The Concept of Divine Transcendence in Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus

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Abstract[1]

Many ancient and modern scholars have presumed that Stoic cosmology is confined to a dualistic framework. This study attempts a radical reconsideration of Stoic theology by reinterpreting Cleanthes' "Hymn to Zeus"—a prayer in the Homeric style, a point of consensus among the hymn's few specialists—against the traditional interpretation of the Stoic divine. In his hymn, according to the research hypothesis, Cleanthes presents a clear vision of a **transcendent deity** possessing sovereignty, who governs the cosmos through His law.

This interpretation moves beyond the traditional Stoic model based on two principles—God and matter—where God is united with nature and diffused throughout the cosmos. The analysis reveals a cosmic framework in Cleanthes' thought that represents a coherent **tripartite hierarchical structure**. This framework positions **Zeus as a transcendent deity, a supreme ruler**, while the **Logos is a principle subordinate to His command**. Cleanthes portrays the cosmos itself as a passive recipient of His divine ordinance.

The research delineates how Cleanthes constructed this hierarchy through logical proofs, where action is attributed to God, yet mediated through intermediaries to demonstrate His majesty—He has no need for direct action. Conversely, the cosmos is described in passive terms, and the divine reason (Logos) is framed as an instrument in the hands of the supreme God. This interpretation affirms the reality of **divine**

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[1] This text has been linguistically paraphrased and proofread with the assistance of DeepSeek AI model, version 3 (DeepSeek-Latest). updated until July 2024

providence—in contrast to the Epicurean doctrine—and clarifies the reasons for which humanity holds a privileged position within that providence.

The deity guides and steers the cosmos through His rational law without a physical presence within the world He governs. Cleanthes offers us a glimpse into the diversity and evolution of early Stoic theology, revealing a more nuanced intellectual landscape that expresses the essence of a **nominal, transcendent deity**. This deity is separate from the world, yet exercises complete control over it through His instruments.

The hymn under study has not received sufficient attention from many researchers, and the research hypothesis—examining it from this perspective—has not been previously investigated. To substantiate this hypothesis, the study relies on a combination of the **descriptive method** and the **analytical-inductive approach**. This methodology is based on the analysis of primary sources, proceeding from the examination of particulars to the formulation of a comprehensive conclusion.

Keywords: Cleanthes, Hymn to Zeus, Stoic Theology, Divine Transcendence, Logos, Immanence, Ancient Philosophy, Hellenistic Religion, Zeus, Cosmology .nomos-Law, Divine Providence, Ancient Stoicism

مفهوم التعالي الإلهي في ترنيمة كليانثيس "إلى زيوس"

ملخص:

اعتقد الكثير من القدماء والمحدثين أن الطبيعة الرواقية قاصره على مبدأين ، نحاول من خلال هذه الدراسة إعادة نظر جذرية في الإطار اللاهوتي الرواقي من خلال إعادة تفسير انشودة كليانثيس "إلى زيوس" -وهي صلاة على النمط الهومري بإجماع الدارسين لهذه الترنيمة علي قلتهم- عن التفسير التقليدي للألوهية الرواقية. حيث قدم كليانثيس في انشودته-تبعا لفرضية البحث- رؤية واضحة عن إله مُتعال ذي سيادة يحكم الكون عبر ناموسه. ويتجاوز النموذج الرواقي التقليدي القائم على مبدأين - الله والمادة – حيث الإله يتحد بالطبيعة والمنتشر عبر الكون، يكشف هذا التحليل عن اطار كوني يمثل بنية هرمية ثلاثية متماسكة في فكر كليانثيس، يضع هذا الإطار زيوس كالـه مُتعالي، حاكم أعلى، اما اللوجوس فهو مبدأ خاضع لحكمه، وصور كليانثيس الكون نفسه كمتلقٍّ سلبي لأمره الإلهي. ويبين البحث كيف شيد كليانثيس هذا التسلسل الهرمي من خلال براهين منطقية، حيث يُنسب الفعل إلى الإله لكن عبر وسائط ليظهر عظمته فهو لا يحتاج للفعل، بينما يصف الكون بمصطلحات سلبية، ويُؤطّر العقل الإلهي كأداة بيد الإله الاعلى. يؤكد هذا التفسير على اثبات العناية الإلهية -على عكس المذهب الابيقوري- كما يوضح الأسباب التي جعلت من الانسان موضعا للعناية.

يرشد الإله الكون ويقوده من خلال قانونه العقلاني دون وجود فعلي له في العالم الذي يحكمه. يقدم لنا كليانثيس صورة من صور تنوع اللاهوت الرواقي المبكر وتطوره، تكشف عن مشهد فكري أكثر دقة يعبر عن جوهر الهي اسمي ينفصل عن هذا العالم لكنه يتحكم فيه بصورة تامة عبر ادواته.

الانشودة موضع الدراسة لم تكن موضع اهتمام للكثير من الباحثين ،وفرضية البحث لم يسبق دراستها من هذا المنظور ،ونعتمد في إثبات فرضية البحث على استخدام المنهج الوصفي مع المنهج الاستقرائي التحليلي، القائم على تحليل المصادر الأساسية، والوصول من خلال دراسة الجزئيات إلى الاستنتاج الكلي.

الكلمات الدالة: كليانثيس ، الانشودة إلى لزيوس، اللاهوت الرواقي، التعالي الإلهي، الكلمة، الوجود الداخلي، الفلسفة القديمة، الديانة الهلنستية، زيوس، علم الكونيات، الناموس، العناية الإلهية، الرواقية القديمة.

1. Significance of the Study

This study presents a significant and radical re-examination of the early Stoic theological framework. While the orthodox Stoic position, particularly as systematized by Chrysippus, is understood as a strict monism identifying God with an immanent, corporeal Logos permeating the cosmos, Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus has long presented a philosophical puzzle. This research is crucial because it moves beyond interpreting the Hymn as merely a poetic or protreptic device and argues that it constitutes evidence of a substantive philosophical divergence within the early Stoa. By proposing that Cleanthes articulates a coherent model of a transcendent, sovereign God who employs the Logos as an instrument, this study challenges the traditional two-principle (God and matter) Stoic model. It thereby reveals a more nuanced and complex intellectual landscape in the school's foundational period, highlighting Cleanthes' unique voice and his attempt to reconcile divine providence and transcendence with a rational, law-bound cosmos.

2. Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Re-examine the theological framework within Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus to demonstrate its deviation from the standard Stoic doctrine of divine immanence.
2. Analyze the hymn's poetic language, structure, and key epithets to reveal a systematic portrayal of Zeus as a transcendent ruler.
3. Identify and elucidate the tripartite cosmological structure in Cleanthes' thought: a transcendent God (Zeus), an instrumental rational principle (Logos), and a passive cosmos.

4. Demonstrate how Cleanthes uses grammatical constructions (active/passive voice, personal pronouns) and logical proofs (from divine agency, instrumental causality, and human origin) to construct his argument for a sovereign deity.
5. Contextualize Cleanthes' theology within the broader Hellenistic religious and philosophical discourse, particularly in its rebuttal of Epicurean detachment and its engagement with pre-Socratic and Platonic concepts of a supreme principle.

3. **Research Methodology**

1. This study employs a qualitative research approach based on two primary methodological frameworks:
2. Descriptive-Analytical Method: This method is used to systematically describe and analyze the primary text. It involves:
3. A close philological analysis of the hymn's Greek text, focusing on key terms (e.g., ὑποεργόν - "instrument", κυβερνῶν - "governing", ἀρχηγέ - "founder"), grammatical structures (e.g., use of active vs. passive voice, hyperbaton), and poetic devices.
4. Examining the tripartite structure (invocation, predication, prayer) to show how it builds a theological argument.
5. Inductive Method: This method is used to draw broader philosophical conclusions from the specific textual evidence. It involves:
6. Reasoning from the specific language and imagery in the hymn to inductively reconstruct Cleanthes' theological model.
7. Comparing Cleanthes' formulations with other Stoic sources (e.g., Diogenes Laertius, Cicero) and critical testimonia to highlight points of divergence and originality.

8. Synthesizing the findings to propose a revised understanding of early Stoic theology that accommodates Cleanthes' distinct emphasis on divine transcendence.

4. Literature Review

The study is situated within a body of seminal modern scholarship on Stoicism and the Hymn:

Standard Stoic Doctrine: The foundation is laid using sources like Diogenes Laertius (Lives) and Cicero (De Natura Deorum), which outline the orthodox two-principle immanentist model.

Comprehensive Hymn Analysis: J.C. Thom (2005) provides the essential textual commentary, though this study pushes beyond his interpretations on key points (e.g., the translation of ὅς τόσσος γεγαὼς).

Stoic Theology and Context: A.A. Long (1996, 2006) and K. Algra (2003) provide the broader context of Stoic theology and its philosophical challenges.

Myth and Philosophy: E. Asmis (2007) is engaged with for her analysis of the hymn's dual audience, though this research argues for a deeper philosophical core beyond mere pedagogical strategy.

Specialized Studies: The work of Meerwaldt (1951), Meijer (1983),

Influence and Parallels: G. Betegh (2003) and references to Heraclitus help contextualize Cleanthes' ideas within a longer philosophical tradition concerning a supreme cosmic principle.

This study contributes to this scholarship by synthesizing these sources to build a consistent argument for transcendence, challenging the prevailing immanentist reading of early Stoicism.

Introduction : Mythic Allusions to the Notion of the Transcendent Divine.

Numerous passages in Homeric epic reveal that the Olympian gods, despite their immense power, are ultimately subordinate to a higher cosmic order—often personified as Moira (**Μοῖρα**) or Aisa (**αἶσα**). This force, representing fate or allotted destiny, governs both mortals and immortals alike. For instance, Poseidon himself acknowledges his subjection to Moira in *Odyssey* 9.528–535, and even Zeus, the king of gods, cannot avert the death of his son Sarpedon, though he momentarily contemplates doing so and ultimately chooses only to delay it (*Iliad* 16.431–461).

The death of Patroclus exemplifies the complex interplay of divine agency and fate. Homer attributes his demise variously to Zeus (*Il.* 16.252, 647, 800), to Zeus's intent (688), to the collective will of the gods (693), to Apollo (791, 804, 816), to both Zeus and Apollo (844), and finally to a convergence of Moira, Apollo, Euphorbus, and Hector (849f). This multiplicity of agents suggests that divine involvement often operates within the bounds of an overarching necessity, rather than through unilateral divine will.

In some cases, the gods appear as mere witnesses to inevitable outcomes. Zeus's foreknowledge of Sarpedon's fate, for example, underscores his inability to contravene Moira without disrupting cosmic balance (*Il.* 16.431–461). Although he occasionally hesitates or deliberates—such as in *Iliad* 16.644–655—his final decisions tend to align with the dictates of fate. Once Zeus's will is resolved, events proceed with inexorable certainty.

Moreover, Zeus may signal the approach of fated events through celestial signs, such as thunder and lightning (*Il.* 8.75,

133), or by sending a star as an omen (*Il.* 4.75–84), reinforcing the idea that divine will and Moira are not in conflict but co-operate in shaping the narrative arc of the epics.

This dynamic has been explored extensively in scholarship. Claridge (2024) argues that the gods function as enforcers of fate, ensuring that predetermined outcomes are realized, while also revealing the limits of divine autonomy. Sarischoulis (2016) emphasizes that Homeric narrative does not depict fate and divine will as antagonistic forces, but rather as interwoven elements that reflect the personal motives of both gods and mortals. Rogerson (2024) further notes that Moira represents a deterministic framework within which even the most powerful deities must operate.

Xenophanes and the Inquiry into Theological Beliefs

Xenophanes distinguished between two tiers of divinity: the supreme God and the lesser gods. His distinction is clear in one of his most significant fragments:

"εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος οὔ τι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίιος οὐδὲ νόημα". **"One god, greatest among gods and men, not similar to mortals in form nor in thought"** (Xenophanes, B23).

Xenophanes does not employ a list of affirmative attributes to define the divine nature. Instead, he utilizes a method of negation (*via negativa*), rejecting known, anthropomorphic qualities. He denies any similarity (***ὁμοίιος***) in physical form (***δέμας***) to mortals (***θνητοῖσιν***) and, crucially, any similarity in thought or mind (***νόημα***). This approach suggests that the true essence of the divine is fundamentally beyond human comprehension.

He further elaborates on the power of this supreme God:

"ἀλλ' ἀπάνευθε πόνοιο νόου φρενὶ πάντα κραδαίνει". **"But without effort, he shakes all things by the thought of his mind"** (Xenophanes, ca. 6th-5th century BCE/1992).

This fragment, describing God's power to move all things through pure intellect, has led scholars like Drozdek (2004), von Fritz (1974), Warden (1971), and Lesher (1992) to interpret Xenophanes' divine perception as a governing force of the cosmos. However, we argue that this does not necessarily imply continuous divine intervention in cosmic affairs. It is illogical to assume God acts merely from capability, particularly since Xenophanes uses the present tense verb *κραδαίνει* ("shakes"). The notion of a perpetually trembling universe is untenable. A more coherent interpretation is that this "shaking" symbolizes the profound awe that creation experiences in the face of divine majesty.

Xenophanes expresses the immense power of the one God, but this does not equate to micromanagement of the world. Significantly, the agent of action is not God as a personal actor, but "the thought of his mind" (***νόου φρενὶ***). This denotes a perception that is immaterial and beyond physical comprehension. Xenophanes' use of this term without a definite article further emphasizes the ineffable and incomprehensible nature of the divine will to humans. This conception—of a God who governs through transcendent intellect rather than direct, anthropomorphic intervention—presents a radical departure from the traditional Greek pantheon.

Plato and idea of Good

The discourse concerning a supreme and transcendent God in Greek society—a deity who is exalted above direct action and governs the world through its law, a being both simple and omnipotent—is a subject of significant scholarly inquiry.

Researchers often trace the roots of this concept to the philosophical tradition of Neoplatonism. In the most favorable interpretation, it is considered a development of the "Idea of the Good" (**ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα**) as articulated by Plato in *The Republic* (508e-509b), where the Good is presented as the ultimate principle, "beyond being" (**ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας**) in dignity and power (Plato, Republic, 509b).

However, a considerable number of scholars have proposed that this refined idea was formed through a process of interaction between the Abrahamic beliefs, as manifested in Judaism and Christianity, and the pagan thinkers of the Greco-Roman world. This perspective exists despite the explicit acknowledgment by early Christian apologists that the Greeks and other nations had, to some extent, perceived the one true God. A pivotal testimony to this effect comes from Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata* (5.13.86):

"Ἕνα μὲν οὖν τὸν ἀληθῆ θεὸν Ἕλληνές τε καὶ βάρβαροι αἰσθάνονται, οὐχ ὁρῶντες μὲν αὐτὸν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, λογισμῷ δὲ καὶ διανοίᾳ καταλαμβάνοντες. ὁ μὲν γὰρ Πλάτων τὸν θεὸν ἀόρατον λέγει, ὁ δὲ Ἀριστοτέλης ἀκίνητον, οἱ δὲ Στωικοὶ λογικὸν πῦρ. πάντες δὲ ὁμολογοῦσιν ἕνα θεὸν εἶναι, κἂν πολυθέῳ δόξῃ χρῶνται."

"Therefore, the one true God is perceived by both Greeks and Barbarians. They do not see Him with their eyes, but they comprehend Him through reason and intellect. For Plato says God is invisible; Aristotle says He is unmoved; and the Stoics say He is rational fire. And all of them agree that God is one, even if they employ a polytheistic opinion."

Some patristic authors, such as Justin Martyr, attributed this philosophical knowledge to cultural and historical interaction with the Hebrew prophetic tradition. In his *First*

Apology (Chapter 60), Justin argues that Greek philosophers like Plato derived their insights from the teachings of Moses, suggesting a direct line of influence (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 60). Conversely, other writers, like Lactantius, pointed to the influence of even older civilizations. In his *Divine Institutes* (1.5), he suggests that the Greeks were influenced by the wisdom of the Egyptians, from whom they might have received a corrupted version of primordial monotheism (Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 1.5).

Physics of the Stoics

The Stoics conceived of the natural world as fundamentally material. According to their physics, everything in existence—from inanimate objects to living beings, and even gods and humans—consists of corporeal substance (Sharples, 1996, p. 47). This materialist framework rests upon two fundamental principles (ἀρχαί) that together constitute the cosmos (Brunt, 1975, p. 191).

The first of these principles is matter (ὕλη), which the Stoics understood as a passive, unqualified substrate. This prime matter possesses no inherent qualities, activity, or capacity for self-initiated movement. As Seneca eloquently captures this conception: "***Materia iacet iners, res ad omnia parata, cessatura, si nemo moueat***" ("Matter lies inert, a thing ready for anything, but would remain still if no one moved it") (Seneca, Ep. 65.2 = SVF 2.303). The Stoics derived this concept largely from Plato's Timaeus but refined it by depriving matter of any intrinsic movement or quality, rendering it absolutely passive (Reydams-Schils, 1999, p. 45; Frede, 2005, p. 221). Consequently, divine action exercises complete and unresisted control over matter, with God serving as the cause of all qualities and forms that matter assumes.

The second principle constitutes the active, divine force that structures and animates this passive substrate. This principle represents the immanent rational force (nous or logos) that permeates all matter. Alexander of Aphrodisias provides a crucial description of this Stoic doctrine: "***Τὸ δύο ἀρχὰς τῶν πάντων λέγοντας εἶναι ὕλην τε καὶ θεόν, ὧν τὸν μὲν ποιοῦντα εἶναι τὴν δὲ πασχοῦσαν, μεμιχθαί τε τῇ ὕλῃ λέγειν τὸν θεόν, δι' ὅλης αὐτῆς διήκοντα καὶ σχηματίζοντα αὐτὴν, καὶ μορφοῦντα καὶ κοσμοποιοῦντα τοῦτό τε τὸν τρόπον***" ("They say there are two principles of all things: God and matter, the former being the active agent and the latter the passive patient. They say that God is mixed with matter, pervading all of it, shaping it, forming it, and thus creating the cosmos") (Alexander Aphrodisiensis, De mixtione, 224.33).

The Stoics substantially developed their conception of divinity from Heraclitean foundations. In their system, God permeates all existence as the active principle or creative fire (πῦρ τεχνικὸν), representing the world-soul that contains within itself the formative principles known as logoi spermatikoi (λόγοι σπερματικοί) or seminal reasons (Copleston, 1993, p. 391). This concept of seminal reasons, later adopted and adapted in Neoplatonism and translated by Saint Augustine as rationes seminales (Pease, 1941, p. 96), refers to the divine causes through which all things come into being and develop.

For the Stoics, God constitutes a subtle corporeal entity that interpenetrates matter completely, flowing through it as semen permeates living bodies. Thus, God, Mind/Nous, Fate, and Zeus represent multiple names for a single divine entity (Sharples, 1996, p. 49). Diogenes Laërtius records this doctrine explicitly: "***Ἕν τε εἶναι θεὸν καὶ νοῦν καὶ εἱμαρμένην καὶ Δία: πολλαῖς τε τ' ἐτέραις ὀνομασίαις προσονομάζεσθαι.***

κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν οὖν καθ' αὑτὸν ὄντα τρέπειν τὴν πᾶσαν οὐσίαν δι' ἀέρος εἰς ὕδωρ: καὶ ὅσπερ ἐν τῷ γονῇ τὸ σπέρμα περιέχεται, οὕτω καὶ τοῦτον σπερματικὸν λόγον ὄντα τοῦ κόσμου" ("And that God, Mind, Fate, and Zeus are one; and called by many other names besides. In the beginning, by his own agency, he transforms the entire substance through air into water; and just as the sperm is contained in the semen, so too this God, being the seminal reason of the cosmos, is contained in the moisture...") (Diogenes Laërtius, Vitae Philosophorum, 7.135).

A cornerstone of this system is the doctrine of Logos (λόγος), the divine, active reason that permeates, structures, and governs the entire cosmos as both its formative principle and sustaining law (Long & Sedley, 1987, p. 266). In its most orthodox formulation, particularly as systematized by Chrysippus (c. 279 – c. 206 BCE), the third head of the Stoa, God is not a transcendent creator but is explicitly identified with this immanent Logos. As the sources consistently affirm, God, Nature, and Fate represent different names for a single, corporeal, rational substance (Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, VII.135-136).

The primary sources leave little room for ambiguity regarding this strict identification. Diogenes Laertius states categorically: "They say that the divine is the universe, the stars, the earth, and the highest mind in the sky" (***τοῦ δὲ θείου φασὶ τὴν μὲν ὅλην οὐσίαν εἶναι τὸν κόσμον καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν, ἔτι δὲ τὰ ἄστρα καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰς ἐν ἀέρι φύσεις· πρόσκειται δὲ τούτοις καὶ ὁ νόμος ὁ διακεκοσμηκὼς τὰ πάντα)*** (Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, VII.148). Similarly, Cicero reports that the Stoics "use the term 'God' for the law-like and common reason of nature, which

pervades all things, and for the common and law-like necessity of fate" (Cicero, De Natura Deorum, I.14.39). This God, understood as intelligent, designing fire (**ἔνθερμον νοερὸν τεχνικὸν**), represents the active, intelligent principle within matter that structures and governs the cosmos with absolute necessity (Stobaeus, Eclogae, I.2.7b, in Long & Sedley, 1987, 46A; Aetius, Placita, I.7.33, in Long & Sedley, 1987, 46A).

Within this orthodox framework, governance does not constitute an action undertaken by God using law as an external instrument. (Mikes,2023) Rather, it represents the automatic and inherent operation of the rational universe itself. The cosmos functions as a living, intelligent organism (ζῷον), with God serving as its commanding faculty (**ἡγεμονικόν**)—the soul coextensive with its body (Sextus Empiricus, Adversus Mathematicos, IX.78-80, in Long & Sedley, 1987, 44). This view, which became the mainstream Stoic position, emphasizes complete identity: no meaningful distinction exists between the ruler and the rule, the planner and the plan, or the mind and its thoughts. The law (nomos) simply represents the operational manifestation of the divine reason (Logos), which is itself God.

Critique of Stoic Divine Immanence

The Stoic conception of divine immanence faced substantial criticism from both popular sentiment and philosophical opponents. The notion of a deity physically blended with matter and perpetually engaged in cosmic governance was perceived as compromising divine transcendence and dignity (Vázquez, 2024). As Algra (2003) notes, this "theology of permanent divine activity" stood in direct opposition to traditional Greco-Roman religious sensibilities that envisioned gods as transcendent and blissful beings (p. 167).

The Epicureans mounted a particularly vigorous assault on this Stoic model. Through Cicero's dialogue De Natura Deorum, the Epicurean spokesman Velleius ridicules the Stoic god as a laboring deity, condemned to eternal administrative duties (Cicero, Nat. D. 1.52). As Sedley (2007) explains, "For Epicureans, divine happiness required complete detachment from worldly concerns, making the Stoic concept of providence tantamount to divine slavery" (p. 90).

The Peripatetic philosopher Alexander of Aphrodisias advanced a more technical critique in De Providentia, arguing that the Stoic doctrine of corporeal immanence logically entailed divine passibility. According to Alexander, a god physically mixed with matter must necessarily be affected by it, violating the fundamental principle of divine impassibility (Alex. Aphr. De Prov. 21.5–20). As Bobzien (1998) summarizes this objection, "If God is a body blended with matter, he becomes subject to the alterations and passions inherent in the material world" (p. 325).

These critiques underscore the fundamental tension in Stoic theology between maintaining divine perfection while asserting providential immanence. The objections reveal how the Stoic system, despite its philosophical coherence, struggled to reconcile its corporeal deity with prevailing conceptions of divine transcendence.

However, the seminal "Hymn to Zeus" by Cleanthes of Assos (c. 330 – c. 230 BCE), Zeno's immediate successor and the second scholarch of the Stoa, presents a complex literary and philosophical artifact that has long intrigued scholars for its potential theological nuances. As A. A. Long notes, the Hymn constitutes "our most important single piece of evidence for the religious spirit of early Stoicism" (Long, 1996, p. 41).

Its devotional tone and use of traditional anthropomorphic language stand in noticeable tension with the school's foundational materialistic pantheism. Ancient doxographical sources explicitly document that Cleanthes maintained opinions differing from those of Zeno and Chrysippus on specific theological points (Vassallo, 2024), including the nature of the soul and the divinity of the stars (Cicero, De Natura Deorum, I.14.37; Diogenes Laertius, VII.139, 143).

The Hymn to Cleanthes requires the most thorough treatment possible, both in its poetic, religious, and philosophical aspects: it is, in fact, like Plato's Timaeus, which one of the ancients described as "a hymn of the universe, a mixture of poetry, religion, and philosophy, summing up not only most of the best and most inspiring ideas of Stoicism" (Adam, 1911, pp. 117-118).

Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* presents us with an obvious challenge. In it we find abundant elements from traditional cult hymns, including a tripartite structure (invocation, predication/argument, and prayer), hyperbolic style, emphasis on god's beneficence, and the notable focus on the relationship and reciprocity between the divine and the human (Thom, 2005, pp. 8-9). Yet, as Asmis (2007) has reaffirmed, the hymn also obviously contains Stoic material and plays some role in engaging with those with a philosophical interest, whether or not they were alone among the hymn's target audience (p. 413). How the last, prayer section of the *Hymn*, devoted to a conventional appeal to a transcendent, sharply separated Zeus is to be reconciled with the Stoics' claim of a thorough-going divine immanence, crucially identified with fate, poses a particularly acute puzzle which has naturally prompted many attempted solutions. In short, the worry seems to be what

the *value* is of a traditional prayer to Zeus, if we accept that we are implicated in the nexus of causal determinism, where prayer would seem to be entirely fruitless. Is it not simply a mistake, too, to pray to something outside of ourselves, when universal reason (**κοινὸν λόγον**) permeates everything (v.12-13), including ourselves?

One might think here of Chrysippus' response, presented by Cicero in *De Fato* (28-30). Perhaps a prayer and what is prayed for are co-fated (***confatalia***). Yet we have no reason to believe (on Cicero's presentation at least) that Cleanthes understood prayer and its value in the same way as his successor.

The central question this paper addresses is whether the "Hymn to Zeus" reflects merely poetic engagement with traditional religious forms or constitutes evidence of substantive philosophical divergence from the strict monistic identity of God and Logos that characterized mainstream Stoicism. The thesis advanced here is that a philological and philosophical analysis of the Hymn's key passages reveals that Cleanthes employs a consistent framework of agential language, portraying Zeus not as a being coterminous with the Logos but as a supreme sovereign who intelligently employs the Logos as an instrument for governance. This suggests a hierarchical model distinguishing, to a significant degree, the divine ruler from the rational principle of his rule, positioning Cleanthes' thought as a distinct voice within the early Stoic tradition.

Analysis of the *Hymn to Zeus*

A quintessential expression of the Hellenistic conception of a supreme deity is found in the *Hymn to Zeus* by the Stoic philosopher Cleanthes. The opening invocation is particularly illuminating:

"κύδιστ᾽ ἀθανάτων, πολυώνυμε παγκρατὲς αἰεὶ
Ζεῦ φύσεως ἀρχηγέ, νόμου μετὰ πάντα κυβερνῶν,χαῖρε"

"Most glorious of the immortals, invoked by many names, ever almighty,Zeus, author of nature, governing all things with law,Hail!" (Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*, 1-3).

The hymn commences with the epithet "κύδιστ᾽ ἀθανάτων" ("Most glorious of the immortals"). This is not Cleanthes' invention but a traditional honorific applied to Zeus in the archaic and classical literary canon. It appears in Homer's *Iliad* (Book 2, line 412), where Zeus is addressed as "κύδιστε μέγιστε" ("most glorious, greatest"); in Pindar's *Nemean Odes* (5.35); and in the Peripatetic treatise *On the Cosmos* (401a 12). However, Cleanthes' use of the name "Zeus," a term familiar to the general populace, does not imply an endorsement of the anthropomorphic and morally flawed god of popular mythology. As the subsequent attributes in the hymn make clear, this is a philosophical reinterpretation. Scholars like Elizabeth Asmis (2007) argue that Cleanthes employed the name "Zeus" precisely because the hymn was intended for a broad audience, including non-philosophers, while simultaneously redefining its content (413). This is further supported by the description of the god as "πολυώνυμε" ("of many names"), acknowledging that the one supreme principle can be approached through different cultural and linguistic lenses.

This hermeneutical strategy of redefining traditional nomenclature has a significant precedent. Heraclitus of Ephesus, a pre-Socratic philosopher whose thought was a major influence on Stoicism, employed a similar method. In Fragment 114 (Diels-Kranz), he states:

"ξὺν νόῳ λέγοντας ἰσχυρίζεσθαι χρὴ τῷ ξυνῷ πάντων, ὅκωσπερ νόμῳ πόλις, καὶ πολὺ ἰσχυροτέρως. τρέφονται γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἀνθρώπειοι νόμοι ὑπὸ ἑνὸς τοῦ θείου· κρατεῖ γὰρ τοσοῦτον ὁκόσον ἐθέλει καὶ ἐξαρκεῖ πᾶσι καὶ περιγίνεται. ἓν τὸ σοφὸν μοῦνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα." (Heraclitus, Fr. 114).

"Those who speak with understanding must rely on what is common to all, as a city relies on its law, and much more strongly. For all human laws are nourished by the one divine law; for it holds as much power as it wishes, and is sufficient for all, and prevails. The One, which alone is wise, is both unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus."

Heraclitus's paradoxical statement (**οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα)** underscores the philosophical position that the name "Zeus" is both inadequate and, for communicative purposes, necessary. The supreme principle is defined not by the name but by its essential quality: it is "wise" (**σοφὸν**). It is our contention that this ancient recognition of the profound epistemological difficulty—the near impossibility of attaining positive knowledge about the supreme God—was a direct cause for the relative scarcity of detailed theological descriptions in the early archaic period, despite the presence of numerous literary hints. Even in Homer, there are suggestions that the Olympian gods themselves are subject to a force beyond them, such as *Moira* (Fate), which they cannot alter (e.g., *Iliad* 16.433-438).

Returning to Cleanthes' hymn, the philosopher describes the supreme God as "**παγκρατὲς**" ("all-powerful" or "almighty"), who actively "steers" or "governs" (**κυβερνῶν**) the cosmos. The use of the present participle is grammatically significant, emphasizing a continuous, ongoing activity of divine

providence. Crucially, however, this governance is not depicted as a series of arbitrary interventions or direct manipulations. Instead, it is executed "through" or "by means of" (**μετὰ**) divine Law (**νόμου**). This "law" (**νόμος**) is synonymous with the rational, organizing principle of the universe—the *Logos*—which permeates all of nature. Thus, God rules not by capricious action, but by the immutable and rational structure of cosmic law itself, a concept central to Stoic physics and theology (Diogenes Laertius, 7.87-88).

The Affirmation of the Transcendent God's Power and Relationship to Humanity in Cleanthes' Hymn

Cleanthes emphasizes the power of the transcendent God through his invocation of Him as the "leader of nature" or "first cause of nature" (**φύσεως ἀρχηγέ**). This epithet is profoundly significant within the Stoic philosophical framework. The term **ἀρχηγές** implies not merely a passive origin but an active, governing principle—a founder and commander of the natural order (Long & Sedley, 1987, p. 274). This aligns with the Stoic doctrine that God, as the active principle (the ***Logos***), permeates and directs the passive matter of the universe, shaping it according to rational law.

In the subsequent passage of the hymn, Cleanthes elaborates on the relationship between this divine ruler and mortal beings:

"σὲ γὰρ πάντεσσι θέμις θνητοῖσι προσαυδᾶν.
ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γενόμεσθα, εἰκός μίμημα λαχόντες
μοῦνοι, ὅσα ζώει τε καὶ ἕρπει θνήτ᾽ ἐπὶ γαῖαν.
τῷ σε καθυμνήσω, καὶ σὸν κράτος αἰὲν ἀείσω."

(Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*, ٤-٧).

"For it is right for all mortals to address you. For we have our origin from you, having received as our

portion the likeness of the one (God),
we alone, of all that live and move as mortal creatures upon the earth.
Therefore, I will hymn you and forever sing of your power."

Cleanthes' diction and rhetoric reflect his piety and profound reverence for the transcendent God. The syntax is meticulously crafted to place theological emphasis ahead of grammatical convention. He consistently begins his phrases with the pronoun or noun referring to the deity (**σὲ** - "you"; **σοῦ** - "of you"; **σὸν** - "your"; **ἑνός** - "of the one") (Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*, 4-6). This deviation from the standard word order (hyperbaton) is a deliberate rhetorical device that places the divine subject at the forefront, grammatically underscoring its absolute priority and primacy (Furley, 2010, p. 445).

Furthermore, the phrase "**ἑνὸς μίμημα λαχόντες**" ("having received as our portion the likeness of the one") is theologically pivotal. The use of the genitive **ἑνός** ("of the one") serves to express uniqueness in our very constitution. It posits that the one God is the singular source from which this likeness flows. Humanity's distinctiveness among all mortal creatures lies in this participatory relationship: we alone possess a portion of the divine *Logos*, which is Reason itself. This "likeness" (**μίμημα**) is not a physical resemblance but a share in the rational faculty, the "god within" each person, as later Stoics like Epictetus would articulate (Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2.8.11-14). This concept reinforces the God's transcendence and separation from the cosmos; He is not immanent in a pantheistic sense of being identical with the whole universe, but rather, His rational principle is immanent within a part of it—the human intellect (Algra, 2003, p. 162).

Humanity's knowledge of God is, therefore, not a direct apprehension of His essence, but is mediated through this internal "likeness" and our observation of the cosmic order He governs, confirming His separation from the world and its lesser deities. (Harriman, 2022)

This interpretation is supported by the preceding line, "**ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γενόμεσθα**" ("For we have our origin from you"). This establishes a causal and creative relationship, not one of emanation or consubstantiality. God is the source (*archē*), and humanity is a distinct effect, distinguished by the gift of reason. The verb **λαχόντες** ("having received by lot") further implies that this rational capacity is a divine allotment, a privilege granted to humans, not an inherent property of all matter (Asmis, 2007, p. 415). Thus, Cleanthes constructs a theology that balances transcendence—God as the remote ruler and source—with a specific, intimate immanence through the human capacity for reason, which is the very basis for our duty to praise Him.

Cleanthes employs the very word that expresses Zeus's power, **κράτος** (*kratos*), coupled with the adverbial phrase **αἰὲν** (*aei*, "always" or "ever"), to emphatically affirm the eternal and perpetual nature of divine power. The line, "**καὶ σὸν κράτος αἰὲν ἀείσω**" ("and I shall forever sing of your power"), serves not merely as a concluding praise but as a theological declaration. In Greek poetry, *kratos* signifies sovereign power, might, and dominion. By modifying it with *aei* and using the future tense of the verb "to sing" (*aeisō*), Cleanthes posits that the act of praising this power is as everlasting as the power itself, framing divine sovereignty as an unending principle of the cosmos (Furley, 2010, p. 448).

In a seamless logical sequence between the clause of cause, "**ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γενόμεσθα**" ("for we have our origin from you"), and the clause of result, "**ἑνὸς μίμημα λαχόντες**" ("having received as our portion the likeness of the one"), Cleanthes articulates the privileged status of humanity above all other earthly creatures. This constructed hierarchy is fundamental to the Stoic worldview. The "likeness" (***mimēma***) is universally interpreted by scholars as the human share in the divine ***Logos***—the faculty of reason (*logos*). As Diogenes Laertius reports, the Stoics held that the universe is governed by a rational principle, and "the virtue of the rational animal is to be in conformity with the reason of the things that happen" (Diogenes Laertius, 7.88). Humanity, by possessing reason, participates in the governing principle of the cosmos itself.

Cleanthes' primary purpose in establishing this unique human distinction is to substantiate the concept of **divine providence** (*pronoia*). In doing so, he offers an indirect but powerful rebuttal to the Epicurean argument concerning the gods. Epicurus taught that the gods, in their perfect blessedness (*eudaimonia*), dwell in the *intermundia* (the spaces between worlds) and are entirely detached from and unconcerned with human affairs, for such concern would disturb their perfect tranquility (Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, 123-124). By explicitly linking humanity's divine origin and rational faculty to Zeus, Cleanthes argues the opposite: the rational structure of the cosmos, governed by Zeus, is itself the ultimate expression of providence. The gods are not neglectful; rather, they care for the whole through the administration of a rational and lawful order, of which human reason is an integral part (Long, 2006, p. 248). The very existence of a rational connection between God and humanity is proof of a benevolent cosmic governance.

Simultaneously, Cleanthes carefully defines the *mode* of this relationship through his grammatical choices. He consistently uses passive voice verbs—"**γενόμεσθα**" ("we have come into being") and "**λαχόντες**" ("having received as a lot")—to describe the human condition in relation to the divine. This is a crucial theological nuance. The passive voice emphasizes that humanity is the recipient, not the initiator, of these divine gifts. The action originates from and is caused by the deity, but it is not a direct, personal intervention in the anthropomorphic sense. This is further specified by the prepositions "**ἐκ σοῦ**" ("from you," denoting origin) and "**ἑνός**" ("of the one," denoting source). Thus, God is the **indirect cause**, the ultimate source from which existence and reason flow according to the impersonal and rational workings of the cosmic *Logos*. This allows Cleanthes to maintain a transcendent, omnipotent deity who is the source of all good, without attributing to Him the capricious, direct interventions of the Homeric pantheon, thereby reconciling divine providence with a stable, law-bound universe.

In the lines:

"**σοὶ δὴ πᾶς ὅδε κόσμος ἑλισσόμενος περὶ γαῖαν πείθεται ᾗ κεν ἄγῃς, καὶ ἑκὼν ὑπὸ σεῖο κρατεῖται·**

"(Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*, ٧-٨).

Translation: "To you, indeed, this whole cosmos, swirling around the earth,obeys, wherever you may lead, and willingly is ruled by you."

Contrary to the common perception of the Stoic doctrine, which posits that God permeates earthly things in the form of *pneuma* (spirit or breath) and is coextensive with the cosmos as its active, immanent principle (the *Logos*), Cleanthes, through the phrase "**ᾗ κεν ἄγῃς**" ("wherever you may lead"),

affirms that this cosmos, with its dual divine and material elements, is **led** by the transcendent God. The verb **ἄγῃς** ("you may lead") is in the active voice and the second person singular, directly attributing the action of guidance to the deity. This phrase alone constitutes clear evidence for the existence of a third, transcendent element in Cleanthes' theology, a dimension that most later Stoics tended to downplay in favor of a more rigorously immanentist physics. This shift was so pronounced that many modern scholars came to believe that Stoicism, even in its earliest forms, operated on a framework of only two principles (God and matter), as famously outlined by Diogenes Laertius: "They [the Stoics] state that there are two principles of the universe, that which acts and that which is acted upon. That which is acted upon is unqualified substance, i.e., matter; that which acts is the reason (*logos*) in it, i.e., god" (Diogenes Laertius, 7.134).

However, Cleanthes' formulation suggests a more complex hierarchy. His use of the active verb "lead" (**ἄγῃς**) portrays God not merely as an immanent organizing principle *within* matter, but as a guiding agent *above* or *beyond* the cosmos, directing its course. This implies a personal, agential deity whose will determines the "where" of the cosmos's path, a concept that resonates more with a Platonic demiurge or a transcendent ruler than with a purely immanent world-soul (Betegh, 2003, p. 351). This nuance in Cleanthes' thought is often overlooked in summaries of "standard" Stoic doctrine.

Furthermore, Cleanthes' use of the passive voice for the cosmos—"**πείθεται**" ("is obeyed"), "**κρατεῖται**" ("is ruled")—is grammatically and theologically significant. It serves to completely negate any notion of the cosmos acting as an

independent agent in its own governance. Instead, the action is entirely ascribed to the divine subject, Zeus, through the powerful dative pronoun "**σοὶ**" ("to you") and the prepositional phrase "**ὑπὸ σεῖο**" ("by you"). This syntactic structure firmly establishes a subject-object relationship between the transcendent God and the cosmos. The cosmos is the passive recipient of divine command and rule; it is the one that *is led*, that *is ruled*. This portrayal stands in some tension with the more monistic Stoic view where God and the cosmos are two aspects of a single substance. Cleanthes' language here preserves a clearer distinction between the ruler and the ruled, reinforcing the transcendent element in his theology and providing a robust poetic expression of a cosmos subject to a divine, providential will.

In the lines:

τοῖον ἔχεις ὑποεργὸν ἀνικήτοις ἐνὶ χερσὶν ἀμφήκη πυρόεντ᾽ αἰειζώοντα κεραυνόν·10 τοῦ γὰρ ὑπὸ πληγῆς φύσεως πάντ᾽ ἔργα τελεῖται·ᾧ σὺ κατευθύνεις κοινὸν λόγον, ὅς διὰ πάντων φοιτᾷ μιγνύμενος μεγάλῳ μικροῖς τε φάεσσιν ‹ὅς τόσσος γεγαὼς ὕπατος βασιλεὺς διὰ πάντος.› οὐδέ τι γίγνεται ἔργον ἐπὶ χθονὶ σοῦ δίχα, δαῖμον,15

(Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus*, ٩-١٥).

The symbol of the thunderbolt (κεραυνός) in Cleanthes' "Hymn to Zeus" serves as a powerful and complex metaphor that further elucidates the distinct relationship between the deity and the Logos. Far from being a mere nod to traditional Olympian imagery, its characterization and function within the hymn reinforce the concept of Zeus as a sovereign agent employing an instrument of governance.

Cleanthes describes this thunderbolt with a series of striking epithets: it is "two-edged" (**ἀμφήκη**), "fiery"

(**πυρόεντ'**), and "ever-living" (**ἀειζὼοντα**) (Line 10). Most significantly, it is termed a "serviceable instrument" (ὑποεργὸν) held in Zeus's "unconquerable hands" (ἀνικήτοις ἐνὶ χεροῖν) (Line 9). The term **ὑποεργός** (**ὑπο-** + **ἔργον**) explicitly denotes something that "works under" or "renders service," an instrument or tool. This lexical choice is deliberate and philosophically loaded. It frames the thunderbolt not as an extension of Zeus's essence but as a distinct implement wielded by him.

The function of this instrument is explicitly stated: "for under its stroke all the works of nature are accomplished" (τοῦ γὰρ ὑπὸ πληγῆς φύσεως πάντ' ἔργα "τελεῖται") (Line 11). The phrase ὑπὸ πληγῆς (under the stroke/blow) reinforces the instrumental and subordinate role of the thunderbolt; it is the means by which Zeus's will is efficaciously executed in the physical cosmos.

The most profound theological implication, however, lies in the purpose for which this instrument is employed. The hymn states that it is with this thunderbolt that Zeus "makes straight the common reason" (**κοινὸν λόγον... κατευθύνεις**)" (Lines 12-13). This is a crucial formulation. The **κοινὸς λόγος** is the Stoic rational principle pervading the universe. The action of **κατευθύνεις** (you guide, make straight) performed upon it by Zeus using the thunderbolt suggests a dynamic relationship. As Brad Inwood notes, this portrayal implies that "the logos is not merely identical with god but is also an instrument which god uses" (Inwood, 2003, p. 27). The sovereign deity actively directs and corrects the rational principle, ensuring its proper operation throughout the cosmos.

This interpretation aligns with the Stoic physical theory of pneuma (**πνεῦμα**), the creative tension that structures matter, of

which the thunderbolt could be seen as a potent, active manifestation. However, Cleanthes' phrasing goes beyond physical description. Johan Thom emphasizes that "the thunderbolt is not just a symbol of power but represents the active tool through which Zeus imposes his rational will on the universe" (Thom, 2005, p. 145). It is the nexus where divine will translates into cosmic order.

Therefore, the instrumental thunderbolt is a central symbol in Cleanthes' theological divergence. It visually and conceptually represents the hierarchical model in which Zeus, the supreme commander, utilizes a powerful, rational tool—the Logos in its active, fiery mode of operation—to administer, direct, and perfect the universe. This stands in contrast to the orthodox Stoic view where such instrumentality is unnecessary because no distinction exists between the governor and that which constitutes the very fabric of governance.

Thom (2005, p. 90) reads the phrase "**ὅς τόσσος γεγαὼς**" and translates it as: "Because of this you are so great, the highest king for ever." However, this translation overlooks a critical nuance embedded in the participle "**γεγαὼς**." This form, a perfect active participle of the verb ***γίγνομαι*** (to become, to come into being), inherently carries a sense of occurrence, birth, or a state of having come to be. Its use here is highly significant, as it undoubtedly points to a **cosmic and completed birth or coming-into-being**. The perfect tense denotes a present state resulting from a past action, suggesting an established, perfected existence. Meijer (1983, p. 23) offers a different interpretation of the same phrase, translating it as: "Because of this awesome thunder, you are the supreme king of the universe."

We find that von Arnim's proposed textual emendation, "**ᾧ σὺ τόσσος γεγαὼς**" ("by which you have become so great"), while potentially stylistically awkward, is logically compelling (von Arnim, 1921, pp. 558-559). This reading allows the relative pronoun "**ᾧ**" ("by which") to refer not merely to the thunderbolt mentioned in the preceding line but to the entire cosmic system and the rational principle it embodies. It is unlikely that Cleanthes would attribute Zeus's supreme greatness *solely* to his possession of the thunderbolt—a specific, mythological attribute. Rather, as Sier (1990, p. 99) argues, the referent is more plausibly the entire cosmos, its order, and its universal Reason (***Logos***), of which the thunderbolt is but a single, powerful symbol.(Sandbach (1989, 71-76)

However, I contend that we may not need to alter the transmitted text as much as we need to interpret it correctly. I propose that Cleanthes uses "**γεγαὼς**" not to refer to Zeus himself—the transcendent God who, in strict Stoic theology, is eternal and ungenerated—but to the **Stoic *Logos***, the active, divine principle as it is manifest in the cosmos. This interpretation is powerfully supported by the continuation of the sentence, which states that this entity "runs through all things" ("**διὰ πάντος αἰὲν ἑρκέος ὀρμᾷ**"). The subject of the verb "ὀρμᾷ" ("runs") is the same entity described by "γεγαὼς." It is the *Logos*, the immanent rational principle, that has "come into being" in a perfected state as the organizing force of the ordered cosmos, and it is this same *Logos* that perpetually pervades all matter.

Furthermore, the meaning of perfection and completeness inherent in the perfect tense of "**γεγαὼς**" is crucial. The word functions as a predicate adjective, and as Meerwaldt (1951, p.

68) notes, its subject is unstated because it is understood from the context. This very perfection is what serves to emphasize and glorify the sublime greatness of the transcendent God as the "highest king" ("**ὕπατος βασιλεὺς**"). The perfection and completeness of the cosmic *Logos* are the direct manifestation and proof of the transcendent deity's supreme majesty and royal power. The greatness of the king is demonstrated by the perfected nature of his cosmic rule.

Conclusion: Cleanthes' Proofs for a Transcendent God

The *Hymn to Zeus* by Cleanthes serves as a profound theological treatise that systematically argues for the existence of a supreme, transcendent God. Through a meticulous analysis of the hymn's diction, syntax, and philosophical context, we can distill several compelling proofs for this belief.

First, the proof from divine agency and governance.

Cleanthes consistently employs active verbs and personal pronouns to depict Zeus as a sovereign ruler. The phrase **"ᾗ κεν ἄγῃς"** ("wherever you may lead") (l. 8) attributes direct, personal agency to the deity, portraying him as a helmsman actively guiding the cosmos. This is further reinforced by the use of the second-person singular pronoun **"σοί"** ("to you") and the preposition **"ὑπὸ σεῖο"** ("by you") (l. 8), which establish a clear subject-object relationship between the ruler and the ruled. This grammatical structure negates a purely immanentist pantheism, instead presenting a God who is distinct from and superior to the cosmos he governs.

Second, the proof from instrumental causality.

A central and powerful argument is found in the characterization of the thunderbolt as a **"ὑποεργόν"** (a serviceable instrument) wielded in Zeus's **"ἀνικήτοις ἐνὶ χερσίν"** (unconquered hands) (l. 9-10). This imagery posits

that the *Logos*—the common reason that runs through all things—is not identical with God but is the tool *through which* he acts. As Cleanthes states, it is with this instrument that Zeus "makes straight the common reason" (**"κοινὸν λόγον... κατευθύνεις"**) (l. 12-13). This establishes a hierarchical model: a transcendent God (the primary cause) employs the immanent *Logos* (the instrumental cause) to administer the universe, thus proving a distinction between the divine essence and its operational principle.

Third, the proof from human rationality and origin. Cleanthes grounds the unique status of humanity in its direct relationship to the transcendent source. The lines **"ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γενόμεσθα"** ("for we have our origin from you") and **"ἑνὸς μίμημα λαχόντες"** ("having received the likeness of the one") (l. 4-5) argue that human reason is not an emergent property of matter but a bestowed portion of the divine *Logos*. The use of the genitive **"ἑνός"** ("of the one") specifies a singular, transcendent source for this rational faculty. This special creation demonstrates God's providence and his separation from creation, as he is the source from which human reason flows as a gift.

Fourth, triadic cosmological structure

Cleanthes presents triadic cosmological structure, which subtly revises the standard Stoic two-principle model. In the pivotal lines describing cosmic governance, three distinct elements are discernible:.

1-Zeus (The Transcendent Ruler): The divine agent who actively leads and guides Cosmos ("**ἄγῃς", "κατευθύνεις**").

2-The Logos (The Instrumental Principle): The "common reason" ("κοινὸν λόγον") which is the medium through which

Zeus works and which "runs through all things" ("**διὰ πάντων φοιτᾷ").**

3-The Cosmos (The Passive Substance): The physical universe which is led, is ruled ("**πείθεται", "κρατεῖται**"), and upon whose works the divine will is accomplished ("**ἔργα τελεῖται").**

In conclusion, Cleanthes' hymn is far more than a pious poem; it is a rigorous philosophical argument. Through his depictions of divine agency, instrumental causality, the origin of human reason, and his deliberate grammatical choices, Cleanthes constructs a coherent and persuasive case for a transcendent God who is both the omnipotent ruler of the cosmos and the personal source of its rational order. This theology navigates a sophisticated middle path, affirming God's transcendence without negating his providential immanence through the *Logos*, thereby offering a direct rebuttal to Epicurean detachment and laying a foundational stone for Stoic religious thought.

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