

description of *πείσομαι* τῷ θεῷ, Woozley seems to think of it as a passive verb with a dative of personal agent. Indeed, his translation, 'I will be persuaded by the god' and his remark that *πείσομαι* 'can mean anything that corresponds in the passive to the active "persuade"' (p. 45), admit no other interpretation I can imagine. Yet this is simply impossible. *πείσομαι* is a middle, not a passive form,⁶ but a dative of personal agent must be used with either a passive verb, normally in the perfect or pluperfect, or a verbal adjective in -τός or -τέος.⁷ Even if *πείσομαι* were passive, however, Woozley's construal would still be prohibitively unlikely, for it is not normal to use a dative of agent either with a future verb, or (unless the agent is a thing and not a person) with a personal subject.⁸ It should be clear then that Woozley's reading requires so much violation of recognized Greek usage and idiom as to be, in effect, impossible. If Plato had meant to say what Woozley suggests, he would have written *πεισθήσομαι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μᾶλλον ἢ ὑμῶν*.

This point about the grammar of 29d3–4 need not, however, be a decisive objection to Woozley's overall interpretation of *Apology* 29c–d. He and his defenders can still capitalize on the fact that *πείθωμαι* has a semantic range which includes behaviour other than strict obedience to commands of authority, much like the English idiom 'listen to'.⁹ There are no grammatical objections to understanding that Socrates will heed the god rather than the men of Athens. This reading neither entails nor requires, however, that he will *be persuaded*; and since 29d3–4 cannot be interpreted as a future passive with a dative of personal agent, it should not be translated as such into English.¹⁰

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⁶ There is a class of verbs in Attic Greek whose future middle functions as a passive, but *πείθω* is not among them. See the copious examples in R. Kühner and B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der Griechischen Sprache*³ ii.1 (Hannover, 1898), pp. 114–16, and the two lists of verbs in H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 220. Woozley may have been misled by the presentation of material in LSJ, s.v. *πείθω* B.1, which gathers middle and passive forms together under the meaning 'be persuaded'. Only two of the twelve examples listed there clearly mean 'be persuaded' as opposed to 'obey' or 'heed', though, and both are passives (Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 524–5; Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusae* 1170). LSJ gives us no reason to believe that *πείθω* in the middle ever has a simple passive meaning.

⁷ Kühner–Gerth, op. cit., pp. 422–3; Smyth, op. cit., pp. 343–4.

⁸ Smyth, op. cit., p. 344.

⁹ This is clearly the operative sense at 25e5 and 29c6–7, though the grammar of these two passages does not differ from that of 29d3–4. S. Panagiotou, op. cit., claims that *πείσομαι* at 29d3–4 is used in its very broad sense of "to comply with", "to yield to", "to listen to" (56). As I admit, this interpretation of *πείσομαι* is possible, but it cannot be supported by Woozley's revisionary construal of the grammar.

¹⁰ I am very grateful to Chuck Young and The Editors, whose comments on the original draft of this note helped me to sharpen its argument significantly.

STATIC ELECTRICITY IN AGATHON'S SPEECH IN PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM

...ἐν πόνῳ, ἐν φόβῳ, ἐν πόθῳ, ἐν λόγῳ κυβερνήτης ἐπιβάτης παραστάτης τε καὶ σωτῆρ ἄριστος, συμπάντων τε θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων κόσμος, ἡγεμὼν κάλλιστος καὶ ἄριστος...

Agathon's mannered yet striking encomium on Eros in Plato's *Symposium* (197c ff.) has attracted critical attention in ample measure, yet at least one dark corner remains

unilluminated. As the speaker approaches his climax in the words quoted above, he slips into nautical imagery: κυβερνήτης ἐπιβάτης... (a soldier on shipboard), but then disconcerts readers and commentators alike by immediately lapsing into the down-to-earth language of παραστάτης τε καὶ σωτήρ... words which seem to lack maritime connotations. The standard editions offer no help: Hug-Schöner (1909) devote several lines to the metaphors as they conceive them and suggest various groupings, but conclude somewhat despairingly: 'dass es im übrigen hier nicht auf Schärfe der Begriffe ankommt, leuchtet ein'. Dover, elsewhere a supportive editor, here only offers observations on ἐπιβάτης and the 'predominantly nautical sense' of κυβερνήτης ('pilot'); he translates παραστάτης as 'comrade-in-arms, – strictly the hoplite posted beside one'. Bury (1909, *ad loc.*) has some desultory statements which lead nowhere, while lecture-notes of pupils betray perplexity; some consider the four nouns here to be an 'odd assortment', and say that 'many emendations have been suggested'. It has even been suggested that it was perhaps Plato's intention to show Agathon talking 'near-nonsense'.

Yet the truth was lurking in a passage of Aelian (*VH* 1.30) all along. In telling a story of two horsemen rescuing a batch of people being led off to execution, he makes one say to the other: ...ἐπιδιώξαντες Διόσκοροι τοῖς δειλαίοις γενώμεθα... He then quotes a (slightly garbled)¹ iambic verse from an anonymous tragic poet:

σωτήρες †ἐνθα† κάγαθοι παραστάται

continuing, significantly for our purpose, with the words: τοῦτο δὴ τὸ λεγόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν θεῶν τούτων.

All is now plain (*sic*) sailing. Even without the hint in the juxtaposed τε καί (linking παραστάτης closely with σωτήρ), an ancient reader of average sensitivity could hardly have missed the thinly-veiled allusion to the Dioscuri, manifesting themselves in the form of the electrostatic discharge often seen from the rigging of ships at sea in thunderstorms, and commonly called St. Elmo's Fire. It was believed (and still is) by Mediterranean sea-captains to indicate that the worst of the storm is over and that the battered vessel will reach port. Alcaeus graphically describes it in his hymn to the Dioscuri (fr. 42a)...πρότον' ὀντρέχοντες...), and it recurs in Homeric hymn 33.6–7 (of uncertain date), Theocritus 22.1–23 and elsewhere.²

Thus the words under discussion are entirely appropriate, and contain an evocative piece of deftly sustained imagery: Eros is not only steersman and protective passenger but is also the ship's 'Castor and Pollux', that is to say its guardian deity.

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¹ See fr. 14, Nauck² = fr. tr. *adesp.* F 14 in *TGF*, vol. 2, Kannicht-Snell (1981), where a reference is given to Pl. *Symp.* 197c, but without comment. It is immaterial to the argument developed here, but if the unlikely ἐνθα in the iambic line is to be emended, the current suggestions might be bettered. Hercher's ἐσθλοί is redundant with κάγαθοί following, Scheffer's ἄμφω is padding, as also is Kühn's pointless ὄντως. Perhaps consider: ἐν θεοῖς, with the noun scanned as a monosyllable, as commonly: 'saviours among the gods'.

² For a full and interesting collection of passages relating to St. Elmo's fire as a traditional element in the *propempticon*, see Nisbet and Hubbard on Horace *Odes* 1.3.2, quoting *inter alia* Cinna fr. 2 (Morel) and Statius *Silv.* 3.2.8. See also Kannicht's note on Eur. *Helena* 1495–1511 (vol. 2, p. 395).