verbal level, for example, emerges from an abundance of artful compounds, a trademark of Aeschylean composition, words in *anti-*, *pros-*, and *dys* work against *syn-* and *dia-*. The estranged brothers with their one fate are the essential dyad. Empedocles described the cycle of generation and destruction that proceeds under the influence of *Philia* and *Neikos* with similar compounds, notably with the word that predicts twins, *syngignesthai* (B 22.8). This is precisely the transition that Eteocles makes in becoming one with Polyneices-of-the-too-significant name. The *Neikos* exists beyond the power of either of them to control; it is *poly*. The paper provides numerous examples in *Septem* of Empedoclean one and many, *neikos* and *philia* pairs.

To become one the brothers must kill their unnatural plurality. Unity cannot be one without the *heteros*, which turns out to be the same. A brother can only be brother if he has a sibling, and both are, therefore, named "brother," and called the same. As Empedocles puts it: "we perceive earth by earth, water by water...and further love by love and strife by painful strife" (31 B 109). So, too, Aeschylus names the two: Eteoklees an eis polys kata ptolin/hymnoith"