

ΠΑΡΑΧΑΡΑΞΟΝ ΤΟ ΝΟΜΙΣΜΑ

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falsification of currency

I

The new general election in Greece took place on Sunday 17 June 2012 was, I believe, very significant for the prospect of Greek people who expressed a willingness to join hands with other European nations to remain in the Eurozone.

In advance of the election Antonius Saramas the New Democracy leader vowed the necessity of renegotiation of some of the terms of the austerity and in addition to this he said: “tomorrow a new era for Greece begins.” And at the EU summit in Brussels on Thursday 28 June President Karolos Papoulias made a strong appeal to EU leaders that Greece should not miss anymore EU support funds. In spite of these promising utterances Greek people will be probably necessitated to observe firmly the bailout agreements and the hard austerity measures including deep spending cuts on everything from health care to education and infrastructure, as well as tax hikes and reductions of salaries etc.

But the notorious option “Grexit” was swept away. Greeks avoided the worst case scenario outlined since the very beginning of the debt crisis.

A crucial dilemma between Euro and Drachma disappeared. The Greek drachma, which enjoyed an extraordinary run until Ottoman times and which was restored as the official currency of Greece in the 1830s, is again sliding into the darkness.

Cherishing for the memory of Greek drachma, I think, it might be eventually the best option to discard drachma in order to save the financial solidity of Greek government, at least temporarily. But from a macroscopic viewpoint we cannot positively affirm that the prospective development of Greek government within Eurozone will be promising. It is true that the EU summit on the debt crisis appears to have averted disaster, Europe's economic future itself is so fluid and fluctuate that we cannot assert that Europe's economic future will be unchangeably prospective and bright.

People's reactions to the recent EU summit are different. Against the question "do you feel more confident about Europe's economic future?" (*The guardian*, Friday 29 June 2012 18.30 BST), "yes" and "no" are equally divided. Some gave a pessimistic answer and said: "Europe has become a solipsistic nightmare and rather than feel optimistic that there is finally a way out of the recent impasse, things are taking a dangerous turn. The introduction of the Euro without a constitution meant that it was bound to fail, especially with the weaker economies like Greece." And he added: "the prospect of financial meltdown [of EU] is supposed to scare us all into agreeing to federalization as the only alternative." (donafugata, 30 June 2012)

II

The present difficult situation of Greek people forces me to remind a Greek philosopher's figure and his mission: Diogenes of Sinope the cosmic dog¹⁾ and his mission "παράχαραζον τὸ νόμισμα" (Deface the currency!). There is a striking parallelism between both figures of ancient Diogenes and the

present Greece. They equally falsified the currency. In order to extract a lesson from them I would like to focus the case of Diogenes' "falsification."

On my assessment of the reports and *testimonies* concerning Diogenes of Sinope, it was Diogenes himself as the Director of Sinopean mint that 'defaced the coinage' (παραχαράξει τὸ νόμισμα) as well as 'adulterated' (ἐκιδόηλευσε) the state coinage. The case was, so it appears, resulted from Diogenes' patriotism and counteraction against Persian power which in those days perpetually intervened in Sinopean coinage and amplified the financial crisis of Sinope. Diogenes' action was eventually detected and he was banished.

On his vagabond journey to Athens Diogenes defaced himself as the former Director of Sinopean mint and redefined himself as a "homeless" who suffered all the curses of a tragedy: "ἄπολις, ἄοικος, πατρίδος ἐστερημένος, πτωχός, πλανήτης, βίον ἔχων τοῦφ' ἡμέραν (without a city-state, without a house, without a fatherland, a beggar, a wanderer with a single day's bread)."²⁾ On this occasion his philosophizing started. Against someone who reproached him with his "exile", he replied: "Yes, it was through that, miserable fellow, that I came to be a philosopher."³⁾

Then, what is the essence of Diogenes' philosophy? It is a spiritual animalism. Theophrastos in *The Megarian* reports Diogenes' personal experience of spiritual awaking as follows: "Through watching a mouse running about, ...not looking for a place to lie down in, not afraid of the dark, not seeking any of the things which are considered to be dainties, he discovered the means of adapting himself to circumstances."⁴⁾ That is to say, Diogenes discerned in animals the best model of the self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια).⁵⁾

This standpoint of spiritual animalism which Diogenes himself voluntarily accepted makes a sharp contrast with Aristotelian vision of

“man.” Reforming and sharpening a traditional Greek view of “man” beginning from Hesiod⁶⁾ Aristotle in the opening part of *Politics* gave a famous definition of “man” as “a political animal by nature” which can be expressed as a proportional mean between “god” and “animal”:

God : man :: man : animal.⁷⁾

In accordance with this definition, Aristotle denounced “a man who by nature and not by mere accident is without a city-state (ἄπολις)” as well as who is “unable to live in society” or “has no need because he is sufficient for himself.” He identified such a man as either “a bad man” or “a beast (θηρίον).” For such a man is, according to Aristotle, “no part of a city-state” and is like the “tribeless, lawless, hearthless one (ἄφρήτωρ, ἀθέμιστος, ἀνέστιος),” whom Homer reviled in the *Iliad* IX.63. It is a noteworthy fact that Aristotle is expressing his severe distrust of the city-less man and the outsider who may be characterized as “beast” and no part of a city-state.⁸⁾

III

Diogenes the cosmic dog defaced Aristotle’s definition of “man” which has been circulated as the Current Coin (τὸ νόμισμα) in that time. Diogenes recognized himself as a “beast” like lion inspiring a person with awe and as a “dog” fawning on those who give him something, yelping at those who refuse, and setting his teeth in rascals.⁹⁾ Thus, in his conscious antagonism to Aristotelian world-view, Diogenes dared voluntarily to substitute himself for “animal,” which was the third term in the above mentioned Aristotelian analogy. The currency of Aristotle’s definition of man is drastically defaced by the dog philosopher.

The “παράχαραξις” is a key-concept of Diogenes’ philosophy. According

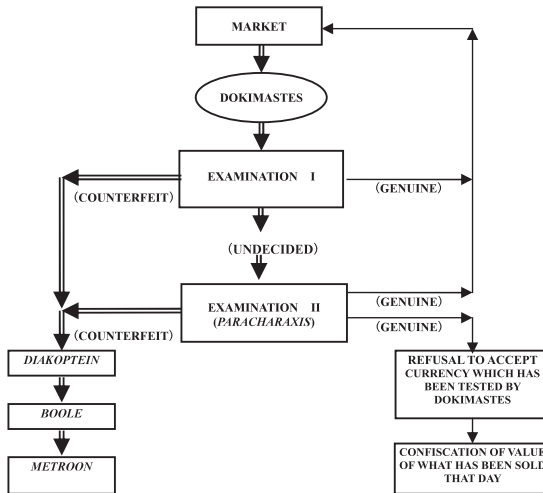
to Liddell and Scott the verb “*παραχαράσσω*” or “*παραχαράττω*” primarily means “re-stamp” or “re-value” the currency and secondarily “deface” or “debase.” But its technical sense refers especially to the method of examination by the medium of which genuineness or spuriousness of a coin is decided.

Speaking more precisely the word “*παραχάραξις*” means to test a coin by cutting its “*χαρακτήρ*”; i.e. “mark engraved,” “impress,” and “stamp” on the coin. The coin examined by this method necessarily leaves a scar. Thus the coins are ‘defaced.’ But the case does not immediately imply that the coins in question are to be out of circulation. If they turn out to be genuine ones, they will be returned back to the market. If they turn out to be counterfeit, they will be confiscated and cut through in order to put them out of circulation.

Six years ago, at 18th International Conference of Philosophy, ‘Values and Justice in the Global Era,’ I have read the original draft of ‘Cynic Justice’ in which I have examined some implications of the word “*παραχάραξις*.” As a sample I have taken a marble stele which was discovered from the Athenian Agora in 1970. Here I would like to show you again its brief outline.

The marble stele in question provides us with a vivid figure how the “*παραχάραξις*” played its role in the examination process of coins. The opening paragraph tells us that the Athenian law in question was, on the motion of Nikophon, resolved by *nomothetai*. The law itself starts with the following words: “let Attic silver currency be accepted when [it is shown to be] of silver and bears the official [type]. Let the public tester (ὁ δοκιμαστής ὁ δημόσιος; Dokimastes) sitting among the tables test (the coins) according to these regulations every [day except] ...”

Dokimastes’ duty is to examine Athenian coins for their purity



according to the law. On my interpretation, Dokimastes' examination runs as follows:

[The first stage] If anyone brings to him coins which will turn out to be Attic genuine coins, he will return it to the person who brought it to him.

(1) The *Dokimastes* observes carefully the coin, and examine closely its stamp, design, size, color, flaws etc.; and if he thinks to be necessary to examine it more exactly, he will weigh it on a balance and test it by a touchstone in order to verify its constituents. And if he had a full confidence that the coin in question satisfies fully Attic regulations, he will return it to the person who brought it to him, saying: 'This is genuine. No problem.' [Examination I]

(2) However, if he has an ounce of suspicion, he appeals to the means of "*paracharaxis*" examination, i.e. to the cutting test by a chisel in order

to check its authenticity. Then, if the coin in question turns out to be counterfeit, the *Dokimastes* confiscates it. Then the person who brought it will receive a certain amount of legal tender in place of the counterfeit coin and come back to his business work.

[**The second stage**] If the coins brought to him turn out to be the plated coins having cores of copper or of lead, or counterfeit, he cuts them across immediately and deposits them with the council in order to consecrate them to the *Metroon*. Thus he takes a measure to stop the circulation of these coins.

(1) The *Dokimastes* cannot verify whether or not the coin in question is a plated one or an alloy of silver and copper (or lead or iron), if he does not appeal to the means of “*paracharaxis*” examination. Without fail the judgment by a touchstone is effective against the alloyed coins. But, it does not valid for the plated ones. The surface metal-constituents can be definitely discerned by this method. But, in order to examine the inner part constituents, one must cut and deface the coin. On the other hand, when the coin turns out to be counterfeit by the “*paracharaxis*” examination, it does not necessary to appeal to the examination by a touchstone. Thus, at all events it is necessary to appeal to the “*paracharaxis*” examination to get a final judgment.

(2) After “*paracharaxis*” examination the genuine coin will be returned back to the market again through the medium of the person who brought it to the *Dokimastes*, while the counterfeit one will be confiscated and cut across (διακόπτειν) by the *Dokimastes* so that it will be deposited with the *Boule* and turned over to the *Metroon*.

(3) The “*diakoptein*” is fundamentally different from one of “*paracharaxis*.” The “*paracharaxis*” is an act of examination (δοκιμάζειν), while the “*diakoptein*” is one of waste disposal.

[The third stage] If anyone refuses to accept the silver currency which has been examined by him and which turned out to be genuine, the *Dokimastes* is entitled to confiscate the value of what the person in question has sold that day.

(1) He who refuses to accept silver currency which has been tested by the *Dokimastes* can be deprived of the value of what he has sold that day. However the coin in question is not counterfeit but genuine one. Then, why does he refuse to accept genuine coin? He refuses them because of the ugly traces on the surface of coin, namely because of chisel stamp by the “*paracharaxis*” examination; in other words because of a fact that it is a “defaced” coin. Perhaps, it might be the case that the person who refused to accept the defaced coin claimed to accept a new substitute “owl” or even a premium.

As you know now, the cardinal task of the *Dokimastes* consists in his examination by “*paracharaxis*” in order to scrap the counterfeit coins. *Dokimastes*’ main task (mission) is to expose the counterfeit coins and to put them out of circulation.

IV

Diogenes’ mission “*παράχαραζον τὸ νόμισμα*” is in parallel with the above mentioned *Dokimastes*’ task. Diogenes’ mission overlaps with *Dokimastes*’ duty in disclosing spuriousness of a false νόμισμα and in putting it out of circulation in order to restore genuine (ὀρθός, in other words τῇ φύσει) currency (νόμισμα).

Diogenes believed that there should be a natural and genuine law without which it is impossible to be there a civilized association (χωρὶς αὐτοῦ οὐχ οἷόν τε πολιτεύεσθαι, DL6.72), where the conventional barriers between

men and women, between citizens and non-citizens, and between the races are to be abolished.¹⁰⁾

Now it is time to refer to Diogenes' words which were uttered by him in the dialogue between Diogenes the slave on his deathbed and his master Xenias (DL6.32). There in his response to master's question how he wishes to be buried, Diogenes the dying slave, perhaps having in mind Alexander and Macedonians in power who were his long standing rivals, answered: 'On my face (ἐπὶ πρόσωπον), since after a little time the things at the bottom will be converted into up (ὅτι μετ' ὀλίγον μέλλει τὰ κάτω ἄνω στρέφεσθαι).'

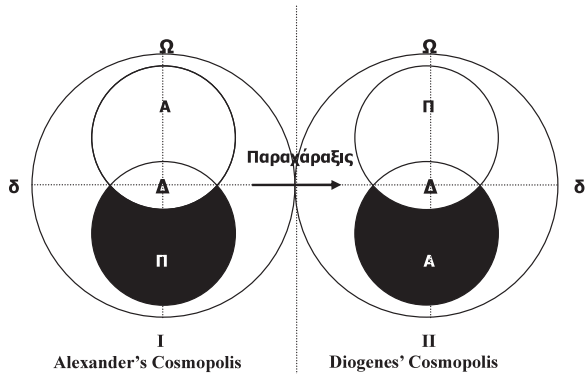
Diogenes' utterance not only reminds us immediately Jesus Christ's words in *Mk.* 10.31: 'Πολλοὶ δὲ ἔσονται πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ οἱ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι' (But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first), but also connotes an "Archimedean point" by the medium of which Alexandrian cosmopolitanism will be reversed and defaced.¹¹⁾

Where is then the "Archimedean point" in question? In order to answer to this crucial question, in the first place, we should identify the nature of Alexandrian cosmopolis and then compare it with Diogenes' one. As I see it Alexander's cosmopolis *in arms* must be regarded as a despotic one, where every foreign state incorporated into it was necessitated to serve as a "subject" in "the Greek government *writ large*."¹²⁾ The notorious practice of "προσκύνησις" (obeisance) which Alexander introduced and forced to all of his subjects tells the state of affairs symbolically.¹³⁾

In contrast with this, Diogenes' cosmopolis is "Beggar's bag (πήρα),"¹⁴⁾ wherein "men fight not each with other (οὐ πολέμουσι πρὸς ἀλλήλους), nor stand to arms for money (οὐχ ὅπλα κέκτηνται περὶ κέρματος) or for fame (οὐ περὶ δόξης)." This "πήρα" immediately reminds us Plato's description of the "*polis* of minimum indispensables" (ἀναγκαιοτάτη πόλις), the so-called "*polis*

of pigs” (ὁὼν πόλις),¹⁵⁾ which Socrates affectionately called “the healthy” (ὑγυής) and “the true *polis*” (ἀληθινὴ πόλις).¹⁶⁾ It was a peaceful *polis*, where people knew neither “poverty” nor “war.”¹⁷⁾

Thus Diogenean cosmopolis should be regarded as a top-bottom reversed version of Alexander’s cosmopolis *in arms*.



In the above diagram I let “A” be Alexander’s cosmopolis in circulation; and let “Π” be Diogenean cosmopolis which is not yet in circulation; let “Ω” be the universe; and let “Δ” be Diogenes who is a dog endowed with an ambivalent character; he said about himself as follows: ‘When hungry, a Maltese; when full, a Molossian-two breeds which most people praise, though for fear of fatigue they do not venture out hunting with them.’ (DL6.55)¹⁸⁾ Because of this ambivalent characteristic, “Δ” is a member of the class $\{A \cap \Pi\}$ and occupies a fence-riding position; in other words he is at the “μέσον” in the universe.¹⁹⁾ Because of A’s all inclusiveness the class $\{A' \cap \Pi\}$ has no member. Then the diagram I represents the “Alexander’ Cosmopolis.”

Now, let me draw a transversal line δ - δ' which cuts across the

intersectional domain between “Α” and “Π.” It reveals a middle point (τὸ μέσον) whereat “Δ” occupies its position. The line is a fundamental axis around which a revolutionary turnabout between “Α” and “Π” arises.

V

Diogenes’ cosmopolis is a bottom-up reversed version of Alexander’s one. In addition to this, it is “madden,” because Plato called Diogenes “Σωκράτης μαινόμενος” (Madden Socrates). Therefore, the cosmopolis in question, namely “Beggar’s bag (πήρα),” may be called “Alexander’s Cosmopolis mainomenos” or “*Madden Alexandro cosmopolis*.”

I do not know your evaluation about this healthy and peaceful “πήρα,” where people know neither poverty nor war.²⁰⁾ But, I believe, the “πήρα” in question outstrips not only Eurozone but also some fresh “federalization” depending on nuclear power plants and armed with nuclear weapons, which may annihilate the whole creature on the earth and change our globe into a supernova in a flash.

References

- 1) Ca. 412/403-324/321 B.C.; heavenly dog, οὐράνιος τε κύων, DL6.77
- 2) D.L. 6.38.
- 3) D.L. 6.49.
- 4) DL. 6.22.
- 5) See also Aelian, *Historical Miscellany*, 13.26: “Diogenes of Sinope lived alone and rejected by the world. He was avoided because of his carping manner and his dissatisfaction with everything that was said or done. So Diogenes was miserable and ate barley-bread and green shoots—that was what he had. A mouse used to come and take crumbs of his bread. Diogenes watched closely what was happening, smiled and became more cheerful than he had been, remarking ‘This mouse does not need any of the luxuries of the Athenians, but you, Diogenes, are annoyed at not dining with Athenians.’ And he provided himself with timely

- comfort.” See also Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, ‘Religion and the Early Cynics’ in R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (ed.) *The Cynics, the Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy*, University of California Press, 1996, p.60.
- 6) See my article ‘Aristotle’s Theory of Justice and the Modern World’ in my book *Greek Philosophy and the Modern World*, Studies in Greek Philosophy Series, The International Center for Greek Philosophy and Culture, Athens, 1998, pp.133-172. Concerning Hesiod’ understanding of human beings, see the excellent articles by Jean-Pierre Vernant, especially ‘The Myth of Prometheus in Hesiod’ in his book *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, translated by Janet Lloyd, Methuen, 1974, pp. 168-185.
- 7) See my article ‘Political Animal’ in my book *Visible and Invisible in Greek Philosophy*, University Press of America, 2008, pp.221-245.
- 8) Why is it acceptable that “a man who is without a state” finds his position turned into that of “the beast” in the midst of giving a definition of “man” as a “political animal” ? It is because Aristotle identifies such a man as a beast. According to Aristotle, such a man cannot find his position in the category of “man.” It is obvious from this that in his statement about “θηρίον ἢ θεός” Aristotle does not necessarily use the word “θηρίον (beast)” in a strictly zoological sense. However it is doubtful that one could specify “the beast” from a zoological point of view. We must insist that the beast could be no less definable than that “weeds” could not be defined in the field of morphological botany. The “weeds” are our subjective projection into the outer world, aiming at distinguishing useless grasses from useful ones. They are not “by nature weeds.” The word “weed” is a normative term attached to some kinds of grasses from an artificial point of view relative to human cultures. Thus it is evident that Aristotle here uses the word “beast” as a certain kind of normative term whose function is founded on a particular understanding of “man.” See my book *Greek Philosophy and the Modern World*, Studies in Greek Philosophy Series, The International Center for Greek Philosophy and Culture, Athens, 1998, p. 136.
- 9) DL. 6.60; see also 6.55.
- 10) See DL6.73: μηδ’ ἀνόσιον εἶναι τὸ καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπείων κρεῶν ἄψασθαι.
- 11) See my paper ‘The Origin of Cosmopolitanism’ in Momoyama Hogaku, 2003.
- 12) Plutarch, *On the Fortune of Alexander*, 328fb.

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- 13) See Arrian, *History of Alexander and Indica*, 4.0.5-12.5; Plutarch, *Lives* VII, 54.3-55.1. Cf. also John Maxwell O'Brien, *Alexander the Great: The Invisible Enemy*, A Biography, Routledge, 1994, pp. 142-3; 144; 147.
- 14) DL6.85.
- 15) Plato, *Republic*, II, 369D.
- 16) *Op. cit.*, 372E.
- 17) *Op. cit.*, 372C.
- 18) See also DL33; 60.
- 19) See DL6.29
- 20) The *Dokimastes'* task was based on Athenian law. It is notable that there is such a fundamental law in the Diogenes' cosmopolis too (DL6.72). This general law²⁰ stipulated three particular regulations those of which are relevant to (1) Freedom, (2) Equality, and (3) Friendship. See my 'Cynic Justice.' It is significant that John L. Mole in his 'Cynic Cosmopolitanism' confirmed that the early Cynics expressed (1) a positive allegiance to the whole earth and all mankind and (2) a positive attitude to the natural world and all its riches as opposed to the world of *polis*, therefore also (3) a positive attitude to the animal world and recognized (4) the kinship or community of the wise or "like-mindedness" (*homonoia*) and considered that (5) this kinship transcends the conventional barriers between men and women and between the races, so that they recognized (6) "friendship" and "affinity" between the animate and the inanimate and between gods and men so as to recognize the common humanity.

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