

If the traditions underlying such works as 'Marsanes' and the Mithras liturgy depend upon post-Nicomachean magical and mystical practices, this has significance as a *terminus post quem* for these traditions, a significance that becomes more important the later the dates of Nicomachus' career.

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PHILOPONUS, DIODORUS, AND POSSIBILITY

Here, according to the standard text of Philoponus, is how Diodorus and Philo defined the possible:

Διόδωρος δὲ ἄλλα τινὰ τοῦ δυνατοῦ σημαίνοντα εἶναι φησι· φησὶ γὰρ δυνατόν εἶναι ἢ τὸ ἐκβεβηκὸς ἤδη, ὅπερ φησὶ ἡμεῖς ὑπάρχον, ἢ τὸ δυνάμενον ἐκβῆναι μήπω δὲ ἐκβεβηκός. ὁ δὲ Φίλων φησὶ δυνατόν εἶναι ἢ τὸ ἐκβεβηκὸς ἢ τὸ δυνάμενον ἐκβῆναι μηδέποτε δὲ ἐκβαίνειν, ὥστε λέγομεν αἰσθητὸν εἶναι τὸ ἐν τῷ βυθῷ ὄστρακον.¹

I conjecture that instead of the first *δυνάμενον*, we should read *μέλλον*.

The definition here ascribed to Philo is entirely in line with what we know of Philo from elsewhere: Alex. Aphr. in *APr.* 184.6–10; Simp. in *Cat.* 195.33–196.5; Boethius, in *de Int.* 234.10–15. The same is not true of the definition here ascribed to Diodorus. For Diodorus, we are told elsewhere, defined the possible as that which either is or will be so: Cic. *Fat.* 13, 17; Plu. *de Stoic. rep.* 1055d–e; Alex. Aphr. in *APr.* 183.42–184.5; Boethius, in *de Int.* 234.22–4, 412.16–7. Something has therefore got garbled.

The garbling may be the fault, not of Philoponus or his source, but of his scribes. We know that the repeated *ἐκβῆναι* led to corruption in one manuscript: B omits everything from *μήπω* to the second *ἐκβῆναι*, and thus has Diodorus define the possible in Philonian style as *ἢ τὸ ἐκβεβηκὸς ἤδη . . . ἢ τὸ δυνάμενον ἐκβῆναι μηδέποτε δὲ ἐκβαίνειν*. I suggest that the repeated *ἐκβῆναι* led to another corruption, which has affected all manuscripts: it led to the replacement of a *μέλλον*, which by rights belonged before the first *ἐκβῆναι*, with a *δυνάμενον* which by rights belonged only before the second. At any rate, the definition here ascribed to Diodorus can be ungarbled if we replace its *δυνάμενον* by *μέλλον*. This will have him define the possible as *ἢ τὸ ἐκβεβηκὸς ἤδη . . . ἢ τὸ μέλλον ἐκβῆναι μήπω δὲ ἐκβεβηκός*. And that definition will be the one familiar from the other sources.²

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¹ Philp. in *APr.* 169.17–21. This is fr. 136 in the collection of K. Döring, *Die Megariker* (Amsterdam, 1972); and part of fr. II F 27 in the collection of G. Giannantoni, *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae* (Naples, 1990). Both Döring, pp. 39–43, and Giannantoni, i.429–33, reprint all the other passages here cited.

² I am grateful to Neil Hopkinson for helpful advice.