

NOTES • KORT BYDRAES

THE MEANING OF *ANTITHEOS* (HLD. 4.7.13) AGAIN

ABSTRACT

The word ἀντίθεος in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodorus (4.7.13) may, contrary to a recent discussion,¹ carry the meaning ‘opposing god’ and need not refer solely to a human agent (in this case Theagenes). To derive the meaning exclusively from the Homeric sense ‘godlike being’ is to deprive the passage of its subtle irony.

Modern scholars and translators of the *Aithiopika* take ἀντίθεος in Hld. 4.7.13 to mean ‘a hostile god’ and compare Iamblichus (*Myst.* 3.31.176–77), who refers to the Chaldaean doctrine of demonology in which ‘impious slips of evil-doing’ (τῆς ἀνοσιουργίας . . . ἀσεβῆ πταίσματα) cause wrong gods or evil demons (which are called ἀντιθέους) to be introduced into sacred rituals in the place of gods.² Because of the similarity between the two passages, some authorities have claimed that Heliodorus had knowledge of ‘Mazdaean beliefs’.³ However, Puiggali states categorically that ἀντίθεος never carries this sense, that it should always be related to the basic Homeric meaning of the word ‘godlike’ (‘semblable à un dieu’: cf., e.g., Hom. *Il.* 5.663, ἀντίθεον Σαρπηδόνα ‘the godlike Sarpedon’), and that Heliodorus cannot therefore

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1. J. Puiggali, ‘Le sens du mot ἀντίθεος chez Héliodore IV 7,13’, *Philologus* 128 (1984) 271–275.
 2. Cf., e.g., J.R. Morgan, *An Ethiopian Story*, in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1989, 431 (‘a divine counter-power’), A. Colonna, *Le Etiopiche*, Turin 1987, 237 (‘una divinità ostile’); G.N. Sandy, ‘Characterization and Philosophical Decor in Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*’, *TAPhA* 112 (1982) 150 (‘evil daemon’); J. Maillon, *Héliodore: Les Éthiopiennes*, Paris 1935–43, Vol. II 14 (‘quelque dieu ennemi’). Arnobius *Adversus Nationes* 4.12 (Reifferscheid) gives a similar account to Iamblichus: *magi suis in accitionibus memorant antitheos saepius obrepere pro accitis, esse autem hos quosdam materiis ex crassioribus spiritus qui deos se fingant, nesciosque mendacius et simulationibus ludant.*
 3. See E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1951, 298 and n. 119; M.P. Nilsson, *A History of Greek Religion* tr. F.J. Fielden, Oxford 1949², 565–67; F. Cumont, *The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*, Chicago 1911, 152 n. 36.

be held to have had knowledge of Mazdaean doctrines.⁴ In essence, the question concerns the supernatural status of the ἀντίθεος in Heliodorus: does the word refer to a human or a demonic rival of the gods or both? Puiggali argues for the first alternative whereas the last is probably better suited to the passage in question. In order to decide the matter, two issues need to be addressed: the possibility of the word carrying the meaning ‘hostile god’ and its meaning in the context of Hld. 4.7.13.

The adjective form of ἀντίθεος generally means ‘godlike’,⁵ possibly even in P.Mag. Lond. 121.635–36 (τινὸς ἀντιθέου πλανοδαίμονος),⁶ but there is also evidence that the Homeric sense of the word was already misunderstood in the second century A.D., since the sophist Apollonius records the views of those who believed that ἀντίθεος Πολύφημος in Homer meant that the Cyclops Polyphemus was the enemy of Zeus.⁷ The Cyclopes were, of course, the sons of Earth and Heaven (cf. Hesiod, *Theogony* 147–49) and of quasi-divine status. By the fifth century, the philosopher Ammonius felt the need to remind his readers that ἀντίθεος was in the past used as a synonym of ἰσόθεος.⁸ The noun form is much rarer than the adjective but in addition to Iamblichus *Myst.* 3.31.177 it was extensively used by the Christian writers to refer to an enemy of God.⁹ The term ‘antiChrist’ had

4. Puiggali translates ἀντίθεος in the Iamblichus passage and in P.Mag. Lond. 121.636–36 as ‘faususement semblables aux dieux’ (above, n.1, p. 272). For the Heliodorus passage he cites Amyot’s translation with approval (‘Mais il me semble qu’il y a quelque jeune homme, qui empêche mon entreprise et combat à l’encontre de mes ministres’). Cf. the commentary of D. Korraes, Paris 1804–6, *ad loc.*, who notes Amyot’s translation with surprise and suggests that he must have mistaken ἀντίθεος here for the similar Homeric form ἥθεος ‘a young man on the verge of manhood’ (cf., e.g., *Il.* 22.127, παρθένος ἥθεος) though there is no evidence in the MSS. for such a reading.
5. LSJ⁹ s.v. ἀντί C.6 observe that ἀντί in the sense of ‘like’ was used productively in compounds such as ἀντίπαις (Lucian *Am.* 2; *Somn.* 16, ‘like a child’) and ἀντίδουλος (Aesch. *Ch.* 135, ‘like a slave’; Aesch. *fr.* 194, ‘instead of a slave’). Philo also uses ἀντίθεος as an adjective to mean ‘in the place of god, godlike’ (*De somniis* 2.183.1; *De confusione linguarum* 88.1, ὁ ἀντίθεος νοῦς; *De posteritate Caini* 123.4, τὸν ἀντίθεον καιρόν). Philo commonly uses compounds of ἀντι-, such as ἀντίμιμος in this sense (*De Vita Mosis* 2.195.4). Cf. Puiggali (above n. 3) 271 n.4.
6. LSJ⁹ s.v. ἀντίθεος II is undecided about this usage.
7. *Lexicon Homericum* s.v. ἀντί [Bekker]: ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ Κύκλωπος, ὅτε φησὶν « ἀντίθεον Πολύφημον » θέλουσιν ἀκούειν ἔνιοι τὸν ἐναντιούμενον τοῖς θεοῖς· οὗτος γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ λέγων « οὐ γὰρ Κύκλωπες Διὸς μεγάλου ἀλέγουσιν » τὰς δὲ ἀντιανείρας Ἄμαζόννας ὁ μὲν Ἄρισταρχος ἰσάνδρους, ἔνιοι δὲ τὰς ἀντιαζούσας, οἷον ἐναντιουμένας, ἀνδράσι· πολεμικαὶ γὰρ. The prefix *anti-* was used productively in the sense ‘opposed to’ in Latin nouns derived from Greek (cf., e.g., Suet. *Jul.* 56.5, *AntiCatones*, cf. Plut. *Caes.* 54; *Tib.* 11.3, *antisophistas*, cf. Lucian *Alex.* 43).
8. In *Cat.* 71.2: τὸ γὰρ ἀντί παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς τὸ ἴσον σημαίνει, ὥσπερ τὸ ἀντίθεον ἰσόθεον καὶ ἀντιάνειρα τὴν γυναῖκα τὴν ἴσην δύναμιν τῷ ἀνδρὶ ἔχουσαν.
9. Cf., e.g., Johannes Chrysostomus *In Joannem homiles* 59.140.30: ἵνα μὴ δόξη ὡς ἀντίθεός τις καὶ ἐξ ἐναντίας ἤκων τῷ Πατρὶ ταῦτα ποιεῖν.

been in use since the composition of the *New Testament* and was widely used by the theological writers.¹⁰ The Christian usage (itself probably derived from Mazdaean thought) shows that the word was indeed used in the sense of ‘opposing god’ in the late Empire and that its use by Heliodorus in a closely related sense cannot be categorically excluded.¹¹

The second question concerns the context in which Heliodorus uses the word (4.7.13). Here Kalasiris, an Egyptian priest and the protector of the young lovers Theagenes and Charikleia, tells Charikles, the adoptive father of Charikleia, that some ἀντίθεος was counteracting the ‘powers’ (δυνάμεις, 4.7.12) which he had invoked against her to overcome her antipathy to marriage (cf. 2.33.6–8, 4.7.1–2); his explanation was designed to account for the hysterical fit she had thrown when presented with Charikles’ chosen suitor, his nephew Alkamenes, instead of Theagenes (4.7.11). Puiggali argues that Kalasiris, who was opposed to the lower forms of Egyptian magic (3.16.3), regards the powers which he initially brought to bear against Charikleia (4.5.3) as malign and the power now blocking them as good, although he gives the opposite impression of his beliefs to Charikles, who believed in them.¹² His arguments are as follows: (1) Kalasiris uses the words ὀχλεῖται and καταναγκάσαι of the powers (δυνάμεις) he first raised against Charikleia (4.7.12) and therefore they cannot be good. (2) Kalasiris only presents the ἀντίθεος as malign for the sake of his deception of Charikles. The whole performance is a spoof (4.5.3), since Kalasiris disapproves of the lower forms of magic (3.16.3). (3) The ἀντίθεος is not a god or a demon because it is called an ἐχθρός τις later in the same paragraph and is portrayed as a γόης. (4) The ἀντίθεος is, in fact, Theagenes. With regard to the first argument, neither ὀχλεῖται nor καταναγκάσαι is strong enough to characterise the powers first invoked by Kalasiris as evil. These forces were, after all, originally invoked to counter the effects of the ‘eye of envy’ (ὄφθαλμὸς βίασκανος), which Kalasiris suggested to Charikles had been put on Charikleia during the procession at Delphi (3.7.2). The second of Puiggali’s arguments effectively concedes that the ἀντίθεος is presented as

10. Cf., e.g., 1 *Ep. John* 2.18; 2.22; 2 *Ep. John* 7.3; Polycarp *Ep. ad Phil.* 7.1; Lactantius *Inst. Divin.* 2.9.13 [Brandt]: *nox quam pravo illo antitheo dicimus attributam.*

11. J.R. Morgan, *A Commentary on the Ninth and Tenth Books of the Aithiopika of Heliodorus*, Diss. Oxford 1979, at 9.9.3, comments that Heliodorus’ use of the word is not unsuited to a Christian bishop. For discussion of the possibility that Heliodorus was familiar with Christian doctrines, see Q. Cataudella, ‘Spunti e motivi cristiani nella poesia pagana antica’, *Vigiliae Christianae* 29 (1975) 161–190, esp. 172–174. In view of the probable fourth century date of the *Aithiopika*, Christian influence on Heliodorus is quite likely. See most recently J.R. Morgan, ‘Heliodorus’, in G. Schmeling, *The Novel in the Ancient World*, Leiden 1996, 418–19.

12. Puiggali (above n. 1) 274.

malign to Charikles and that he took it in the sense of a 'divine opponent'. Although Kalasiris is probably insincere in his deception of Charikles, this does not mean that the word cannot refer to a supernatural power in its primary sense. In turn, the ἀντίθεος need not be identified with the ἐχθρός (4.7.13, Puiggali's third argument) since Kalasiris describes it as a hostile power invoked by the rival sorcerer to blight Charikleia's life and to leave her childless. It is quite possible that Heliodorus was playing with the Homeric meaning of the word ('resembling a god') and intended his readers to pick up an allusion to Theagenes (Puiggali's final argument) in the word. This would have been entirely in keeping with his characterisation of his hero as a second Achilles replete with ashen spear (δόρυ μελίαν χαλκόστομον, 3.3.5) and also with his tendency to play on words.¹³ But, while this may be the latent meaning in this passage, the overt sense must be 'hostile god' to suit the demands of the context. It is worth noting that Porphyry (*De Abstin.* 2.37–43) refers to a closely analogous situation of a hierarchy of spiritual powers and daemons.¹⁴

In conclusion: while there may be an underlying awareness of the Homeric meaning of ἀντίθεος in Heliodorus, which lends a degree of ambiguity and irony to the phrase, the primary meaning demanded by the immediate context must be 'opposing god'. I suggest 'some divine opponent' to bring out the nuance in the expression.

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