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ANGRY DOGS AND STONES: A PROVERBIAL SIMILE IN THE HOMERIC SCHOLIA[1]

In Iliad 1, Achilles is "not pleased to see" the heralds (οὐδ' ἄρα τώ γε ἰδὼν γήθησεν Ἀχιλλεύς) who have come to take Briseis away from him. Unsurprisingly, they are in fear of him, but he greets them with the words (Il. 1.334–5):

> Χαίρετε κήρυκες, Διὸς ἄγγελοι ἠδὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν,
> ἆσσον ἴτ'· οὔ τί μοι ὔμμες ἐπαίτιοι, ἀλλ' Ἀγαμέμνων …
>
> Greetings, heralds, messengers of Zeus and of men,
> Come nearer: not you are to blame, but Agamemnon
> …

This differentiation between the one who has caused something unpleasant and those who are under obligation to carry it out is noted by the scholia (schol. AbT Il. 1.335c *D* = ad Il. 1.334 van Thiel):[2]

> πεπαιδευμένως· οὐ γὰρ δεῖ τὰς αἰτίας ἐφ' ἑτέρους μετάγειν ὡς κύνα κατὰ τοῦ βεβλημένου λίθου.
>
> ⟨This is⟩ educatedly ⟨said⟩, for one ought not to shift the blame on others like the dog on the stone that has been thrown.

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1) I would like to thank Mark Beck and René Nünlist for helpful comments. My thanks also go to Professor Bernd Manuwald for his critical reading of this paper.

2) The scholion in some respects resembles those exegetical scholia which are concerned with education, either with a view to the effect on the audience or to the education of Homeric characters; cf. I. Sluiter, Commentaries and the Didactic Tradition, in: G. W. Most (ed.), Commentaries – Kommentare, Göttingen 1999, 173–205 (here: 176–9). I intend to discuss scholia of this type more fully as part of a monograph on Homer in ancient education. It is not uncommon in Homeric epic to distinguish between who is to blame and who is not, but then usually the gods are blamed (e. g., Il. 3.164, 19.86–7). The same distinction is made, e. g., in the case of Croesus, who refrains from punishing his son's killer, Adrastos, explaining that not he is to blame but one of the gods (Hdt. 1.45.2). This type of distinction differs, however, from one that refrains from 'shooting the messenger'.

The explanation suggests a proverb, the complete form of which (and thus, its meaning) is not immediately obvious. Erbse offers no parallel or predecessor, nor is there, indeed, an exact parallel. But as it shall be demonstrated in this paper, there existed a proverb to which the scholion refers. It is, however, a proverb with quite a few variations, due to the fact that that proverb is a simile, which in turn allows for various adaptations to different contexts.

The proverb's earliest extant occurrence is in Plato's *Republic*.[3] For the purpose of this paper, it will serve as the reference point for all subsequent uses of the simile. This does not exclude the possibility that the simile was used as a proverb already before Plato; nor can it be assumed with certainty that all subsequent uses descend from Plato.[4] In the passage in question, Socrates speaks of cowards, who would rather busy themselves in despoiling corpses than participate in battle (Rep. 5, 469d–e):

> Ἀνελεύθερον δὲ οὐ δοκεῖ καὶ φιλοχρήματον νεκρὸν συλᾶν, καὶ γυναικείας τε καὶ σμικρᾶς διανοίας τὸ πολέμιον νομίζειν τὸ σῶμα τοῦ τεθνεῶτος ἀποπταμένου τοῦ ἐχθροῦ, λελοιπότος δὲ ᾧ ἐπολέμει; ἢ οἴει τι διάφορον δρᾶν τοὺς τοῦτο ποιοῦντας τῶν κυνῶν, αἳ τοῖς λίθοις οἷς ἂν βληθῶσι χαλεπαίνουσι, τοῦ βάλλοντος οὐχ ἁπτόμεναι;
>
> Does it not seem mean and greedy to despoil a dead body, and characteristic of a womanish and petty mind to regard the body of the dead man as the enemy, when the antagonist has flown off and has left behind that through which he has fought in battle? Or do you think that those who do this do anything different from the dogs which are angry at the stones with which they are pelted, but stay away from the one who throws them?

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3) B. Biliński, Contrastanti ideali di cultura sulla scena di Pacuvio, Wrocław / Warszawa / Kraków 1962, 47, raises the question whether the proverb existed before Plato, but points out the specific references to Plato made by Aristotle and Stobaeus (on which below); this, in his view, suggests that Plato was the originator of the simile. Yet it is possible that Plato used a proverbial simile already in existence, but in such a way that it appeared to be so closely linked to the point he wished to illustrate that it became almost a unit. I was unable to trace a story from the Upanishads in which a Brahmin pelts a dog with a stone and the dog then tries to bite the stone, ignoring the thrower (mentioned by S. Persaud, I hear a voice, is it mine? Yogic realism and writing the short story, World Literature Today 74, 2000, 529–39; here: 536). If indeed such a story existed, this would support the view that Plato was not the originator of the simile/proverb.

4) It is not uncommon already in the *Iliad* to have to deal with those who rather stay behind in order to despoil fallen enemies and stay away from combat, as Nestor's exhortation Il. 6.67–71 shows; the author of De Homero 2, ch. 198.3, remarks that the despoiling would also rise to flight.

Both the action Plato describes (A) and the simile that illustrates it (B) consist of two parts: the corpse (i. e., the mere body) of the enemy (A^1) corresponds to the stones (B^1), the enemy (A^2) – i. e., his soul – to the thrower of stones (B^2). Yet the question as to what the point of comparison is, is as problematic as it is crucial to the analysis of how the simile evolved. Adam, in explaining why βάλλοντος should be read rather than βαλόντος (as in codex A), remarks that "the simile is not quite accurate, because a 'flown antagonist' cannot continue to do mischief".[5] To this could be added that the enemy's dead body no longer poses a danger, whereas the thrower continues to be one,[6] and that the plunderer acts deliberately, whereas the dog does not.

If, on the other hand, one applies a certain degree of abstraction, one could find that both the dog and the plunderer are concerned with what is less threatening or dangerous (A^1 and B^1), and that this harmless element is merely instrumental and passive: the stones cause no harm unless thrown, the body poses no danger unless alive. To this is opposed the dangerous element (A^2 and B^2), the enemy while still alive and the thrower, respectively; both entities are clearly active. The problem remains, however, that while the thrower is alive and active, the enemy is neither. The question is how far Plato intended to push the simile, i. e. how many details A and B have in common. In attempting to give an answer to this, one should make a careful distinction between context and point of comparison. The context, the specific situation, is clearly one of battle and despoiling, of danger and cowardly attempts to avoid it. But this is not what provides the point of comparison. Plato introduces the simile by speaking of "those who do that" (τοὺς τοῦτο ποιοῦντας) – but what does "that" refer to? Usually, τοῦτο refers to the closest preceding entity. Here, this is νομίζειν: the one who despoils the enemy's dead body mistakes it for the real enemy, just as the dog mistakes the stones for the thrower. This interpretation solves the problem of the supposed inaccuracies of the simile. Yet

5) J. Adam, The Republic of Plato, ed. with critical notes, commentary and appendices, 2 vols., Cambridge ^{2}1965, on 469e.

6) If one were to read βαλόντος, which would be antecedent, it could be argued that the thrower has ceased to throw the stones (in which case he would also have ceased to be a threat). Given the rather short attention span of dogs, I cannot, however, imagine a dog snapping at stones that just lie there; the incentive for attacking the stones is the fact that they are being thrown.

it is not quite complete: in the case of both the despoiler and the dog the mistaking results in a particular course of action, i. e. the despoiling and the snapping at stones. As shall be demonstrated, the specific action that results from mistaking one thing for another is the variable part of the simile that is determined by the context, whereas the element of mistaking provides the fairly stable primary point of comparison.

In two occurrences after Plato the simile was seen as an illustration of the despoiling specifically, not of the error of judgement. Aristotle paraphrases Plato's comparison in order to exemplify the simile as a type of 'metaphora' (ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν μεταφορά, Rhet. 3.4, 1406b20; 32–4):

> καὶ τὸ ἐν τῇ πολιτείᾳ τῇ Πλάτωνος, ὅτι οἱ τοὺς τεθνεῶτας σκυλεύοντες ἐοίκασι τοῖς κυνιδίοις, ἃ τοὺς λίθους δάκνει τοῦ βάλλοντος οὐχ ἁπτόμενα.
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> Yet another example is that in Plato's *Republic*: those who despoil the dead resemble puppies that snap at the stones without attacking the thrower.

Similarly, Stobaeus (4.57.16 H.) quotes the passage from Plato under the heading "That one ought not to revile the dead" (ὅτι οὐ χρὴ παροινεῖν εἰς τοὺς τετελευτηκότας). The attributions to Plato specifically suggest that neither Aristotle nor Stobaeus regard the simile as an anonymous proverb. In the exact reference also lies the reason why the simile is so closely linked to the despoiling: the context in which Plato uses the simile and the specific course of action take precedence over the primary point of comparison, the mistaking. Even so, the scholion's use of the simile as an illustration of the transference of blame within a context that is not related to battle, cowardice and the despoiling of bodies may, at first sight, not seem very likely.[7]

A reference to the simile such as the one made by Suidas, however, shows that it had a proverbial ring to it. Suidas uses it in order to illustrate the construction of the verb περιχαίνω (π 1349 Adler):

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7) The omnipresence of war in the *Iliad* notwithstanding, it is of no concern in the situation to which the scholion refers, especially since Achilles has withdrawn from battle.

περιχαίνω· αἰτιατικῇ. οἷόν τι ποιοῦσιν οἱ κύνες τοὺς λίθους, οἷς βάλλονται, περιχαίνοντες.

'To snap at' takes the accusative, as the dogs do when they snap at the stones with which they are pelted.

No reference to Plato is given, although the phrasing is so close that, in fact, it has been suggested to read περιχαίνω in the passage from Plato's *Republic*, too.[8] It is difficult to decide whether it was clear to the lexicographer that he was referring to Plato. It is, at any rate, worth noting that not only the compared element (A) has disappeared; the simile itself is incomplete, since the second half of the antithesis (B^2, that the dogs do not attack the thrower of the stones) has been omitted. The reason may have been that for the explanation of the lemma, the incomplete version was sufficient, but also that the saying was so well-known that the reader would automatically supplement the omitted part.

The quotation in Suidas thus leaves open – at least for us – what the saying was supposed to illustrate (other than the construction of the verb in question); it allows no conclusions about the context or the point of comparison. Another occurrence of the saying, a fragment from Pacuvius' *Armorum iudicium* (fr. 34 Schierl = 38–39 Ribb.$^{2-3}$ = 58–59 D'A.), is similarly incomplete:

nam canis, quando est percussa lapide, non tam illum adpetit,
qui sese icit, quam illum eumpse lapidem, qui ipsa icta est, petit

For the dog, when it has been pelted with a stone, does not so much attack the one
that has thrown ⟨the stone⟩ at it, as it attacks the very stone itself with which it has been pelted.

Here, the simile (B) is complete: the attack on the stone is contrasted with the attack on the thrower. The question remains as to what the simile was supposed to illustrate, i. e. what part (A) consisted of. In view of the context in which Plato uses the simile, some commentators assume that in the *Armorum iudicium* it somehow

8) J. Toup, Emendationes in Suidam et Hesychium et alios lexicographos Graecos, vol. II, Oxford 1790, 63–4.

refers to a maltreatment of Ajax' body (or a quarrel about it).[9] Since there is no indication that either took place in Pacuvius' tragedy, it has alternatively been suggested that a character uses the simile when Ajax in an argument wrongfully directs his anger at the judgement against someone who is not to blame for it – the Greeks in general instead of the Atridae, or Odysseus and the Atridae instead of the gods.[10] In support of this view, commentators point to Pliny the Elder's mention of a proverb that is about dogs biting stones (Nat. Hist. 29.102):

> *minus hoc miretur qui cogitet lapidem a cane morsum usque in proverbium discordiae venisse.*
>
> One might be less puzzled by this (i. e. the properties of a mad dog's poison) when one considers that the stone bitten by a dog has become proverbial about discord.

Here, as in the passage from Suidas, the saying only mentions the biting of stones (B^1), not the antithetically contrasted attack on the thrower (B^2). What is mentioned, on the other hand, is the context for A: discord. The only way in which a bitten stone would make sense in the context of discord is that someone (~ the dog) vents his anger on a mere instrument (~ the stone), not on the one who is in truth responsible (~ the thrower).

Such a context of discord and quarrel between individuals is different from the one in Plato,[11] but quite close to the one found in the scholion quoted above; moreover, in both Pliny and the scholion the similes are incomplete, with the antithetical part (B^2)

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9) Thus, e. g., J. Vahlen, De versibus nonnullis Pacuvii tragici, Opuscula academica, vol. 2, Leipzig 1908, 489–90, who sees an echo of Soph. Ai. 1344, where Odysseus argues against maltreating Ajax' body. For a recent discussion see P. Schierl, Die Tragödien des Pacuvius. Ein Kommentar zu den Fragmenten mit Einleitung, Text und Übersetzung, Berlin / New York 2006, 136–7; 156–7.

10) Schierl (as in the previous note) 157, who also mentions the possibility raised by L. Müller, De Pacuvii fabulis disputatio, Berlin 1889, 18–9, that Odysseus may have commented upon Ajax' insults by using the simile.

11) A. Otto, Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer, vol. 1, Leipzig 1890, 70 (s. v. *canis*, no. 8), states that the use of Pacuvius and Pliny is about attacking "not the true enemy but his innocuous tool", whereas Plato uses it to illustrate "a cowardly and mean spirit": "Der Ergrimmte, Erbitterte greift in seiner blinden Wut nicht seinen wirklichen Gegner selbst an, sondern dessen unschuldiges Werkzeug. Als Beweis feiger und niedriger Gesinnung dagegen Plato republ. 5 …" As I have indicated above, I do not think that Plato intended this to be the primary point of comparison; I shall return to this question.

omitted. In the scholion, however, the antithetical part is mentioned with regard to the behaviour that is illustrated by the simile (A): the blame is shifted onto others, which can only mean onto those who are not in fact responsible. This shows that the antithetical part (B^2, the thrower of the stones) could easily be supplemented by the reader, just as it was suggested for the version given by Suidas.

Looking at the evidence so far (the scholion excluded), one could object that discord as the context for the simile is found only in Latin texts, and that the shift away from the meaning it had in Plato is due to the translation into Latin. Yet there are Greek versions of the simile which show that the shift is not a matter of translation into a different language or cultural environment. The first passage, mentioned by Toup,[12] but neglected by later commentators, is from Plutarch's *De garrulitate*. With some irony, Plutarch relates that Antipater, instead of disputing with the Academic Carneades face to face, resorted to writing (Mor. 514d):[13]

> ὁ μὲν γὰρ Στωικὸς Ἀντίπατρος, ὡς ἔοικε, μὴ δυνάμενος μηδὲ βουλόμενος ὁμόσε χωρεῖν τῷ Καρνεάδῃ μετὰ πολλοῦ ῥεύματος εἰς τὴν Στοὰν φερομένῳ, γράφων δὲ καὶ πληρῶν τὰ βιβλία τῶν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀντιλογιῶν 'καλαμοβόας' ἐπεκλήθη· τὸν δ' ἀδολέσχην ἴσως ἂν ἡ πρὸς τὸ γραφεῖον σκιαμαχία καὶ βοὴ τοῦ πλήθους ἀπερύκουσα καθ' ἡμέραν ἐλαφρότερον παρασκευάσειε τοῖς συνοῦσιν, ὥσπερ οἱ κύνες εἰς λίθους καὶ ξύλα τὸν θυμὸν ἀφέντες ἧττόν εἰσι χαλεποὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.
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> The Stoic Antipater, since he apparently was unable, or did not wish, to come to close quarters with Carneades, who was violently attacking the Stoa, wrote and filled many books with his controversy with him, and was therefore nicknamed 'pencil-shouter'. Perhaps the fight with shadows in writing and a shouting that keeps him away from the crowd may render the garrulous person day by day easier to deal with for those around him, just as dogs which have vented their anger on stones and sticks, are less fierce towards men.

12) As in n. 8, 64.

13) Erasmus gives a Latin version of the simile as it appears in *De garrulitate* in his *Parabolae*, a collection of similes culled from ancient writers, among whom Plutarch is one of the most important sources: *Ut canes, si iram effuderint in lapidem aut saxum, mitiores sunt erga homines, sic qui bilem in alienos evomuerit, placidior est erga suos* (ASD I-5, 136, ll. 591–592). The editor mentions a different passage from Plutarch (discussed below) as a possible source (as well as the passages from Plato, Pliny, Pacuvius and some modern echoes); but I think the parallels to the passage from *De garrulitate* are striking.

There is, of course, no real combat situation. It is, however, used figuratively for the direct confrontation which Antipater avoids (cf. ὀμόσε χωρεῖν, σκιαμαχία), and one can easily detect an element of cowardice in Antipater's behaviour. The context therefore is both similar to the one in Plato and is not, since it is not to be taken literally. As in Plato, anger figures in the simile (χαλεποί is probably an echo of Plato's χαλεπαίνουσι; θυμόν enforces the notion of anger) but the context, too, with its atmosphere of dispute and shouting, at least suggests it.

Plutarch's use of the simile does not, however, correspond entirely to Plato's. Starting from the simile part, it is noteworthy that Plutarch does not mention the thrower of sticks as B^2 but only some unspecific "men" towards whom the dogs are less fierce. The sticks and stones (B^1) are thus not the instruments used by B^2, as in Plato. This matches the relationship in A, where Plutarch speaks of "the fight with shadows and writing" etc. as A^1 (the equivalent to the stones and sticks in B^1), and of the people around the garrulous person as A^2, which fit well as the equivalent of the unspecific "men" of B^2. The relationships between A^1 and A^2 and B^1 and B^2, respectively, are not those of the instrument and the agent who uses the instrument – neither do the people around the garrulous man engage in "shadow-fighting" nor do the people in general use sticks and stones. Also, neither the garrulous man nor the dog are said to have been attacked by the people around them. While in Plato the attackers were the agents A^2 and B^2 (the enemy while still alive and the thrower of stones), in Plutarch they are not parts of the relationships A^1/A^2 and B^1/B^2. As a result, while in Plato A^1 and B^1 are the instruments in the hands of the agents A^2 and B^2, in Plutarch they are not. Instead, they are instruments in the hands of the garrulous man and the dog; they are not the instruments by which they were attacked but now are the objects on, or through, which the anger is vented. In Plutarch, therefore, the simile does not illustrate the 'mistaking' of instrument for agent, but the use of tools for venting one's anger, as a substitute in place of an immediate response to the agent. This idea of substitution is an important factor also for the way in which the simile is used in the Homeric scholion.

Plutarch refers to the behaviour of dogs as described in the simile also in an altogether different context. It no longer is treated as a simile or proverb but as a physiological problem. In one of

those chapters of his *Aetia Physica* which survive only in a Latin translation, Plutarch asks (Aet. Phys. XXXVII):[14]

> *Quare canes relicto homine qui iecit, lapidem morsu insectantur? An quia neque cogitatione comprehendere quicquam nec reminisci (quibus solus homo virtutibus valet) potest? itaque quum mente non discernat a quo iniuria fuerit illata, id tantum quod ob oculos minaciter versatur, inimicum esse existimat deque eo vindictam sumere parat. An lapidem, dum per terram mittitur, feram aliquam esse autumans, pro ingenio hanc prius capere conatur, deinde cum viderit se opinione sua frustrari, hominem rursum invadit? An quod et id quod missum fuerit, et hominem ipsum aequaliter odit, et id quod proximius est, insectatur?*
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> Why do dogs ignore the thrower and go after the stone with their bite? Is it because ⟨the dog⟩ can neither understand something with its mind nor remember it (in which faculties only man is proficient)? As a consequence, when it does not mentally discern whence the injury has arisen, it believes that only that which lies threateningly before his eyes, is the enemy and gets ready to take revenge from it. Or is it that while the stone is hurled over the ground, ⟨the dog⟩ believes it to be some animal and tries at first, in conformity with its mental abilities, to catch it, but then, when it sees that it is deceived in its opinion, rushes, in turn, against the man? Or is it because ⟨the dog⟩ equally hates the thing thrown and the man himself and goes after what is nearer?

Even though the discussion of the dog's behaviour does not serve as an analogy to human behaviour, there is some mention of emotions which are related to anger, such as "taking revenge" and "hate", and of some mental activity, however deficient it may be. This makes it easy to set the discussion into relation with the various purposes of the simile. The last of the three explanations may well be seen as falling into the category of 'venting one's anger', which was the point of the simile in the passage from *De garrulitate*: the main point is to act out the hatred rather than to deal with the one who caused it. The first two explanations reflect the aspect of misapprehension, which was suggested above as being the primary point of comparison for Plato's use of the simile. In the first instance, the dog is unable to distinguish between the agent and the instrument; in the second, it mistakes the stone for something else.

Misapprehension, with a focus on the distinction between agent and instrument, also plays a large part in another occurrence

14) The translation was made in the 16th century by Gilbert de Longueil (Gybertus Longolius), as part of an edition of Latin versions of Plutarch's *Moralia*. It is unclear on which text the translation is based, but it is not generally assumed to be a forgery.

of the simile, in a homily on anger by Basil of Caesarea. Towards the end of the sermon, Basil addresses the question of justified anger, yet also admonishes not to be angry with another person but with the one who is truly responsible (Homilia adversus eos, qui irascuntur 31, 368–9 PG):

> Σὺ δὲ ὀργίζῃ τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου εἰκῆ. Πῶς γὰρ οὐκ εἰκῆ, ἄλλου ἐνεργοῦντος, ἄλλῳ χαλεπαίνων αὐτός; Καὶ ποιεῖς τὸ τῶν κυνῶν· οἳ τοὺς λίθους δάκνουσι, τοῦ βάλλοντος οὐ προσαπτόμενοι. Ὁ ἐνεργούμενος ἐλεεινός· ὁ δὲ ἐνεργῶν μισητός.
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> But you are angry with your brother without reason. How can it not be without reason, when one person is responsible, but you are angry with another. You act as in the saying about dogs that bite the stones without attacking the one who throws them. The one who is being used is pitiable, but the one who uses him, hateful.

Like Plato, Basil employs χαλεπαίνω, (προσ)άπτεσθαι and τοῦ βάλλοντος,[15] but he transfers χαλεπαίνω from (B) to (A). As in Plato, the primary point of comparison is that of misapprehension. In Plato, νομίζειν describes the misguided nature of an action, which in the particular case Plato describes involves mistaking the instrument (A^1, the mere body) for the agent (A^2, the enemy who has ceased to exist). Its meaning resembles that of the American idiom of 'barking up the wrong tree'.[16] This idea of misguidedness is pointed out by an ancient commentator on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, according to whom the lesson to be drawn from the simile is that "one should defend oneself against them (i. e., the enemies) while they are still alive".[17] Plato scolds the misguidedness and the action resulting from it as "mean" and "womanish", and the wider context suggests that the cowards intentionally misapprehend and thus misdirect their actions in order to avoid combat (cf. 469c7–d2). This is probably the reason why the cowardly action of despoiling

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15) Incidentally, the passage from Basil adds to the evidence given by Aristotle's and Stobaeus' quotations that Plato wrote βάλλοντος, not βαλόντος (which is read by *cod.* A).

16) The OED (s. v. bark, v.[1], no. 2), e. g., explains the idiom as "to make a mistake in one's object of pursuit or the means taken to attain it".

17) ὅτι οἱ δέροντες τοὺς τεθνεῶτας διὰ τὸ ἀμύνασθαι αὐτοὺς ἐοίκασι τοῖς κυνιδίοις, ἃ τῶν μὲν ἀφιέντων τοὺς λίθους οὐχ ἅπτονται, δάκνουσι δὲ τοὺς λίθους· ζῶντας γὰρ ἔδει τούτους ἀμύνασθαι; Anonymi in Aristotelis Artem Rhetoricam, ed. H. Rabe, Berlin 1896 (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca, XXI, 2, 178, ll. 22–5), on Rhet. 1406b33.

has sometimes been regarded as the primary point of comparison.[18] Basil, however, focuses on the aspect of misguidedness rather than the motives behind it. In his use of the simile, the anger is aimed at the wrong target – not intentionally, but due to a deficient perception. The person in question fails to understand that not the obnoxious man is a cause for anger but the Devil, who, as the agent, uses the man.

In both Plato and Basil, the distinction between agent and instrument is made with regard to the target at which the action is (or should be) aimed: they are directed at the instruments (A^1, Plato's body of the enemy warrior and Basil's annoying man), while they should be aimed at the agents (A^2, Plato's enemy warrior while still alive and Basil's Devil). But while Plato does not make an evaluative judgement of the instrument as opposed to the agent (the body of the dead enemy is not something better than the enemy while still alive), Basil explicitly states that the instrument (A^1) is pitiable, whereas the agent (A^2) is hateful. Plato's evaluative judgement was about misdirecting one's action deliberately to achieve a despicable purpose. To Basil, it seems, misguidedness is something that should be corrected (cf. εἰκῆ, "without reason"), but since it is not intentional, he passes no moral judgement on it – the one who misdirects his anger is not a bad person. Instead, he expands the dichotomy of 'instrument' and 'agent' to one of 'innocent' and 'culprit'.

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18) Plato's negative evaluation of such an action is reflected in the commentary on Aristotle by the prescriptive ἔδει used for the action that is to be performed instead, and even more clearly in the heading under which it occurs in Stobaeus (see above). Erasmus refers twice to the simile in his *Adagia*: in the first instance, he uses it (or rather, Aristotle's paraphrase, reading, however, τῶν βαλόντων instead of τοῦ βάλλοντος) in order to explain the expression "when the bear is near, you are looking for its tracks": *CUM ADSIT URSUS, VESTIGIA QUAERIS* Ἄρκτου παρούσης τὰ ἴχνη ζητεῖς. He states that it is said about those who out of fear wish to avoid a task at hand, and that it originates from the notion of a hunter who pretends to pursue tracks in order to avoid the danger of confronting the bear: *De iis dicitur, qui timiditate praesens negocium declinant atque ad alias nugas dilabuntur. Translatum a formidolosis venatoribus, qui se dissimulant sensisse ursum et vestigia persequi fingunt, quo absint a periculo. Hoc genus homines Plato De republica libro quinto scripsit similes esse* τοῖς κυνιδίοις, ἃ τοὺς λίθους δάκνει τῶν βαλόντων οὐχ ἁπτόμενα, *id est catulis, qui lapides mordent, cum eos, qui iecerint, non ausint attingere* (Adag. I.x. 34, no. 934, ASD II–2, 440). The juxtaposition of the two proverbs indicates that Erasmus here focuses on an intentional misdirecting of one's actions due to cowardice. This is different in the second instance in which he refers to Plato's simile; see below n. 22.

The simile continued to be used as a proverb about directing one's anger against someone who is not responsible: a few centuries after Basil, it occurs in a *Didascalia* by Dorotheus of Gaza, where he concludes his thoughts on self-incrimination as follows (Did. 7.88.19–30):

> Ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἀνεχόμεθα εἰπεῖν περὶ ἀδελφοῦ ἡμῶν ὅτι· Κύριος εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἀλλ' ἐὰν ἀκούσωμεν ῥῆμα, εὐθέως τὸ τοῦ κυνὸς πάσχομεν. Ῥίπτει τις κατ' αὐτοῦ λίθον, καὶ ἀφίει τὸν ῥίψαντα καὶ ἀπέρχεται δάκνει τὸν λίθον. Οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς ποιοῦμεν, ἀφίεμεν τὸν Θεὸν τὸν συγχωροῦντα ἐπενεχθῆναι ἡμῖν τὰς ἐπιφορὰς πρὸς κάθαρσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, καὶ χωροῦμεν κατὰ τοῦ πλησίον λέγοντες· Διὰ τί εἶπέ μοι; καὶ διὰ τί ἐποίησέ μοι; Καὶ δυνάμενοι ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων μεγάλως ὠφεληθῆναι, τὸ ἐναντίον ἐπιβουλεύομεν ἑαυτοῖς, ἀγνοοῦντες ὅτι πάντα προνοίᾳ Θεοῦ γίνεται πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον ἑκάστῳ. Ὁ Θεὸς συνετήσῃ ἡμᾶς εὐχαῖς ἁγίων. Ἀμήν.
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> But we do not bring ourselves to say about our brother: "The Lord told him to", but as soon as we have heard a word, we immediately undergo something like in the saying about the dog. Someone throws a stone down towards it, and it lets go of the thrower and runs off and bites the stone. We do the same: we let go of the Lord, who suffers that attacks be made on us for the purpose of purging our sins, and we go after our neighbour, saying: "Why did he say this to me? And why did he do this to me?" And although we could benefit greatly from such things, we aim at the opposite for ourselves, not knowing that everything happens in accordance with the Lord's providence for the benefit of each. May the Lord illuminate us through the prayers of the Saints. Amen.

This occurrence of the simile is more significant in understanding its use in the Homeric scholion than may be immediately obvious. Dorotheus takes his cue from the question why some are unaffected by a chafing remark while others are deeply offended by it, and the *Didascalia* is an exhortation to incriminate oneself (μέμφεσθαι ἑαυτόν). Consequently, with the idea of blame figuring prominently in it (words such as αἴτιος and its cognates, μέμφεσθαι, ἐγκαλέω, πρόφασις abound), an important part of the argument is the contrast between blaming others and blaming oneself. Dorotheus thus admonishes the scrutinization of one's actions in order to find that oneself is to blame (εὑρίσκει ἑαυτὸν πάντως αἴτιον, 82), not the one who made the hurtful remark; according to him, peace of mind is achieved when we "hold ourselves, not somebody else, accountable for what happens to us" (τὸ ἑαυτοὺς καὶ μηδένα ἄλλον ἐν τοῖς συμβαίνουσιν αἰτιᾶσθαι, 83); he criticizes that "each of us hastens to shift the blame in every affair toward his brother and to

throw the burden off onto him" (καὶ ἕκαστος ἡμῶν σπουδάζει ἐν παντὶ πράγματι βαλεῖν τὴν αἰτίαν κατὰ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ καὶ ῥίψαι κατ' αὐτοῦ τὸ βάρος, 84).

Like Basil, Dorotheus distinguishes between agent and instrument. This distinction does not overlap, however, with the one between who is to blame and who is not: one cannot simply equate, e. g., the one whom we blame with the instrument (A^1) and ourselves, whom we ought to blame, with the agent (A^2). In Dorotheus, the aspect of misapprehension is broken up into two lines. One is, as outlined above, shifting the blame onto the wrong person. The other line concerns the one who is behind all this. As Dorotheus explains, quoting from the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, we ought to blame ourselves because "if something good happens, it is the Lord's dispensation; if something bad, it is on account of our sins" (εἰ μὲν καλόν τί ποτε συμβῇ, ὅτι οἰκονομία ἐστὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ· εἰ δὲ κακόν, ὅτι διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, 84). The attacks people make on us are, according to the passage quoted above, a means of purging our sins; consequently, our brother who hurts us is a mere instrument (A^1), whereas the agent (A^2) is the Lord.

But of course the Lord is not to be "blamed". A comparison with Basil is helpful in understanding Dorotheus' argument and use of the simile. Basil's point is that our negative response (in his case, anger) is aimed at the wrong target (A^1). In Dorotheus, too, our response is aimed at the wrong target (again, A^1). But since the agent (A^2) is the Lord, who is responsible for the attacks made by the instrument, he does not simply call upon us to aim our anger at the correct target: the Lord means well, and therefore the correct response which Dorotheus demands cannot be assumed to be a negative one. Both Basil and Dorotheus are concerned with a correct perception of the events. Yet while Basil demands that we identify the correct target (the Devil), Dorotheus exhorts us to undergo a mental process that recognizes the one who is in truth responsible, with the consequence that what has caused our anger, ought not to have done so in the first place, since it is for our own good.

Basil condemns the agent, the Devil, and pities the instrument. In Dorotheus, the instrument is relieved of its responsibility, and therefore of any criticism; the agent is seen as something altogether positive. With regard to the simile, this means that the thrower of the sticks is actually good. This certainly sets Dorotheus' use of the simile apart from the other instances. The evaluation that is

supposed to lead us to a correct behaviour is that of an appropriate assessment of the entire situation: we ought not to mistake the Lord's providence for hurtful talk of another human being, and it is in this sense that we should go, not after the sticks, but after the thrower.

The evaluation of a particular behaviour provides the framework also for another occurrence of the simile, in a letter written by a teacher who lived in the 9th/10th century CE and whose name is unknown, to his student, Leon.[19] After deploring the student's "deafness", he asks him of what he can accuse (τί σοι τὸ προβαλλόμενον, ll. 6–7) those whose only crime has been to show him kindness, and answers the question himself (ll. 9–17):

> ἢ τοῦτο μὲν οὐκ ἂν ἔχοις εἰπεῖν, εἰ μὴ τῷ τῆς ἐμβροντησίας ἔχῃ πάθει, ἑταίρου δὲ καὶ συνήθους ὑπεροψίαν προβάλλεσθαι, τὸ τῆς κυνὸς ποιεῖν, λογικὸς ὤν, οὐκ ἐρυθριᾷς· ἢ τὸν βάλλοντα ἀμύνειν οὐ σπεύδουσα, τὸν ῥιφέντα λίθον τοῖς ὀδοῦσιν ἐμβάλλουσα καὶ τούτῳ προσεπιλυττῶσα πολὺ τῆς ὀργῆς ὑφ⟨ι⟩έναι δοκεῖ. ὅρα γοῦν μὴ τοῦτο ποιεῖν αἱρούμενος καὶ τοὺς διδασκάλους ἀποσειόμενος καὶ τῶν θυρῶν αὐτῶν ἔξω βαίνειν οὐ δεδιὼς καὶ ἀντὶ τιμῆς ἀτιμίαν τούτοις περιτιθείς, ταῖς οἰκείαις πάγαις περιπαρῇς καὶ τὸ Δωδώνης χαλκεῖον ἐπὶ σαυτὸν ἐγείρῃς.
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> In truth you could not say this, unless you suffer from stupidity, but you do not blush to accuse a friend and companion of arrogance, and to act, although possessed of reason, as in the saying about the dog, which does not rush to ward off the thrower but with its teeth attacks the stone that has been thrown and rages against it, and thus seems to vent much of its anger. Now see to it lest, when you choose to do this, revolt against your teachers, are not afraid to walk out their doors and put dishonour on them instead of honour, you get entangled into your own snares and incite the Dodonian cauldron against yourself.

The simile is complete, with both the stones (B^1) and the thrower (B^2) mentioned. Part A^1 is here represented by the teacher whom the student wrongfully accuses of arrogance. As in the passage from Plutarch's *De garrulitate*, A^2 is a problem: who or what is to be seen as analogous to the thrower? It seems that, again as in Plutarch, the simile is used not with a view to the distinction between instrument and agent – whose instrument would the teacher be? – but about accusing someone who is not, in fact, to blame. The simile provides the link between two steps in the teacher's argu-

19) Anonymi professoris epistulae, rec. A. Markopoulos, Berlin / New York 2000, 27 (Ep. 33).

ment. In the first step, he points out that the accusations against him are unjustified. The second is a threat (the "Dodonian cauldron" stands for a loud noise, probably a row or wigging in this case), which offers the opportunity to give a more detailed description of Leon's behaviour. He acts, one may well say, arrogantly. The simile thus contributes to turning Leon's accusations against himself. The point of comparison is therefore a misguided action: not the teacher, but the student is the culprit.

Where now does the scholion fit into this range of uses of the simile? It is not the last instance in a chronological succession, but due to the shortened version of the simile given there, its uses in other texts provide helpful clues. These other instances are of importance also because the simile's earliest known occurrence in Plato is within a completely different context and illustrates a different kind of behaviour. Yet it has been demonstrated that after Plato the close link with a combat situation and the act of despoiling is present only when the simile was used with specific reference to the passage from *Republic*. In all those instances, however, whose textual basis allows for any conclusions, the primary point of comparison is that of mistaking, with a particular course of action resulting from it. What the specific course of action is, is determined by the context to which the simile is applied. In addition, it is noteworthy that there frequently is an emotional aspect, being that of anger. It is already present in Plato, where it was part of the simile (part B), with the dog being angry; Plato's χαλεπαίνειν is echoed in Plutarch (who also speaks of θυμός), and in the Anonymus it appears as ὀργή.[20] In Basil and Dorotheus, the anger appears in part A, the action illustrated by the simile. The scholion does not mention anger, neither for part A nor for part B, which consists in shifting the blame onto others. But it does not need to mention anger, since it is present already in the *Iliad*. The statement that Achilles "was not glad when he saw them" (οὐδ' ἄρα τώ γε ἰδὼν γήθησεν Ἀχιλλεύς, Il. 1.330) can be understood as a litotes, which could indicate anger as well as sorrow.[21] Achilles' μῆνις lingers in

20) In those passages where only the simile-part is used (or transmitted) – Pacuvius, Stobaeus, Suidas – no mention is made of anger. Pliny, at any rate, mentions discord.

21) It is not quite clear which of the two the scholia, using λυπεῖν in order to explain the litotes, have in mind. Schol. A Il. 1.330a (Aristonicus) explains: ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου τὸ ἐναντίον ἀκουστέον· οὐκ ἐγήθησεν, ἀλλ' ἐλυπήθη ("[the diple] because

the background, and the heralds may still be under the fierce impression Achilles has made in his quarrel with Agamemnon – what else should they be afraid of if not his anger, which flashes up in lines 338 ff.?

What the scholion emphasizes, however, is the aspect of shifting the blame onto the wrong persons. While in Plato the misapprehension, resulting in a misguided action, is, as has been demonstrated above, the primary point of comparison,[22] the notion of blame may at first appear simply to be due to a more or less violent adaptation to its new context. Yet the 'mistaking' itself also underwent some specifications in the other uses of the simile. In Basil and Dorotheus, the misapprehension is a matter of faulty or deficient perception; in Plutarch's *De garrulitate* and the letter of the Anonymus, anger is vented against the 'wrong' target, in the case of Plutarch even with some deliberation as a substitute. All these variations also occur in Plutarch's discussion of canine behaviour in the *Aetia physica*. The variation of misapprehension that occurs in the scholion resembles the one in the Anonymus and Plutarch. What the scholion has in common with Plutarch is the idea of substitution, as the 'shifting' of blame suggests; it differs from Plutarch, however, in that the behaviour in question is not venting anger but, as in Dorotheus and the Anonymus, blaming and accusing someone.

Yet while neither in the Anonymus nor in the passage from *De garrulitate* the distinction between agent and instrument is relevant, the scholion shares this important aspect with Plato, Basil and Dorotheus (and the *Aetia physica*). The scholion takes its cue for the simile from the differentiation Achilles makes in the *Iliad*

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the exact opposite is to be understood: he was not glad, but he was vexed"). Schol. T Il. 1.330b speaks of an *antiphrasis*; the expression also serves as illustration of *antiphrasis* in Trypho, Περὶ τρόπων 15, who explains ἀλλὰ συνεχύθη καὶ ἐλυπήθη ("but he was confounded and vexed"). Cf. also Ps.-Plutarch, De Homero 2, ch. 25.

22) Interestingly, in the second instance where Erasmus refers to Plato's simile, he focuses on the misguidedness of an action, which also involves the question of who is to blame (Adag. 3122, ASD II–7, 108): CANIS SAEVIENS IN LAPIDEM Κύων εἰς τὸν λίθον ἀγανακτοῦσα, *id est Canis indignans in lapidem. Competit in eos, qui mali sui causam imputant non ipsi autori, sed alteri cuipiam. Veluti si quis iracundiae vitium iuventae, non stultitiae, attribueret, unde proficiscitur. Plato libro de Republica quinto damnans eos qui caesorum cadavera despoliant, ait hos perinde facere ut solent canes saevientes in lapidem, eo qui iecit omisso.*

between Agamemnon as the agent and the heralds as his mere instruments. Even though only B^1 is mentioned in the scholion, B^2, the thrower, can be easily supplemented. The version of the simile is also shorter than others in that it does not even explicitly mention what the dog actually does or fails to do: are we to supply the 'shifting of blame' also for the action of the dog? In fact, if one surveys the actions that are attributed to the dog in the various instances of the simile, it turns out that in the majority of cases the dog is said to be „biting" or „snapping" at the stones;[23] in Plato and Plutarch's *De garrulitate*, however, there is no mention of biting but of the emotional state of anger. Both appear jointly in the Anonymus professor, and 'human' emotions also serve in the *Aetia physica* as one of the possible explanations for the biting at stones. The scholion seems to stay more closely to Plato und Plutarch and attribute a human behaviour to the dog.

As demonstrated in the course of this paper, evaluations play an important part in the various uses of the simile. In Plato, the action that results from the misapprehension, i. e. the despoiling, is condemned as an act of cowardice. Stobaeus, with his focus on the despoiling, turns it into an admonition against it. In Plutarch's *De garrulitate*, interestingly, the misguided action has the positive effect of making the angry person (or the dog) less difficult for his environment; yet this certainly adds to the irony with which Plutarch describes Antipater. In Basil, as seen, the agent (A^2) is denunciated as evil, and in both his and Dorotheus' opinion the inaccurate perception is, although not morally condemned, something that ought to be ameliorated. The Anonymus, too, admonishes the student to change his course of action and uses the simile as part of his rebuke. The scholion takes a similar paedagogical approach when it points out that it is a token of education not to shift the blame onto the wrong persons, that it is something one ought not do to (οὐ … δεῖ, which is reminiscent of Stobaeus' οὐ χρή). The scholion does not explain how deliberate this action is imagined to be; it probably is not considered as intentional as the actions of Plato's cowards, but could be compared to Plutarch's acting out one's feelings against whoever or whatever is at hand.

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23) In Aristotle and the corresponding Commentary, Suidas, Pacuvius, Pliny, Basil and Dorotheus.

The more complete uses of the simile show a variety of aspects, purposes, contexts, evaluations – but they all clearly revolve around the notion of misapprehension and a subsequent action which is not aimed at the proper target, be it deliberately or not. If once again its earliest occurrence in Plato is taken as point of reference, the way in which the simile is used in the scholion is certainly not more extravagant than those in Plutarch, Basil, Dorotheus or the Anonymus. The proverbial simile lived on beyond the Graeco-Roman world. There are quite a few occurrences in mediaeval German. Around 1300, Hugo von Trimberg, in his moralizing poem, *Der Renner*, declares: "The evil dog bites the stone, when one throws it; look: as impure are envy and hatred."[24] While here also the notion of dogs' uncleanliness plays a certain rôle, the idea of aiming at the wrong target emerges clearly from a parable by Hans Sachs. In *Niemand wil Gottes straff erkennen* ("No one wishes to recognize God's punishment"),[25] he expands the simile into a parable, in which the narrator is attacked by a dog and eventually gets rid of it by throwing a stick at it; the dog then bites it and vents its anger at it, ignoring the narrator. The lesson to be learned from this closely resembles that of Dorotheus' *Didascalia*: God punishes us for our sins by sending us a 'stick' in the shape of tyrants, criminals and usurers, whom we blame for all calamity, and on whom we try to exact vengeance for it, but we should rather recognize that these are only a tool for God's punishment. The typical elements appear clearly: a misapprehension, the distinction between agent and instrument, anger and blame, a moralizing slant.

A collection of German sayings of wisdom from the 17th century renders it as "Der Hund beisst vergebens in den stein / damit er geworffen wird" ("the dog in vain bites into the stone with which it was thrown at").[26] Friedrich Nietzsche, finally, leaves no doubt as to the point of comparison: "Der Gewissensbiss ist, wie

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24) "Ein übel hunt bîzet in den stein / Sô man in wirfet, seht als unrein / Sint nît und haz": Hugo von Trimberg, Der Renner, ed. G. Ehrismann, vol. 2, Tübingen 1909, ll. 14721–3. This and the reference to the poem by Sachs are owed to S. Singer (ed.), Thesaurus proverbiorum medii aevi, vol. 6, Berlin etc. 1998, 7.23: *Der Hund beißt in den Stein (Stock), mit dem er beworfen wird*, nos. 396–7.

25) A. v. Keller / E. Goetze (ed.), Hans Sachs, vol. 1, Tübingen 1870, 418–21. The parable dates from 1554.

26) Georg Henisch, Teütsche Sprach und Weißheit: Thesaurus linguae et sapientiae Germanicae, A–G, Augsburg 1616 (repr. Hildesheim 1973), 266.

der Biss eines Hundes gegen einen Stein, eine Dummheit."[27] To explore how the saying developed such a 'Nachleben' goes beyond the scope of this paper – as does the question whether dogs indeed act as described in the simile.

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27) "Qualms are, like a dog's bite against a stone, a stupidity": Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, II, 2, 38. Of interest here also is: K. Braun, Während des Kriegs, Leipzig 1871, 200: "Wir Deutsche, wir waren der Stein, der dem französischen Hund von der Polizei hingeworfen wurde, damit er nicht die Regierung beiße, sondern uns. Der dumme Hund biß und die Polizei lachte ins Fäustchen."