

SHORTER NOTES

KONNOS' FIGLEAF?

In Aristophanes' *Wasps* (673–5), Bdelykleon tells his jury-mad father that because the allied states are aware that the ordinary Athenian juror is an exploited creature, deliberately kept poor by the demagogues in whose hands the real power lies, σὲ μὲν ἡγοῦνται Κόννου ψῆφον, τοῦτοισι δὲ δωροφοροῦσιν. The scholia see that Κόννου ψῆφον must mean 'something worthless', but they add on the authority of Kallistratos and Euphronios that Ar. has altered the original phrase:

Καλλίστρατος παροιμίαν φησὶ “Κόννου θρίον”, παρ’ ἣν παίζει· Εὐφρόνιος δὲ ὅτι ἐλέχθη διὰ τὸ ἡδὺν τινα τὸν Κόννον εἶναι. . . . ψῆφον δὲ εἶπε διὰ τὸ περὶ δικαστοῦ λέγειν. (*Σ Wasps* 675b+c ed. Koster)

We cannot tell whether Euphronios was commenting on Κόννου θρίον or Κόννου ψῆφον, since although he was writing before Kallistratos, the latter need not have been the first to cite the phrase Κόννου θρίον in connection with our passage; indeed, the credit for first noting its relevance may belong to Euphronios himself. I shall be reverting to Euphronios' interpretation of the phrase presently.

Why should a worthless thing or person be called 'a figleaf of Konnos'? The suggestion of Florent Chrestien¹ that θρίον in the proverb denotes something that makes a lot of noise but is of little importance (cf. *Wasps* 436) has rightly gained little recent support; it does not explain why a quality characteristic of all θρία whatsoever should be proverbially associated specifically with a θρίον belonging to Konnos. Recent editors of *Wasps* have not ventured an explanation of the proverb, and Starkie seems to suspect it of being an exegete's invention, while MacDowell accepts the statement of Kallistratos only on the ground that the phrase 'appears too odd to have been invented'. An explanation can, however, be found for the proverb that will fit in satisfactorily with our other information both about θρία and about Konnos.

In *Frogs* 134 Dionysos, responding to the suggestion that a possible route to Hades might be to throw oneself from a high tower, objects ἀλλ’ ἀπολέσαιμ’ ἂν ἐγκεφάλου θρίῳ δύο. The scholia comment:

καὶ γὰρ ὁ ἐγκεφάλος τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἔχει ὑφ’ ἐαυτὸν ὑμένας εὐοικόςτας τοῖς τῆς συκῆς φύλλοις. ἄλλως· Ἀρίσταρχος, πρὸς τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ ἐγκεφάλου. ἔστι γὰρ ὥσπερ δύο θρία συγκείμενα. (The note then goes on to discuss the culinary sense of θρίον, pointing out that these rissoles sometimes included animal brains as an ingredient.)

Aristarchos and the other anonymous commentator here do not specifically say that θρίον was popularly used to mean 'brain-membrane' or 'brain-hemisphere'; but the *Frogs* joke, depending as it does on a double interpretation of ἐγκεφάλου θρίῳ δύο as (i) 'two savoury rissoles' and (ii) 'both halves of my brain', would be hard to appreciate unless θρίον was in fact current in this sense. I can find no other instance of this usage except indeed in the phrase Κόννου θρίον itself. I suggest that this meant

¹ Quoted by J. Taillardat, *Les Images d'Aristophane*² (Paris, 1965), 257 n. 4; Taillardat does not make it clear whether he agrees with Florent's interpretation.

'half of Konnos' brain', and that this was equivalent to 'something worthless' because Konnos was, or was considered, an imbecile.

There is adequate evidence that in fifth- and fourth-century Greece not only philosophers and medical men but also ordinary people regarded the brain as the seat of the intellect. Strepsiades, affecting to believe that one of his creditors has gone out of his mind after a chariot accident, says to him τὸν ἐγκέφαλον ὥσπερ σεσεῖσθαι μοι δοκεῖς (Ar. *Clouds* 1276). Socrates, picturing himself being upbraided by an imaginary interrogator for not giving a proper general definition of τὸ καλόν, envisages this man saying to him οὐδέν σοι μᾶλλον γεγωνεῖν δύναμαι ἢ εἴ μοι παρεκάθησο λίθος, καὶ οὗτος μυλίας, μήτε ὦτα μήτε ἐγκέφαλον ἔχων (Pl. *Hipp. Ma.* 292d) – clearly a popular rather than a philosophical manner of speaking. Hegesippos tells the Athenians that they should liquidate all pro-Macedonians in their midst εἴπερ ὑμεῖς τὸν ἐγκέφαλον ἐν τοῖς κροτάφοις καὶ μὴ ἐν ταῖς πτέραις καταπεπατημένον φορεῖτε ([Dem.] 7.54; Platnauer suspects, probably rightly, that Ar. *Peace* 669 ὁ νοῦς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἦν τότε ἐν τοῖς σκύτεσιν is a variant on the same idea). It is not therefore surprising to find a proverbial expression presupposing that lack of brain equals lack of intellect.

And lack of intellect is independently attested for Konnos: *κοννόφροσιν* meant *ἄφροσιν* (com. *adesp.* 93). There is no reason why this Konnos, who became a byword for stupidity, should not be identical with the musician Konnos son of Metrobios who is supposed to have taught Socrates the kithara (Pl. *Euthyd.* 272c, 295d; *Menex.* 235e), who gave his name to a play by Ameipsias in which Socrates appeared, and who was made fun of by Kratinos fr. 317 and Ar. *Knights* 534. The name is not a common one; and a man who had won many crowns in Olympic and other musical competitions (schol. *Knights* 534) and yet could not make himself a decent living (ibid.) might well be thought stupid or feckless.

And now we can come back to Euphronios. He is reported to have said that the phrase on which he was commenting originated from the fact that Konnos was ἡδύς. He was right; for by ἡδύς he meant 'simple, "soft in the head"' (cf. Pl. *Euthyd.* 300a, *Gorg.* 491e; *Men. Sam.* 412; so also γλυκύς Pl. *Hipp. Ma.* 288b). Konnos was the most extreme contemporary example we know of a type of individual that Socrates found to be distressingly common: the expert in one field who has no understanding of any other aspect of life (Pl. *Apol.* 22c–e).

University of Nottingham

ALAN H. SOMMERSTEIN

ARISTOPHANES, *BIRDS* 13–18¹

ΕΥΕΛΠΙΔΗΣ.

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| ἡ δεινὰ νῶ δέδρακεν οὐκ τῶν ὀρνέων, ὁ πινακοπώλης Φιλοκράτης μελαγχολῶν, ὃς τῶδ' ἔφασκε νῶν φράσειν τὸν Τηρέα, καὶ ἀπέδοτο τὸν μὲν Θαρραλεῖδου τουτονὶ κολοιὸν ὀβολοῦ, τηνδεδὶ τριωβόλου. | 15 |
| τὸν ἔποφ', ὃς ὄρνις ἐγένετ' ἐκ τῶν ὀρνέων. | 16 |

So van Leeuwen prints the lines, following Cobet and Meineke in athetizing 16. Nor is it difficult to find grounds for the exclusion; τὸν ἔποφ' is (virtually) repeated at 47;

¹ I am indebted to Mr G. W. Bond for much constructive comment on this note.