

*FILOCALUS* AS AN EPITHET OF HORSE OWNERS IN PELAGONIUS:  
ITS ORIGIN AND MEANING

The fourth-century veterinary writer Pelagonius three times uses the adjective *filocalus* (φιλόκαλος) as an attribute of horse owners. The word has obviously lost its basic sense “loving beauty,” but its exact implication is difficult to grasp. What does the word mean, and why does Pelagonius alone use it in Latin? Where did he pick it up? The answers to these questions throw light on the perception Pelagonius had of himself as a veterinary writer.

At *Ars veterinaria* 2 the word is applied to the *dominus* envisaged as selecting a horse on the evidence of certain qualities that it might have: “talem autem equum aut comparare aut e gregibus eligere filocalum dominum convenit, ut sit exiguo capite, nigris oculis. . . .” The list of qualities comes from Columella (6. 29. 2–3 “corporis vero forma constabit exiguo capite, nigris oculis, . . .”), but the introductory clause is Pelagonius’ own. Superficially, *filocalus* might seem not far removed here from its literal force, if one could give it the sense “having an eye for good qualities” (including strength, etc., as distinct from mere beauty). But judgment must be reserved until the other examples and further evidence are considered.

The use of *filocalus* at 188. 1 could not be so readily related to its etymological meaning. The word is again an epithet of the horse owner, who this time is imagined as treating a disease, *bulimus*: “utilissimum et necessarium est domino filocalo bulimoso succurrere.” The passage is taken from the Greek veterinary writer Apsyrtus, but *filocalus* does not come from the source (*Hipp. Ber.* 67. 1, *CHG* 1:262. 15–16 τῷ βουλιμιῶντι δεῖ βοηθεῖν οὕτως). Some such sense as “circumspect, careful” would fit the context (see further below).

The third example is in one of the epistles (found at the head of chapters) that are definitely from the hand of Pelagonius himself:<sup>1</sup> 183. 1 “diversae quidem passiones equorum, sed signa similia forsitan curantibus vel filocalis erroris adferant aliquid.” In this section Pelagonius discusses errors of differential diagnosis. Whether a contrast is intended between professional horse doctors (*curantibus*, admittedly a vague word)<sup>2</sup> and horse owners, described as *filocali*, is not absolutely certain, but such a contrast would make sense. One might be tempted to see *filocalus* as indicating the care and attention to detail of the owner, as distinct from the professional expertise of the *veterinarius* (see further below).

Thus two, and perhaps all three uses of *filocalus* are applied to the horse owner, *dominus*. There is only one other epithet in Pelagonius that is associated with *dominus*, the Latin word *diligens*: 1. 1 “equos circo sacrisque certaminibus quinquennes usque ad annum vigesimum plerumque idoneos adseverant, usibus

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1. The work is a compilation, which shows signs of late editorial rearrangement: see, e.g., K.-D. Fischer, *Pelagonii “Ars Veterinaria”* (Leipzig, 1980), pp. xi–xv.

2. But *curantes* is used frequently by Celsus as roughly = *medici*: see J. N. Adams, “The Substantial Present Participle in Latin,” *Glotta* 51 (1973): 125–26.

autem domesticis a bimo usque in annum tricesimum necessarios esse apud *diligentissimum dominum* certissimum est"; 24. 1 "equos tuos sanos quidem, sed satis macilentos frequenter inspexi, quibus ut adhibeas talem diligentiam *diligentissimum dominum* monemus." Both of these passages, like one of those containing *filocalus*, are in epistles.<sup>3</sup> There is another example of *diligens* in an epistle at 1. 2, qualifying *homo* rather than *dominus*: "nec postea quot annorum sit, manifesto comprehendi potest nisi a *subtilissimo et a diligentissimo homine*." Note too 69 "tu *diligens*, ne quid diligentiam subterfugiat, etiam hoc curare debes." There is no noun here, but the addressee is again likely to be the horse owner.<sup>4</sup> *Filocalus* is therefore in variation with *diligens* in Pelagonius as an epithet for the *dominus* of horses.

I turn now to the use of φιλόκαλος (with which should be considered φιλοκαλέω and φιλοκαλία) in late Greek. This group of words is perhaps most commonly used in inscriptions, papyri, and some literary texts in the context of building and restoration, with the verb meaning "repair, restore, keep or put in good order."<sup>5</sup> Our use of *filocalus* cannot be directly related to these usages.

Φιλόκαλος, "careful," φιλοκαλέω, "look after, tend," φιλοκαλία, "care, attention," are, however, well attested.<sup>6</sup> An interesting transitional case can be found at Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 2. 1. 22:<sup>7</sup> ἰδιώτῃ μὲν ἑαυτὸν παρέχειν εὐπειθῇ τοῖς ἄρχουσι καὶ ἐθελόπονον καὶ φιλοκίνδυνον μετ' εὐταξίας καὶ ἐπιστήμονα τῶν στρατιωτικῶν καὶ φιλόκαλον περὶ ὅπλα καὶ φιλότιμον ἐπὶ πᾶσι τοῖς τοιοῦτοις. This example is cited by LSJ (s.v. φιλόκαλος 2) with the meaning "fond of effect and elegance," and it is true that it is still possible to see the etymological force of the word in this context. The soldier who is φιλόκαλος in respect of his arms is keen to see that they have a fine and impressive appearance.<sup>8</sup> But that keenness implies careful treatment of the ὅπλα, attention to detail in their presentation. Thus "loving beauty" shades into the sense "careful about, attentive to."<sup>9</sup> When the "beauty" that a person φιλεῖ lies in the fine external

3. The other two passages with *filocalus*—one drawing on Columella, the other on Apsyrus—are of course equally Pelagonian. Columella and Apsyrus were Pelagonius' two main sources, and both are quoted elsewhere in epistles.

4. It is worth noting that *diligentia* is sometimes an attribute of an owner: e.g., 152. 1 "cui etiam pro diligentia et pro amore equorum remedium et medellas negare non debes." This section comes from Apsyrus (*Hipp. Ber.* 33. 9–10, *CHG* 1:169–70), but the sentence quoted is Pelagonius' own. For *diligentia*, see further 24. 2, 69, 226.

5. See LSJ, s.v. φιλοκαλέω 5 ("repair, put in good order"); F. Preisigke, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1927), p. 694, s.v. φιλοκαλέω; Du Cange, *Glossarium ad Scriptores Mediae et Infimae Graecitatis* (Lyons, 1688), p. 1677, s.v. φιλοκαλέω. A. J. Festugière, "SEG XV 141," *MH* 16 (1959): 143, cites literary examples of φιλοκαλέω for which he gives the meaning "faire avec art, restaurer" (e.g., *V. Hyppat.* 73. 7 τὸ μοναστήριον φιλοκαλεῖν). Elsewhere ("Les proscynèmes de Philae," *REG* 83 [1970]: 178) Festugière notes: "je doute que, dans cette langue tardive (sous Constantin), φιλόκαλον soit 'ami du beau'. A cette époque, φιλοκαλέω est couramment dit de 'celui qui nettoie, remet en état, restaure, apprête', et le verbe se rencontre assez souvent en connexion précisément avec le travail d'une mosaïque" (in reference to an inscription—see J. and L. Robert, *Bull. épigr.* 1964, 546—that runs, in part, Νέστορα τὸν φιλόκαλον κτίστην); see further *Bull. épigr.* 1960, 157.

6. See in particular G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), p. 1479, s.vv. M. Ihm, *Pelagonii "Artis Veterinariae" Quae Extant* (Leipzig, 1892), p. 135, points out that the Greek translator of Pel. 24. 3 renders *diligentia* by φιλοκαλία (*Hipp. Ber.* 68. 6, *CHG* 1:266. 10).

7. Drawn to my attention by J. A. L. Lee.

8. For καλός applied to weapons and armor, see LSJ, s.v. 1.

9. It is possible to see how in such a context the word could equally be interpreted as meaning something like "loving, devoted to, neatness, tidiness, cleanliness"; cf. Hsch. φιλόκαλος: φιλόκοσμος;

appearance of a concrete object over which he has some control (such as a building, weapons, or a horse), φιλοκαλία may manifest itself in the care which he devotes to that object. It is under these circumstances that the semantic change seen in φιλόκαλος must have taken place. The *decor*—external appearance—of a saddle horse was a matter of considerable concern to the ancient horse owner (note Veg. *Mul.* 1. 56. 34 “sed in equis non solum utilitas, verum etiam decoris ratio servanda est”; cf. the whole of *ibid.* 34–35), and the owner who was φιλόκαλος will inevitably have been attentive to his animal.

This is the general background to the semantic change, but one can relate Pelagonius' use of *filocalus* more directly to a category of examples of φιλόκαλος (-έω, -ία) in Greek. Applied to care and attentiveness, φιλόκαλος (-έω, -ία) established a particular currency in the terminology of agriculture and veterinary medicine. Note the use of the verb by Nilus of Ancyra (*Epist.* 1. 101, *PG* 79:125B).<sup>10</sup> καθάπερ ὁ δίκαιος Νῶε γεωργὸς γέγονε, καὶ ἐφιλοκάλησε φυτεύσας τὴν ἄμπελον, of care of the vine. At *Geoponica* 2. 1 it is stated that the constant presence of the owner on a farm, watching over all as they carry out their tasks, will provide a model of σπουδὴ τε καὶ φιλοκαλία, “effort and diligence,” for everyone: πολλῶ τὸν ἀγρὸν ἀμείνω ποιεῖ δεσπότης συνεχῆς παρουσία. πάντας γὰρ ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν ἔργων προτρέπεται ἐπιμέλειαν, καὶ τὰ ἐλλιπῆ ὑπομνήσκων πληροῦσθαι ποιεῖ, καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἐπὶ ἔργον προθύμους ἐπαίνων, τοὺς δὲ ῥαθυμοῦντας αἰτιώμενος, ἕνα σκοπὸν πᾶσι σπουδῆς τε καὶ φιλοκαλίας ἀπεργάζεται.<sup>11</sup>

Φιλόκαλος is used in reference to the care of horses by the Greek veterinary writer Theonnestus (*Hipp. Ber.* 7. 7, *CHG* 1:47. 6):<sup>12</sup> στρατιώτης, δοκῶν εἶναι φιλόκαλος, ἴδιον ἵππον ἅπαξ τῆς ἡμέρας ἁλῶν ὑπέρκoron ἐποίει τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον. The στρατιώτης thought that he was attentive (in treating his horse once a day with salt),<sup>13</sup> but the potion ate into the membrane of the lung, caused φθίσις in the horse, καὶ ἐφ' ἐκάστης ἡμέρας ἰσχυνοῦτο (line 18). When Theonnestus explained with anatomical detail the reason for the horse's deterioration, the soldier, as befitted one who regarded himself as caring, proceeded to lament.

The adjective also occurs as an epithet of those who tend animals at Aelian *De natura animalium* 3. 33:<sup>14</sup> ἔνθεν τοι καὶ τῶν νομέων τοὺς ἄγαν φιλοκάλους καὶ τῆς ποιμνῆς τῆς σφετέρας ἔχοντας πεφροντισμένως ὕδωρ ἐκ τοῦ Νεῖλου ταῖς ἑαυτῶν ἀγέλαις ἄγειν μηχανῇ ὅσον δυνατόν ἐστι, καὶ ταῖς γε στερίφαις ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον. The waters of the Nile induce fertility in animals. Herdsmen who are φιλόκαλοι and devote great care to their herds draw as much water as possible from the river, particularly for infertile beasts. The rendition “shepherds who

LSJ, s.v. φιλοκαλία 2 (“love of cleanliness”). The ambiguities are reflected in translations of the passage: M. Bizos (Budé), “ami des belles armes”; W. Miller (Loeb), “neat in the care of his equipment.” See further G. P. Shipp, *Modern Greek Evidence for the Ancient Greek Vocabulary* (Sydney, 1979), p. 556.

10. Cited by Lampe, who does not, however, set up a specific class of agricultural examples.

11. Drawn to my attention by D. M. Bain.

12. For the date of Theonnestus (early fourth century), see M. Haupt, “Varia,” *Hermes* 5 (1871): 23–25 (no. LIV), A.-M. Doyen-Higuet, “The *Hippiatrica* and Byzantine Veterinary Medicine,” *DOP* 38 (1984): 112–13. Theonnestus, who accompanied an emperor (Licinius?) on an expedition (see *Hipp. Ber.* 34. 12, *CHG* 1:183. 21–23), will have been a superior military *veterinarius*.

13. Taking δοκῶν in the sense “seemed (sc. to himself)” (rather than “to others”).

14. Drawn to my attention by D. M. Bain.

like fine flocks" (in A. F. Scholfield's Loeb) is superficially plausible, but it misses the precise point. The shepherds in question are not thinking of the fine appearance of their flocks, but are concerned about the problem of barrenness. They are attentive to the health and breeding of their animals; the sense of φιλόκαλος is reinforced by the juxtaposed ἔχοντας πεφροντισμένως. Here, in the previous passage, and in one or two of the passages in Pelagonius, the word is close to the meaning "attentive to the welfare (of a domestic animal)."

There are other examples of φιλόκαλος in veterinary and agricultural contexts. Apsyrus uses the word twice in the expression φιλοκαλώτερον ποιεῖν in a chapter which concerns the breeding of mules (*Hipp. Ber.* 14. 9 = *Geoponica* 16. 21. 6 and 9): *CHG* 1:82. 17 φιλοκαλώτερον δέ τινες ποιοῦντες ταῖς θηλείαις ἵππασιν ὑποβάλλουσι τοὺς τῶν ὄνων πῶλους; *CHG* 1:83. 2 τινὲς δὲ φιλοκαλώτερον ποιοῦσιν τὸν ἀναβάτην ὄνον ἢ ἵππον ἢ ἄλλό τι ζῶον, χρώματος οἷου βούλονται γίνεσθαι τὸ τικτόμενον, τοιοῦτῳ καὶ ἱματίῳ περικαλύπτουσιν. The breeder who φιλοκαλώτερον ποιεῖ introduces refinements: he may rear young donkeys with mares, or adopt a ploy intended to predetermine the color of the offspring. The phrase seems to mean "shows particular subtlety, attention to detail," though it may have weakened into an equivalent of καλῶς ποιεῖν, which is used earlier in the chapter (*CHG* 1:82. 14 ἐνιοὶ δὲ καλῶς ποιοῦντες καὶ τοὺς ἀγρίους ἡμεροῦσι).

The comparative (adverb) is also found in an agricultural context at *Geoponica* 5. 26. 10, which deals with methods of manuring: φιλοκαλώτερον δὲ ἂν τις κοπρίσειεν, εἰ ἐν μὲν τῇ ψαμμώδει γῇ κόπρω χρήσαιτο προβατεία ἢ αἰγεία (εἶναι γὰρ ταῦτα ἀπαλὰς δῆλόν ἐστιν), εἰς τε τὴν λευκάργιλλον βοεῖα κόπρω φῶσει γὰρ αὐτὴν οὖσαν ἀσθενῇ τὸ γλυκίζον τῆς κόπρου καὶ λιπαρὸν αὐτάρκως παραμυθεῖται. Here again the hypothetical referent is attentive to the subtleties of the task.

The questions posed at the start of this article can now be answered. The alternation of *filocalus* with *diligens* in Pelagonius, the contexts in which *filocalus* is used, and the sense that φιλόκαλος has in Greek, particularly in veterinary and agricultural contexts, establish the meaning of *filocalus* as "attentive, caring, careful." The passage of Pelagonius in which this sense is clearest is *Ars veterinaria* 188. 1, quoted above. It is necessary for a *dominus filocalus* to help an animal with *bulimus*, "nam equi interdum famem sic non ferunt, ut concidant." The *dominus* who is *filocalus*, it seems to be assumed, will be on the alert for trouble and ready to act early in the disease, even if he is on a journey ("et hoc quidem initiis vel in itinere ubi desunt necessaria, prodest"). The meaning "attentive" (to the welfare of animals) suits the context best. The general idea of the third passage containing *filocalus* cited earlier (183. 1) is that even a man who is *filocalus* can make mistakes; this is also the implication of the passage of Theomnestus in which φιλόκαλος occurs. In this type of context either of two meanings would be possible: "expert" or "careful, attentive." The first sense seems to be ruled out (in Pelagonius' usage) by 188. 1, because there the implication is surely that it is not only "experts" who should treat their horses when they suffer *bulimus*, but all owners who care about their animals.

Whatever the exact process by which φιλόκαλος acquired its sense "careful, attentive," the usage was current in veterinary Greek, as evidenced by the

passages of Theomnestus and perhaps Apsyrtus quoted above. Pelagonius undoubtedly picked it up either from Greek veterinary writings (and it is established that he made extensive use of Apsyrtus),<sup>15</sup> or from Greek-speaking ἰππιατροί. By using φιλόκαλος, a word with virtually no currency in Latin,<sup>16</sup> when there was a good Latin alternative available, Pelagonius will have been attempting to parade his acquaintance with the Greek veterinary tradition of the Empire. His prefaces, addressed to men of distinction in a tone that is sometimes sycophantic (note particularly 0. 1–2, 163), and certain features of his Latinity, reveal Pelagonius as a writer seeking prestige. I illustrate this point further by turning finally to the literary tradition from which the use of *diligens*, seen earlier, derives.

*Diligens* is a constant epithet of the owner of an estate in Columella. In one place the referent is named: M. Columella, the uncle of the writer, who is given the highly complimentary designation *doctissimum et diligentissimum agricolam* (2. 15. 4). For *diligens* with *dominus*, see 1. 8. 18; in other places the word *paterfamiliae* is so qualified (1. 1. 3, 1. 2. 1, 5. 6. 37, 9. 1. 6, 12. 21. 6), and there are examples of *diligens agricola* apart from that cited (2. 14. 8, 4. 29. 3). *Diligentia* goes hand-in-hand with technical knowledge. M. Columella is *doctissimus* as well as *diligentissimus*. *Diligentia* is linked with *scientia* at 3. 3. 7, and *diligenti cura* with *scite* at 4. 3. 4. *Prudens* and *diligens* (6. pr. 5) are contrasted with *iners* and *inscius*. There is probably an implication in the expressions cited that Columella's work is intended for wealthy landowners; it is no mere practical manual to be used by anyone with the requisite literacy.<sup>17</sup>

It was almost certainly with the usage of Columella in mind that Pelagonius wrote of the *diligens dominus*: he constantly made use of Columella.<sup>18</sup> It no doubt suited his pretensions to use the sort of terminology that would imply a readership of upper-class *domini*.<sup>19</sup> The anonymous *Mulomedicina Chironis* contrasts with Pelagonius in this respect. The *Mulomedicina* is a mundane practical manual whose readership is never specified or implied. The author simply gives directives in the second person, without claiming the *diligens dominus* as his reader. Vegetius, on the other hand, whose *Mulomedicina* has a

15. See the *testimonia* cited at the foot of each page in Fischer's edition.

16. Ihm, *Pelagonii* . . . *Quae Extant*, p. 135, cites an example of *philocalia* (with its literal meaning) from August. C. Acad. 2. 3. 7. R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), pp. 406–7, draws attention to the name *Filocalus*, which occurs several times in "Sergius" GL 4:498–515 and probably belongs to a fictitious character. This name contrasts with *Rusticus* at GL 4:499. 24; Kaster translates the names as "Mr. Refined" and "Mr. Uncouth."

17. Though *diligens* can also be an epithet of a lowly agricultural worker who is attentive to his task: note 6. pr. 5 (*pastor*; cf. Varro *Rust.* 2. 1. 21), 7. 6. 6 (*pastor*), 7. 9. 14 (*porculator*), 11. 1. 18 (*opilio*), 11. 2. 38 (*vinitor*), 12. 52. 13 (*olearius*).

18. See K.-D. Fischer, "Pelagonius on Horse Medicine," *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar Third Volume*, ed. F. Cairns, ARCA: Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs 7 (Liverpool, 1981), p. 289. On Columella's influence on later veterinary works in both Greek and Latin, see J. N. Adams, "Pelagonius, Eumelus and a Lost Latin Veterinary Writer," *Mémoires V, Centre Jean Palerne* (Saint-Étienne, 1984), p. 29.

19. Note that Arzygius, to whom Pelagonius dedicated his treatise, is tentatively identified by A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1971), p. 689, with Betitius Perpetuus Arzygius, *consularis Tusciae et Vmbriae*; see, however, K.-D. Fischer in *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*, vol. 5, ed. R. Herzog and P. L. Schmidt (Munich, 1989), p. 81.

more upper-class orientation,<sup>20</sup> also uses a variety of such phrases from Columella: 1. 56. 2 “*diligens* itaque *dominus* stabulum frequenter intrabit”; 1. 56. 13 “quam rem *diligens paterfamilias* summa severitate prohibebit” (so too 2. pr. 3); 4. 3. 1 “habet plurimas species et diversas, quas enumerare non piget, ut facilius inter ipsa principia a *diligentibus* intelligi possint” (cf. Col. 9. 15. 13 *ab diligentioribus*).

The epithets that Pelagonius uses with *dominus*—*diligens* and its Greek equivalent, *filocalus*—nicely illuminate his aspirations. By using *diligens* he associated himself with the learned treatise of Columella written with landowners in mind; and by using *filocalus* he associated himself with Greek veterinarians, represented particularly by the equally learned Apsyrus.

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20. Note that the *domini* referred to in the prologue (11) own *equi* used as saddle animals, or in the circus races, or in warfare. These *domini* are rich (“[equos] ad vehendos locupletes aptos”). Again, at 1. 56. 34–35, Vegetius concentrates on the appearance of good saddle horses ridden by *honesti sutores*. The author of the *Mulomedicina Chironis* shows little interest in saddle or race horses. He no doubt usually had in mind humbler equines, such as mules; the word *equus* is uncommon in the work.