

A POSSIBLE ARISTOTLE-FRAGMENT IN THE b-SCHOLION ON *ILIAD* 22.94

By Robert Mayhew

Summary: The b-scholion on *Iliad* 22.94 attributes a claim about a venomous snake (δράκων) to Aristotle's *On Animals*. Likely because there is no obvious parallel text in Aristotle's extant works on animals, the reference tends nowadays to be dismissed as inauthentic (though it was taken much more seriously in the 19th century). Further, the Aristotle reference has been consigned to a footnote in the standard edition of the *Iliad* scholia. This essay reassesses the scholion and considers as possible sources a few different works of Aristotle. It also suggests that the Aristotelian material – whatever its source – was brought in by Homeric scholars to support one side of a debate over the meaning of κακά φάρμακα.

Early in *Iliad* 22, Hector is described as waiting for Achilles,

ὥς δὲ δράκων ἐπὶ χειρὶ ὀρέστερος ἄνδρα μένησιν
βεβρωκῶς κακὰ φάρμακ', ἔδω δέ τε μιν χόλος αἰνός,
σμερδαλέον δὲ δέδορκεν ἐλισσόμενος περὶ χειρῆ¹

As a *drakōn*² by its hole in the mountains waits for a man,

1 The text is West 2000: 272-73.

2 The *drakōn* also appears in *Il.* 2.308, 3.33, 6.181, 11.26, 11.39, *Od.* 4.457. Note *LfGrE* s.v. δράκων (M. Harder): “Charact. and behaviour ... neither recall the types of snake familiar to Greece and Asia Minor nor suggest a ‘dragon’. ... No clear dist. between δ. and ὄφις poss.” But see van der Mije 2011: 364-66 for an attempt at identification. On Aristotle on the *drakōn*, see below note 22.

having eaten evil *pharmaka*,³ and a dreadful *cholos* enters it,⁴
and it shoots a stinging glance, coiled by its hole (93-95).

The ancient scholars' main concern here was the use of *χειή* for the snake's abode.⁵ (More on this shortly.) There was also some curiosity about the idea of a snake eating poisonous things (*κακὰ φάρμακα*), and what precisely these things were. It is this latter issue that interests me most, though the bT-scholia⁶ that are the focus of this paper concern both *χειή* and *κακὰ φάρμακα*.

I begin by presenting transcriptions with translations of the two most relevant (sets of) scholia:

1. schol. T *Iliad* 22.93 & 94 (Burney MS 86 [fol. 242r])⁷

‡‡‡^o ἐπὶ χειῆ: ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ζῶων ξυλόχους τε καὶ εὐνάς φησι·
δύναται γὰρ καὶ ἕτερα ζῶα χωρήσαι· νῦν δὲ χειάν, τὴν αὐτὸν μόνον
χωροῦσαν καὶ τρόπον τινὰ ἔλυτρον αὐτοῦ οὔσαν· «οὐδὸς δ'
ἀμφοτέρους ὄδε χεῖσεται». ἢ ὅτι δίκην ὕδατος ἐκχεῖται εἰς αὐτὴν
τὸ θηρίον· ἀγριώτερα δὲ τὰ ἐν ἐρήμῳ γεννώμενα : —

- 3 See *LfGrE* s.v. *φάρμακα* (V. Langholf). I leave *φάρμακα* untranslated, as its nature is disputed in the scholia that interest me here.
- 4 de Jong 2012: 82: “*χόλος* is a psychological force, anger, as well as a substance in the body, bile, which is produced by the organ known as *χολάδες* (4.526 = 21.181) ... Here it is uniquely used to refer to the poison of a snake ...” See also van der Mije 2011: 368-69.
- 5 Though rare (in the Homeric epics, it appears only in *Il.* 22.93 and 95), this concern is not shared by modern scholars; see e.g. *LfGrE* s.v. *χειή* (W. Beck) and Richardson 1993: 116.
- 6 The scholia preserved in the b family of manuscripts (i.e. *Venetus* B [B], *Escorial* Y 1.1 [E3], and *Escorial* Ω 1.12 [E4]) and in manuscript T (*Burney* MS 86). The source of both is a lost archetype (known as ‘c’), the sources of which in turn are in large part ancient exegetical commentaries. See Erbse 1969: xvii-xxi and xxvi-xxviii (with a stemma on lviii), and for briefer overviews Dickey 2007: 19-20 and Schironi 2018: 9-11.
- 7 This manuscript can be accessed here: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=burney_ms_86_fs001r. ‡‡‡^o is written above *χειῆ* in the text of the *Iliad*, ⊕ over *βεβρωκῶς*.

- ⊕ βεβρωκῶς κακὰ φάρμακα: φασὶν αὐτὸν ἐσθίοντα μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν, ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι λυσοῦν τε τοῦ ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν · *
- ‡‡° “by its hole”: In the case of the other animals he says ‘copse’ and ‘lair’; for it [i.e. a copse or lair] can⁸ make room for other animals, too; but here [he says] ‘hole’, [because] it only has room for the [*drakōn*] itself, and is in a way its case; “this threshold will be room enough (χειίεται) for both of us” [*Od.* 18.17].⁹ Or [Homer uses χειή] because in the manner of water the beast pours (ἐκχεῖται) into it. And the [animals] that are brought forth in solitude are wilder [sc. than other animals].¹⁰
- ⊕ “having eaten evil *pharmaka*”: They claim that it [sc. the *drakōn*], eating ants and beetles after hiding,¹¹ is filled with venom and is provoked to go into a frenzy wiping off the irritating venom.

8 The journal’s referee suggested correcting δύναται to δύνανται, which would make the translation more natural: “for they [i.e. a copse and a lair] can” etc.

9 This *Odyssey*-quotation, here and in the following b-scholion, seems a bit out of place, and I suspect something may have dropped out at this point. It arguably makes a bit more sense in the context of an etymological explanation of (and objection to) χειή, of the sort found in an Aristonicus-scholion on *Il.* 22.93 in *Venetus A* (fol. 284r):

«ὥς δὲ δράκων ἐπὶ χειῆ»· ὅτι τὴν τῶν ὄφρων κατάδυσιν χειὰν εἶρηκεν, ἀπὸ τοῦ χειῖσθαι ὃ ἐστὶ χωρῆσαι ...

“As a *drakōn* by its hole”: Because he called the secret place of the snakes χειά, which is from ‘to pour’ (χειῖσθαι), which is ‘to make room for’....

Aristonicus is explaining why Aristarchus athetized this verse. See Schironi 2018: 349-50.

10 I am grateful to the journal’s referee for help in translating and understanding this passage (which also appears in the following b-scholion), as it gave me a great deal of trouble. The last line of this text is a further explanation of why Homer made the *drakōn* (a wild animal) dwell in a hole rather than in a copse or a lair.

11 Balme 1991: 147 points out that Aristotle uses φωλεύω, φωλεία, and their cognates, for both hibernation and estivation.

2. schol. b *Iliad* 22.93 (Venetus B [fol. 294r], Escorial Y 1.1 [fol. 285r], Escorial Ω 1.12 [fol. 189r])¹²

κζ ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ζῴων ξυλόχους τε καὶ εὐνάς φησι· δύναται γὰρ καὶ ἕτερα ζῶα χωρῆσαι. νῦν δὲ χειάν, τὴν αὐτὸν μόνον χωροῦσαν καὶ τρόπον τινὰ ἔλυτρον αὐτοῦ οὔσαν· «οὐδὸς δ' ἀμφοτέρους ὄδε χεῖσεται». ἢ ὅτι δίκην ὕδατος ἐκχεῖται εἰς αὐτὴν τὸ θηρίον. ἀγριώτερα δὲ τὰ ἐν ἐρήμῳ γεννώμενα. φησὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ ζ̄ περὶ ζῴων Ἀριστοτέλης ἐσθίοντα αὐτὸν μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι πλείονος τοῦ ἐμφύτου καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι καὶ λυσσᾶν ἐπιθυμοῦντά που ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν· ~

κζ [= χειῖ] In the case of the other animals he says ‘copse’ and ‘lair’; for it [i.e. a copse or lair] can make room for other animals, too; but here [he says] ‘hole’, [because] it only has room for the [*drakōn*] itself, and is in a way its case: “This threshold will be room enough (χεῖσεται) for both of us” [*Od.* 18.17]. Or [Homer uses *χειῖ*] because in the manner of water the beast pours (ἐκχεῖται) into it. And the [animals] that are brought forth in solitude are wilder [sc. than other animals]. Now Aristotle claims in *On Animals* 6 that it [sc. the *drakōn*], eating ants and beetles, is filled with venom, more than the natural amount, and so is provoked and goes into a frenzy, desiring somehow to wipe off the irritating venom.

I think T is superior to b in this respect: these are clearly two separate scholia on two different verses. For further evidence that these are separate comments, note that in *Lipsiensis gr.* 32, the ‘ants and beetles’ comment is virtually identical to the one in T, but is preceded by an entirely different comment that notes an etymological connection between δράκων in *Il.* 22.93, and δέδορκεν in 95;¹³ and that Eustathius (in a passage

12 These manuscripts can all be accessed here: <https://amphoreus.hpcc.uh.edu/>. In *Venetus B* and *Escorial Y* 1.1 (but not in *Escorial Ω* 1.12), κζ is written over χειῖ in the text of the *Iliad*. Otherwise, this scholion is identical in all three manuscripts. Although this is presented as a scholion on χειῖ in *Il.* 22.93, as I make clear it is in fact two scholia, one on χειῖ in 93, the other on κακὰ φάρμακα in 94.

13 «ὡς δὲ δράκων»: δράκων εἴρηται παρὰ τὸ δεδορκεῖναι· καὶ γὰρ δράκων ἀπὸ τούτου εἴρηται· τὸ γὰρ βλέμμα δεινὸν ἔχει. καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἰδίου οἴκου ἰστάμενος δεινότερος ἐστίν. φασὶ δὲ αὐτὸν ἐσθίοντα μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας, μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι, καὶ λυσσᾶν που ἐναπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν. (I

quoted below) couples a clearly related ‘ants and beetles’ comment with a different interpretation of κακά φάρμακα, which precedes it.

I pass over for the moment the first comment – identical in T and b – which concerns why (or whether) Homer chose to use χειρή to refer to the abode of the snake, when he elsewhere uses ξύλοχος (‘corpse’, see e.g. *Il.* 5.162) or εὐνή (‘lair’, see e.g. *Il.* 11.115). Here again are the passages that concern me (on κακά φάρμακα in *Il.* 22.94), with the differences highlighted:

T: φασίν αὐτὸν ἐσθίοντα μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι λυσσᾶν τε τοῦ ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν.

b: φησὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ ζ̄ περὶ ζώων Ἀριστοτέλης ἐσθίοντα αὐτὸν μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι πλείονος τοῦ ἐμφύτου καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι καὶ λυσσᾶν ἐπιθυμοῦντά που ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν.

The major differences are φασίν (T) in place of φησὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ ζ̄ περὶ ζώων Ἀριστοτέλης (b), and μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν (T) which is absent in b. This latter aside, T seems like a slightly more condensed version of the same material. The difference between these two texts with respect to the Aristotle-citation is hard to explain, given that we should expect the comments on κακά φάρμακα in b and T to have the same source. My aim in what follows is to speculate about the source of the reference to Aristotle.

Erbse 1972: 288 edits and presents these bT scholia together, as follows:

βεβρωκῶς κακά φάρμακα: φασίν αὐτὸν ἐσθίοντα μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι, b(BE3E4)T

was unable to consult this manuscript and so relied on Bachmann 1835: 682-83.) Cf. schol. D *Il.* 22.94/U^m & 22.95/Z^s (van Thiel²). The etymological connection is sound; see Colvin 2007: 194: “**δράκων**: < *d̥rkōn (root *derk-, ‘look’): poetic term derived from the unnerving eyes of a reptile. A play with δέδορκεν 95.”

πλείονος <ῆ> τοῦ ἐμφύτου b(BE3E4) καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι λυσσᾶν τε τοῦ ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν. b(BE3E4)T.

As presented, this is misleading, as mss. B, E3, and E4 all contain the Aristotle-reference. Erbse does, however, print this reference in his apparatus, where he explains why he omitted it: *mentionem Aristotelis ... ab auctore hyparchetypi b fictam et interpolatam esse demonstravit Valk I 175*. Here is the relevant passage in van der Valk 1963: part 1, 175:

bT X 94 offers information about dragons that were filled with venom by eating ants. b takes over the notice and ascribes it to Aristotle: φησὶν ἐν τῷ ζ' [sic]¹⁴ περὶ ζώων Ἀριστοτέλης κτε. This time the notice of b seems quite trustworthy, since he refers to a definite passage of Aristotle. If we consult Aristt. HA VI, we see that it begins with the words αἱ μὲν οὖν τῶν ὄφρων καὶ τῶν ἐντόμων γενέσεις κτε.¹⁵ The book itself, however, does not discuss serpents, but treats fishes, birds and mammals. Fortunately, we are acquainted with the unreliability of b, for otherwise we might have thought that originally the sixth book of Aristt. HA had presented a text which differed from that which is offered by our mss. The behavior of b is understandable, for he was interested in dragons (see [p. 151] note 90) and, therefore, he tried to make the notice of bT interesting by ascribing it to Aristotle.¹⁶

Although I cannot dismiss this as impossible, I do find dubious the idea that b would insert Aristotle's name into the text to make it more interesting, even adding a title and book number. Moreover, this would be particularly sloppy of b, as αἱ μὲν οὖν τῶν ὄφρων καὶ τῶν ἐντόμων

14 Mss. B, E3, and E4 all have ζ, but as van der Valk goes on to refer to HA 6, his printing ζ' creates no problems in interpretation. (In one book-numbering system 6, 7, and 8 are represented by ζ, ζ, and η, in another by ζ, η, and θ. See Primavesi 2007: 63-64 and Dickey 2007: 131-32.)

15 "So much for the generations of snakes and of insects etc.," which would include the *drakōn*, and ants and beetles.

16 van der Valk adds in a footnote: "We may imagine that b, when looking through the HA of Aristotle, saw that the sixth book began by mentioning dragons. The beginnings of new books are most easily discernible in the mss."

γενέσεις does not announce the subject to be discussed in Book 6, but briefly describes the subject that Aristotle had just discussed in the previous book: *HA* 5.19-32 is on the generation of insects, *HA* 5.34 (the last chapter of *HA* 5) on the generation of snakes. I therefore think it worthwhile to explore other possibilities.

Rose included this scholion (or rather, something like it) in all three of his collections of Aristotle fragments (1863, 1870, 1886). In each case he combined material from an A-scholion with the B-scholion (based on Dindorf's edition).¹⁷ In his first collection (titled *Aristoteles Pseudepigraphus*, as he thought all of this material was spurious) he sees a connection between this 'fragment' and *HA* 7(8),¹⁸ the source or identity of which he considers Theophrastus' *Περὶ τῶν φωλευόντων* (see DL 5.44 [124 Dorandi], and frs. 366-370 FHS&G) – recall the μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν in T, which Rose and other editors 'restore' to b.¹⁹ I cannot here discuss the ongoing debate over the authenticity of *HA* 7(8), a text I will return to shortly. (I believe *HA* 7(8) is authentic, but cannot make that case here, nor is it important in the present context.²⁰) Setting aside *HA* 7(8), I suppose it is just

17 For instance, Rose³ fr. 372 is presented as follows (the ellipses and parentheses are his):

Schol. in Hom. Il. χ, 93 (Dind.): (ὡς δὲ δράκων ἐπὶ χειρὶ (ὀρέστερος ἄνδρα μένησιν, βεβρωκῶς κατὰ φάρμακ' ἔδω δὲ τέ μιν χόλος αἰνός): ἡ διπλῆ ὅτι τὴν τῶν ὄφειων κατάδυσιν χειρὰν εἴρηκεν ἀπὸ τοῦ χεῖσθαι (A) . . .

. . . ἢ ὅτι δίκην ὕδατος ἐκχεῖται εἰς αὐτὴν τὸ θηρίον. ἀγριώτερα δὲ τὰ ἐν ἐρήμῳ γεννώμενα. φησὶ δὲ καὶ ἐν τῷ ζ' περὶ ζώων Ἀριστοτέλης ἐσθίοντα αὐτὸν μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας <μετὰ τὴν φώλευσιν> ἰοῦ πληροῦσθαι πλείονος τοῦ ἐμφύτου καὶ ἐρεθίζεσθαι καὶ λυσοῦν ἐπιθυμοῦντά που ἀπομάξασθαι τὸν ἐνοχλοῦντα ἰόν (B int.).

See *Venetus* A (fol. 284r), quoted above in note 9. ἡ διπλῆ should be in pointed brackets.

18 Following the notation in Balme 1991: '7(8)' = Book 7 according to the paradosis, Book 8 according to Theodore Gaza's rearrangement (in his fifteenth-century Latin translation). This rearrangement, which was accepted by Bekker and became standard, was a consequence of Gaza having concluded that the tradition's Book 9 in fact belonged after Book 6.

19 His text in this collection alone includes "ἐν τῷ ζ' (corr. ζ') περὶ ζώων" κτλ. Rose refers to "Ar. h.a. 8, 13, 15" (i.e. *HA* 7(8).13 & 15). More recently, Huby 1985: 318-19 has argued that *HA* 7(8) is an inauthentic compilation making use of the works of Theophrastus, including *Περὶ τῶν φωλευόντων*.

20 On the authenticity of *HA* 7(8), see Balme 1991: 1-13 and Schnieders 2019: 97-108.

possible (but unlikely) that the scholar responsible for the Aristotle comment had access to Theophrastus' *Περὶ τῶν φωλεόντων*, which discussed this behavior of snakes and which he mistook for a work of Aristotle's or which was being circulated as such. But I do not consider this possibility a serious alternative to van der Valk's explanation.

In his other two collections, Rose attributes the text to a lost work of Aristotle on animals (which he labels *Zoica*). Heitz 1869: fr. 301, who presents a much more accurate edition of our text, also takes it to be from a lost work on animals (though he does not mention a title).²¹ In Mayhew 2020, I argue that the lost *Zoika* was a collection of data concerning animal coloration, anatomy, and behavior. And I believe I have demonstrated in Mayhew forthcoming the probability that at least one Homeric scholar had access to the *Zoika* (or a compilation including excerpts from it). So I think one genuine possibility is that the *Zoika* contained a description of snakes eating poisonous animals, and that this was the source of the reference in the b-scholia.

I turn now to the *Historia animalium*. HA 7(8).13-17 is devoted to animals that hide – i.e. that hibernate or avoid the sun – and in 7(8).15, Aristotle (for I think he is the author) says that “while the other snakes hide in the ground, the vipers conceal themselves under rocks” (οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι ὄφεις ἐν τῇ γῆ φωλεύουσιν, αἱ δ' ἔχιδναι ὑπὸ τὰς πέτρας κατακρύπτουσιν ἑαυτάς) (599a33-b2). Later, in 7(8).29, he attempts to show how differences in location can make a difference in the bites or stings of various animals, including snakes (see 607a21-34). He says that “snake bites too differ greatly” (τά τε τῶν ὄφεων δῆγματα πολὺ διαφέρουσιν) (607a21). After providing a couple of examples, he writes (607a27-29):

πάντων δὲ χαλεπώτερα ἔστι τὰ δῆγματα τῶν ἰοβόλων, ἐὰν τύχη ἀλλήλων ἐδηδοκότα, οἷον σκορπίον ἔχιδναι.

But more dangerous than any are the bites of the venomous animals after one happens to have eaten another, for example a viper that has eaten a scorpion.

21 In his apparatus, however, he refers to HA 8(9).6, which describes the δράκων – a promising lead which I return to shortly.

There is, however, no mention (here or elsewhere) of snakes eating ants and beetles. Perhaps the most relevant passage, noted by Heitz, is *HA* 8(9).6.612a30-31:

ὁ δὲ δράκων ὅταν ὀπωρίζῃ τὸν ὀπὸν τῆς πικρίδος ἐκροφεῖ, καὶ τοῦθ' ἐώραται ποιῶν.

The *drakōn*, when it eats fruit, drinks down the juice of the *pikris*, and it has been seen doing this.²²

Aristotle is referring to a snake extracting liquid from the *pikris*, a kind of bitter plant or herb,²³ prior to eating fruit.

This last Aristotle-passage is worth exploring in greater detail. In *HA* 8(9).6, Aristotle presents an array of endoxa illustrating the intelligence of animals – eating things that protect them or otherwise promote their lives: For instance, a weasel eats the herb rue before fighting snakes, as the odor of rue is inimical to snakes; and, a hound feeling pain eats a certain kind of grass to make itself vomit.²⁴ In the case of the *drakōn* eating *pikris*, however, no such reason is given to explain this behavior, the explanation in my view likely having dropped out of the text. But judging by the evidence in Pliny and Aelian, the *drakōn* does this as a remedy of some kind, and not to acquire venom. Pliny *NA* 8.99 claims that the snake (*anguis*), after hibernating in winter, rubs its eyes against fennel to restore its sight; and, that the *drakōn* (*draco*) cures its nausea by eating wild

22 Aristotle refers to the *drakōn* three times in the *Historia animalium*, the other two being 7(8).20.602b24-26 and 8(9).1.609a4-5. The mention in *HA* 7(8).20 suggests a water snake, the other two a land snake. See Schnieders 2019: 593-94. I doubt this snake can be identified.

23 Theophrastus says it is “bitter in taste, and this is why it received its name” (τῇ γεύσει δὲ πικρά, διὸ καὶ τοῦνομα εἴληφε) (*HP* 7.11.4). According to Amigues 2006: 324, this is *Crepis zacintha* (English ‘Striped hawksbeard’). See Schnieders 2019: 738-39 for other suggestions.

24 *HA* 8(9).6.612a28-30 and 31-32: ἡ δὲ γαλῆ ὅταν ὄφει μάχηται ἐπεσθίει τὸ πῆγανον-πολεμία γὰρ ἡ ὄσμη τοῖς ὄφεισιν. ... αἱ δὲ κύνες ὅταν ἐλμινθιῶσιν ἐσθίουσι τοῦ σίτου τὸ λήϊον. These two endoxa appear on either side of the reference to the *drakōn*.

lettuce.²⁵ Similarly, but in more detail, Aelian in NA 9.16 describes (*inter alia*) how a snake (ὄφις), after hibernating in winter (τοῦ χειμῶνος φωλεύσας), improves its eyesight by rubbing against fennel.²⁶ He has a separate discussion of the *drakōn*, which I think is of capital importance in the present context. I present NA 6.4 in full:

οἱ δράκοντες ὅταν ὀπώρας μέλλωσι γεύεσθαι, τῆς πικρίδος καλουμένης ῥοφοῦσι τὸν ὀπὸν· ὀνίνησι δὲ ἄρα αὐτοὺς αὕτη πρὸς τὸ μὴ φύσης τινὸς ὑποπίπλασθαι. μέλλοντες δὲ τινα ἔλλοχᾶν ἢ ἄνθρωπον ἢ θῆρα, τὰς θανατηφόρους ρίζας ἐσθίουσι καὶ τὰς πόας μέντοι τὰς τοιαύτας. οὐκ ἦν δὲ ἄρα οὐδὲ Ὅμηρος αὐτῶν τῆς τροφῆς ἀμαθής. λέγει γοῦν ὅπως ἀναμένει περὶ τὸν φωλεὸν εἰλούμενος, προεμπλησθεὶς σιτίων πολλῶν φαρμακῶδων καὶ κακῶν.

The *drakontes*, when they are about to eat fruit, drink the juice of the so-called *pikris*; it seems to help them against being filled with wind. But when they are about to lie in wait for either a human or a beast, they eat death-bringing roots and herbs of the same sort. In that case, Homer was not ignorant of their diet. For at any rate he describes how it waits, coiled up near its hiding-place, having filled up beforehand on a lot of poisonous and evil food.

So according to Aelian, sometimes the *drakōn* eats a certain plant for medicinal reasons, and other times it eats different plants to produce or improve its venom, and this latter (he thinks) is what Homer is describing.

25 *idem* (sc. *anguis*) *hiberna latebra visu obscurato maratho herbae se adfricans oculos inunguit ac refovet ... draco vernam nausiam silvestris lactucae suco restinguit*. Plut. *De soll. an.* 20 (*Mor.* 974b) seems to conflate these two, writing that the *drakōn* improves its eyesight with fennel: ὁ δὲ δράκων τῷ μαράθρω τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἀμβλυώττοντα λεπτύνων καὶ διαχαράττων. (He does not mention hibernation.)

26 ὅταν ἀποδύσῃται τὸ γῆρας ὁ ὄφις ὑπαρχομένου δὲ τοῦ ἥρος δρᾷ τοῦτο, ἐνταῦθά τοι καὶ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν τὴν ἀχλὺν καὶ τὸ ἀμβλὺ τῆς ὄψεως ῥύπτεται καὶ ἐκεῖνο ὡς γῆρας ὀφθαλμῶν, τῷ δὲ μαράθῳ ὑποθήγων τε καὶ παραψήχων τὸ ὄμμα ἐκάτερον, εἴτα ἐξάντης τοῦδε τοῦ πάθους γίνεται. ἀμβλυώττει δὲ ἄρα διὰ τοῦ χειμῶνος φωλεύσας ἐν μυχῷ καὶ σκότῳ. οὐκοῦν μαλκίουςαν ἐκ τῶν κρυμῶν τοῦ ζῶου τὴν ὄψιν ὑποθερμαίνων τὸ μάραθρον καθαίρει, καὶ ὄξυωπέστερον ἀποφαίνει.

I believe we have enough evidence to support a reasonable hypothesis (or hypotheses) about the source of the Aristotle-reference in schol. b *Il.* 22.93-94. First, it is clear that Aristotle collected a number of ‘facts’ or *endoxa* about various kinds of snakes, which hibernate or hide from the heat, and which eat certain plants (e.g. *pikris*) and animals (e.g. scorpions) for reasons other than normal nutrition. Perhaps something about ants and beetles dropped out of the snakes-eating-venomous-animals passage in 7(8).29 or the *drakōn*-passage in 8(9).6, though this would have to have happened very early on. I think it somewhat more likely that the reference originally came from a collection of such data in the *Zoika*, perhaps in a book or section titled *Περὶ ὄφρων*.²⁷ The *Περὶ ζώων* in our b-scholion would then refer either to the *Historia animalium* or (more likely) to the *Zoika*, with the book number (ζ) a scribal error (e.g. a later erroneous addition), unless per chance *Περὶ ὄφρων* was the sixth ‘book’ or subsection of the *Zoika*. It is also just possible that the source was one of the six books of Aristotle’s lost *Homeric Problems*, which might have been titled *Περὶ ζώων*;²⁸ though I doubt this hypothesis has more merit than van der Valk’s explanation.²⁹ But I do find both of the other hypotheses – *Historia animalium* and *Zoika* – more likely, and no more speculative, than van der Valk’s, and this despite the fact that I cannot explain how the reference to Aristotle dropped out of T.

If the reference in b is accurate, then Homeric scholars made use of what Aristotle wrote in his biological writings about snakes eating ants and beetles. What more might we say about the issue or debate concerning *Iliad* 22.93-94 and involving Aristotle’s views on snakes? I believe a passage in Eustathius is illuminating in this context. This is from his discussion of *Iliad* 22.94 (vol. 4, p. 581.7-10 van der Valk):

27 Athenaeus 7, our best source for information on Aristotle’s *Zoika*, variously refers to it – with the title of its subsection – as *Zωϊκά ἢ περὶ ἰχθύων*, *Περὶ ζωϊκῶν καὶ ἰχθύων*, *Περὶ ζώων καὶ ἰχθύων*, etc. See Mayhew 2020: 110.

28 See Mayhew 2019: 33.

29 Even setting aside this possibility, however, if Aristotle discussed elsewhere snakes eating ants and beetles, one can speculate about how he might have interpreted *βεβρωκῶς κακὰ φάρμακα* in *Il.* 22.94.

κακὰ δὲ φάρμακα οἱ μὲν πῶς τινὰ φασι χολῆς γεννητικὴν, ἣν ἐσθίων ὄφεις εἰς χολὴν ἐρεθίζεται. ἕτεροι δὲ ὅτι δράκων ἐσθίων μύρμηκας καὶ κανθαρίδας ἰοῦ πληροῦται καὶ εἰς λύσσαν ἄγεται, καὶ ταῦτ᾽ ἐστὶν ἅπερ ὁ ποιητὴς λέγει κακὰ φάρμακα πρὸς διαστολὴν τῶν ἀγαθῶν.

Some claim ‘evil *pharmaka*’ are a certain herb productive of bile (*cholēs*), which the snake eats and so is provoked into anger (*cholēn*). But others [claim] that the *drakōn*, eating ants and beetles, is filled with venom and brought to a frenzy, and these are what the poet calls evil *pharmaka* in opposition to the good ones.³⁰

So on one view, κακὰ φάρμακα refers to certain plants (according to Aelian, “deadly roots and herbs”). On another, κακὰ φάρμακα refers to ants and beetles, with certain plants (e.g. the *pikris*) in fact being ἀγαθὰ (not κακὰ) φάρμακα. Modern scholars for the most part favor the former view,³¹ and Roemer 1924, 73 is right that *Od.* 2.328-29 and 4.229-30 do in fact support this reading.³² But the Homeric scholar(s) who cited Aristotle on ants and beetles defended the latter position³³ – as Aristotle too might well have done, had he discussed *Iliad* 22.93-94 in his *Homeric Problems*.

30 I.e. to good *pharmaka*, likely herbs with medicinal properties.

31 See Leaf 1902, 2: 437; Ameis & Hentze 1906; 10; Cunliffe 1924 s.v. φάρμακον, 2; van der Mijne 2011. Richardson 1993: 116 and de Jong 2012: 82, however, leave open the nature of the snake’s diet.

32 Roemer 1924 contrasts this with the ancient interpretation found in our b-scholion – an interpretation he attributes (erroneously, in my view) to Aristarchus: “Anders die antike Exegese, die Exegese Aristarchs, am besten erhalten in [Venetus] B: φησὶ δὲ ἐν τῷ ζ̄ περὶ ζώων Ἀριστοτέλης etc.” Unlike van der Valk and Erbse, he does not dismiss the attribution (“Also sehen wir hier mit vollem Recht die Autorität des Aristoteles angerufen und ausgespielt gegen eine falsche Volksvorstellung ...”), though he recognizes that it has no parallel in the extant corpus. He mentions in a footnote, however, that Dittmeyer drew his attention to the scorpion-passage in *HA* 7(8).29.607a27-29 (quoted above), which Dittmeyer 1907: 350-51 considers an excerpt from Theophrastus’ *Περὶ δακέτων καὶ βλητικῶν*.

33 As did Eustathius, immediately following the above quoted passage (vol. 4, p. 581.10-12 van der Valk): τὸ δὲ ἐκ τῶν μυρμηκῶν κακὸν δηλοῦται καὶ ἐν τῷ μυρμηκιᾶν, κτλ.

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