AETNA AND HERACLITUS

537 quod si quis lapidis miratur fusile robur,
cogitet obscuri uertissima dicta libelli,
Heraclite, tui: nihil insuperabile gigni
540 omnia quae rerum natura semina iacta.

sed nimium hoc mirum? densissima corpora saepe
et solido uicina tamen compescimus igni.

The Aldina text (App. Verg., 1517) of 539-40 runs:

Heracleti, et ubi nihil insuperabile gigni
omnia quae rerum natura semina iacta.

Scaliger (App. Verg., Lyons, 1572, pp. 409 f.) has suggested
instead:

et discet uero nihil insuperabile ab igni,
onmia quo rerum naturae semina iacta.

Now, et discet uero has been refuted by C, but ab igni was
adopted, e.g., by Gorallus (Amsterd., 1703), Jacob (1826), Haupt
(1854; 1873), Munro (1867). Baehrens (P. Lat. Min., 1880), Ellis (1901),
Vessereau (1905; 1923; 1961). As for the line 540, Munro and
Vessereau read it in the same way as Scaliger did; quae Gorallus,
cui Jacob, quoi Haupt, quoi rerum <in> natura Baehrens, quae
rer. <in> nat. s. i. / seminum1) Ellis.

But many editors have preferred to keep the textual gigni; thus
they read 540 as follows:

Munro (alternatively, p. 75)

<ignibus, et contras procreasere rursus ab igni>
onnia quae

gigni

Sudhaus (1898)

<omniaque <e> (later <in>) rer.
natura s. i.

seminium instead of sed nimium (sed: nec Gorallus, seu Housman;
nimium: minime Jacob, Baehrens) all this without necessity. Ellis translated: „of
all the seeds sown within the realm of nature, this (fire) is the wondrous nursery“.
I think Scaliger's *ab igni* could be correct.

(i) Richter refers to *Aet. I*, 28,1 (*Dox*. p. 323 = Diels-Kranz *FV*5–10 22 A 8) περί οὕσιας εἰμαρμένης. Ηράκλειτος οὕσιαν εἰμαρμένης ἀπεφάνετο λόγον τὸν διὰ οὕσιας τοῦ παντὸς διήκοντα. κἀτ’ δ’ ἐστὶ τὸ αἰθέριον σώμα, σπέρμα τῆς τοῦ παντὸς γενέσεως καὶ περιόδου μέτρου τεταγμένης. This is not the best reference (it speaks rather of the εἰμαρμένη bearing some Posidonian flavour, cf. Diels *Dox*. p. 178 and n. 1). A better instance would be Ar. Didym. fr. 36 Diels (= *StF* I, 107=11, 596) Ζήσων καὶ Κλέανθει καὶ Χρυσίππων ἀρέσκει τὴν οὕσιαν μεταβάλειν οἶον εἰς σπέρμα τὸ πῦρ, καὶ πάλιν ἐκ τούτου τοιαύτην ἀποτελείσθαι τὴν διακόσμησιν οία πρότερον ἦν; cf. also Philo *de aetern. mundi* 94 (VI, p. 101 Cohn-II, 618 Arnim). But they can speak in favour of the reading *ab igni* as well. Of course, in all this evidence there is almost nothing from Heraclitus: the Stoic teachings are quite clear.

(ii) Richter’s interpretation (p. 75) is not conclusive to me; it runs: „...daß nichts Unüberwindliches entstehe und daß alle Samen, die gesät sind, von Aethernatur sind.“ Now, two topics are not probable here (contra -que). Besides, *rerum* should be kept: only *semina iacta* is too weak. In favour of the reading

\[ab igni,\]

\[omnia quo rerum Natura semina iacta\]

I would refer to Lucret. II, 1072 ...natura manet quae semina rerum / conciere in loca ...; I, 614 ...natura reseruans semina rebus. (As for *ab igni* in this position. cf. Lucr. V, 604; VI, 968; Verg. G. I, 234; for -e *ab igni*, cf. *Aetna* 370 *luctamine ab imo*; 33; for *quo* cf., e. g., Lucr. I, 374; II, 304 etc.).

3) I don’t see how Giomini understands his text, but his translation (p. 269) seems to contradict his own text; it runs: „nulla c’è sulla terra, di tutti gli elementi primordiali che danno vita al mondo, nulla che resista all’urto dal fuoco“.
As for the image: *igni, omnia quo rerum... semina iacta*, either *Aetna* simply borrowed the phraseology from Lucretius (the atoms — *semina rerum*), or the metaphor of *tellus* containing the *semina rerum* (cf. Lucr. VI, 789; V, 916 is implied.

(iii) The most *popular* teaching of Heraclitus was that on *fire* (cf. Lucr. I, 635 ff.; 690 ff.; 705 f. and Ellis, p. 209; *ardebat Heraclitus*, says Mart. Capella, II, 213. etc.). The author of *Aetna* had special reasons of interest in this doctrine; hence the probability of the reading *ab igni*.

Consequently, *Aetna* probably alluded to the *common* doxographic evidence on Heraclitus (Diog. Laert. IX, 7 ἐκ πυρὸς τὰ πάντα συνεστάναι καὶ ἐς τούτο ἀναλύεσθαι has been quoted already by Scaliger), and not especially to fr. 66 DK (as Bernays and Bywater have believed) or to fr. 90 DK (as Munro and Ellis have thought).

Thus, as far as I know, the only editor who read these two lines correctly was L. Hermann, *Le Second Lucilius* (Coll. Latomus 34, Brussels 1958).

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