

Kurzová, Helena

What worried the crows in Callimachus' epigram?

Graeco-Latina Brunensia. 2009, vol. 14, iss. 1-2, pp. [125]-129

ISBN 978-80-210-5000-6

ISSN 1803-7402 (print); ISSN 2336-4424 (online)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/114977>

Access Date: 16. 02. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

HELENA KURZOVÁ (ACADEMY OF SCIENCE OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, PRAGUE)

WHAT WORRIED THE CROWS IN CALLIMACHUS' EPIGRAM?

This paper deals with the Callimachus' epigram devoted to Diodorus Cronus and attesting his great popularity as dialectician. New interpretation of the second croak of crows is proposed, according to which the crows worry about their future: "what will be with us further?". Thus both croaks of the crows are connected with the most important part of Diodorus' teaching, i. e. his theory of modality expressed in the so called "Master Argument".

1 The following fragment of Callimachus' epigram Fr. 393 Pfeiffer relates to Diodorus Cronus, the prominent representative of the Megarian School, whose main centre of interest was dialectics, the discipline corresponding to the contemporary logic and philosophy of language. The epigram was probably written during Diodorus' stay in Alexandria, which is supposed to have occurred during the 80s of the 3rd century B.C.:

αὐτὸς ὁ Μῶμος
ἔγραφεν ἐν τοίχοις 'ὁ Κρόνος ἐστὶ σοφός'.
ἦνίδε κοὶ κόρακες τεγέων ἔπι 'κοῖα συνῆπται'
κρῶζουσιν καὶ 'κῶς αὖθι/αὖθις¹ γενησόμεθα'.

Surely, the epigram is one of the testimonies of Diodorus' popularity. The fragment 393 consists in fact of two fragments, which were connected together by Bentley. The first two lines are quoted by Diog. Laert. II, 10, 7. The sense and interpretation of this part is quite obvious. "Momus himself used to write on the walls 'Cronus is wise.'" *Kronos* is the nickname of Diodoros, inherited probably from his teacher Apollonius Cronus. Whether it was given to its bearer with a negative connotation, is not sure. Here, the scoffing sense of being behind the time ("the old fogey"), as we know it especially from Aristoph. *Nubes* with reference to Socrates, is actualised. However, even Momus, the personification of reproach and mockery, must admit that this nickname is not appropriate for Diodorus, who is "wise", and writes this corrected view on the walls.

¹ Reading of the archetypus G is αὖθις, which appears also in Sextus conclusion Sext. Emp. *MI*, 312.

2. 1 The third and fourth lines come from Sextus Empiricus' book for Grammarians (*Adversus Mathematicos* I, 309–312). It contains two croaks of crows, phonetically characterized with κοῖα instead of ποῖα, κῶς instead of πῶς, which, together with κρῶζουσιν, imitate the croaking of crows and at the same time hint at the Ionic speech of Diodorus, who was born in Iasos in Caria. Sextus admits that even the grammarians are able to understand the first part of what the crows are croaking on the rooftops: 'κοῖα συνῆπται;' "what follows from what?" This is an allusion to the ability of the great dialectician to judge the validity of implication. According to Diodorus, a conditional statement is true when it neither was nor is possible that the protasis is true and the apodosis is false (Sext. Emp. *PH* 2, 110–112 *M*, 8, 112–117). Thus, this conception corresponds to the so called strict implication of modern logic. To understand this first croak of crows means to understand what is, according to Sextus, "common knowledge even to children." This is said of course with exaggeration, reflecting, however, the great popularity which dialectics enjoyed in the Hellenistic public. Dialectic arguments were the subjects of talks in the soirées in which ladies were also engaged; the ἀγῶνες of outstanding dialecticians were followed with excitement.

However, according to Sextus, the grammarians have no chance of understanding the second question of the crows: 'κῶς αὐθι γενησόμεθα;', for it belongs to the philosophers to explain that. Sextus connects this worry of the crows with Diodorus' tenet saying that nothing moves and consequently – in Sextus' interpretation – that nothing perishes and dies, and "we shall live on" (καὶ αὐθις γενησόμεθα). This amazes the crows and they ask in Sextus' interpretation "How is it that we shall live hereafter?"

Yet, Sextus is clearly wrong in his explanation, which does not correspond to the views of Diodorus. According to Diodorus, we cannot catch the movement including the destruction (see Sext. Emp., *M* 10, 347 on the collapsing of the wall) in process, but we cannot deny the result – without being able to determine the moment the change came to end. Hence, Diodorus did not deny the perishing. This view is expressed on the basis of aspectual difference; the change in imperfective aspect is not perceptible, but its result, expressed mostly in perfect (stative-resultative), is. Cf. Sext. Emp. *M* 10, 85²: Κομίζεται δὲ καὶ ἄλλη τις ἐμβριθῆς ὑπόμνησις εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι κίνησιν ὑπὸ Διοδώρου τοῦ Κρόνου, δι' ἧς παρίστησιν, ὅτι κινεῖται μὲν οὐδὲ ἔν, κεκίνηται δέ. "Another weighty 'reminder' of the non-existence of motion is provided by Diodorus Cronus, through which he shows that although nothing is moving (κινεῖται), it none the less is moved (or has moved κεκίνηται)"³

² See also Sext. Emp. *M* 10, 48: συμφέρεται δὲ τούτοις τοῖς ἀνδράσι (sc. τοῖς μὴ εἶναι κίνησιν φάσκουσιν) καὶ Διόδωρος ὁ Κρόνος, εἰ μὴ τι ῥητέον κατὰ τοῦτον κεινῆσθαι μὲν τι, κινεῖσθαι δὲ μηδὲ ἔν, Aetius, *Plac.* I, 23, 5 (in Stobaeus, *Ecl.* I, 19, 1), *Dox. Gr.* 320, 7–8: Διόδωρος ὁ Κρόνος κεινῆσθαι μὲν τι, κινεῖσθαι δὲ μηδέν.

³ Translation by M. J. White, op. cit. in note 5 p. 535.

2. 2 In view of this unsatisfactory explanation of Sextus,⁴ M. J. White in his short but sharp-witted notice,⁵ whose title inspired the title of this contribution, tries to explain the second croak of the crows differently. He also connects it with Diodorus' theory of motion, but explains it on the correct basis of his denial of the process of moving (κινεῖσθαι), not of the result of having moved (κεκινῆσθαι). Diodorus has eliminated the motion connoted by the present-imperfective verb and has substitutes for them a fixed series of states, connoted by the perfect-stative verb forms. There is no doubt that the crows can later be in a place different from the one they presently occupy. But the crows are puzzled as to how (κῶς) this can happen. White reckons in his interpretation with αὔθι as an adverb of place referring to its attestation in Callimachus *Hecale* fr. 260, 9–10 Pfeiffer: αὔθι δέ μίμνον “and stayed here”.

However, the temporal αὔθις/αὔθι or αὔτις has more attestations in Callimachus; the place in *Hecale* can be an epicism (αὔθι in the local sense is well attested in Homer). In the Hellenistic period, the temporal meaning seems to be basic; Sextus Empiricus also understands αὔθις γενησόμεθα in the temporal meaning. With the future of the verbs γίγνεσθαι and εἶναι the temporal αὔθις/αὔτις seems to occur frequently, cf. μηδὲ νῦν γε ἄλλη γίγνεσθαι μηδ' αὔθις ποτε γενήσεσθαι Plat. Leg. 4, 711c. See also αὔτις ἔσσεται in Callimachus fr. 358, 3 Pfeiffer. The future suggests another explication of the second croak which I will attempt to give below.

2. 3 I argue that the second croak of the worrying crows, like the first one, relates to the most prominent activity of Diodorus in dialectics. It is his view on the possible and the necessary which is in play here and which was formulated in his “Master Argument.” Whereas the theory of motion is connoted by aspect differences, namely, imperfective vs. perfective or specifically perfect, in the modal logic/dialectics the temporal value of the verb forms is relevant and it is the future which matters here.

According to Diodorus, the possible is what is either true or will be true⁶ (Cic. *Fat.* 13; 17). In his ‘Master Argument’ (κυριεύων sc. λόγος), Diodorus tried to prove that this concept of possibility was the only correct one. The argument is described in the following manner in the only documentation that contains more exact information about it, i.e. Epict. *Dissertationes* 2,19,1: Ὁ κυριεύων λόγος ἀπὸ τοιούτων τινῶν ἀφορμῶν ἠρωτησθαι φαίνεται· κοινῆς γὰρ οὔσης μάχης τοῖς τρισὶ τούτοις πρὸς ἄλληλα, τῷ πᾶν παρεληλυθὸς

⁴ See also SEDLEY, DAVID. 1977. “Diodorus Cronus and Hellenistic Philosophy.” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 203, 108, n. 35

⁵ WHITE, MICHAEL J. 1986. “What worried the crows?” *The Classical Quarterly*, N. S. 36, 534–537.

⁶ See Cic. *Fat.* 13: *Ille enim (sc. Diodorus) id solum fieri posse dicit, quod aut sit verum aut futurum sit verum, et, quicquid futurum sit, id dicit fieri necesse esse et, quicquid non sit futurum, id negat fieri posse; ibidem 17: placet igitur Diodoro id solum fieri posse, quod aut verum sit aut verum futurum sit.*

ἀληθὲς ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι καὶ τῷ δυνατῷ ἀδύνατον μὴ ἀκολουθεῖν καὶ τῷ δυνατὸν εἶναι ὃ οὐτ' ἔστιν ἀληθὲς οὐτ' ἔσται, συνιδὼν τὴν μάχην ταύτην ὁ Διόδωρος τῇ τῶν πρώτων δυεῖν πιθανότητι συνεχρήσατο πρὸς παράστασιν τοῦ μηδὲν εἶναι δυνατόν, ὃ οὐτ' ἔστιν ἀληθὲς οὐτ' ἔσται.

To paraphrase this information more lucidly: Diodorus recognizes that the following three statements are incompatible with one another: a) Everything true in the past is necessary; b) The impossible does not follow from the possible; c) Something possible exists that is neither true nor will be true. Realizing this contradiction, Diodorus used the plausibility of the first two propositions to establish the principle: Nothing is possible that is neither true nor will be true. This argument was fiercely debated in antiquity and the debate has been prolonged by modern logicians.⁷

With respect to this, the worry of the crows is fully understandable. The future was entirely uncertain; no present conditions could form the foundation for future possibilities. They ask then with worry “What will be further with us?”

3. The preserved Callimachus fragment devoted to Diodorus attests his great popularity as a dialectician. Also the crows were well informed about his arguments. In our interpretation, both their anxious croaks concern Diodorus' arguments on implication and on what is possible. In fact, both croaks express the same worry: what will follow, what will be with us in the future? The interpretation of the second croak as being connected with Diodorus' views on motion is unlikely. The elucidation proposed by Sextus presupposes wrongly that Diodorus denied the perishing, which consequently implies everlasting life. White's explanation reckoning with ἀϋθι in the local sense is not impossible. However, there are many facts supporting the interpretation proposed in this contribution. As for linguistic expression, it is not only the current use of ἀϋθις/ἀϋθι as a temporal adverb, but also the use of the verb forms which speaks in favour of our interpretation. In the thoughts about motion the imperfective vs. perfective (perfect) aspects are crucial, whereas in the account of what is possible, it is the temporality which matters and the future is most relevant. Furthermore, the Master Argument was the most important and most highly debated part of Diodorus' teaching, and also very popular. If the second croak is interpreted in connection with Diodorus' view on what is possible, both croaks express the same underlying anxiety; that is, anxiety about what will follow and what awaits them in the future.

7

The immense literature is collected in the bibliography attached to DÖRING, KLAUS 1998. “Eukleides aus Megara und die Megariker.” In *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike* 2/1, ed. H. FLASCHAR, 207–237, Bibliographie 348–352, Basel: Schwabe. See also KURZOVÁ, HELENA. 2007. *Megarikové, Zlomky*. Praha: OIKOYMENH, 303–312.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- DÖRING, KLAUS. 1998. "Eukleides aus Megara und die Megariker." In *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Die Philosophie der Antike* 2/1. Ed. H. FLASCHAR. Basel: Schwabe, 348–352.
- KURZOVÁ, HELENA. 2007. *Megarikové, Zlomky*. Praha: OIKOYMENH.
- SEDLEY, DAVID. 1977. "Diodorus Cronus and Hellenistic Philosophy." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 203.
- WHITE, MICHAEL J. 1986. "What worried the crows?" *The Classical Quarterly*, N. S. 36, 534–537.

RESUMÉ

Fragment Kallimachova epigramu věnovaný Diodórovi svědčí o velké popularitě tohoto představitel megarské školy. Diodórovým hlavním přínosem k „dialektice“, oboru, který odpovídá dnešní logice a filosofii jazyka, je jeho pojetí implikace a učení o možném a nutném. Podle Diodórova pojetí je možné jen to, co v budoucnu opravdu bude. Na tomto základě lze nejlépe vyložit druhou otázku havranů, kteří se střechy volají „Co z toho plyne“ (implikace) a „Co s námi v budoucnu bude“ (nejistá budoucnost při přísném pojetí možností). Tímto výkladem nahradila autorka nepřijatelný výklad Sexta Empirika, z něhož citát pochází. Ten mylně interpretuje Diodórovo učení o pohybu v tom smyslu, že vylučuje zánik a tedy počítá se stálým žitím. Diodórus vša popírá zachytitelnost procesu pohybování a zanikání, ale ne rezultat. Na tomto základě předložil D. White svou interpretaci. Havrani mají podle tohoto pojetí starost, jak se na střechu zase dostanou, když je odmítán průběh pohybu. Vztazení obou obav havranů k téže obavě z nejisté budoucnosti je však pravděpodobnější, také proto, že tento výklad chápe adverbium $\alpha\upsilon\theta\iota/\alpha\upsilon\theta\iota\varsigma$ v temporálním významu, stejně jako Sextus. White počítá s lokálním významem v pohoméřské době méně běžným.

