

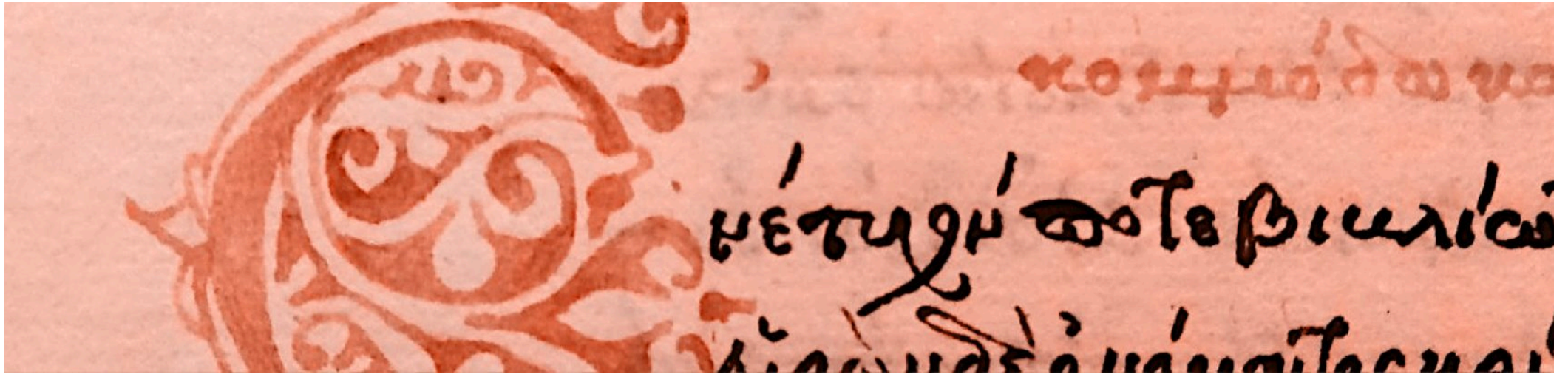


Digital Encyclopedia of Atticism



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PURA. Purism In Antiquity: Theories Of Language in Greek Atticist Lexica and their Legacy



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The **Digital Encyclopedia of Atticism** is one of the research outputs of **PURA**, a five-year ERC Consolidator project (grant agreement no. 865817), which began in January 2021 at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. PURA investigates the theories of **linguistic purism** that were developed in ancient Greek culture, and the way in which they were received in later periods. The focus of our analysis is **Atticist lexica**, ancient 'dictionaries' that collect linguistic features to be cultivated or avoided in correct Greek.

DEA contributes to the three main objectives of PURA:

1. to provide a comprehensive mapping of **Atticist purism** by analyzing the linguistic theories of Atticist lexica;
2. to study the intellectual and cultural **legacy** of Atticism in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern age by charting the history both of the lexica as **books** and of their authors;
3. to make the theories of these specialist and intricate texts more approachable and **accessible** outside the traditional format of critical editions.

To fulfil these objectives, the three sections of DEA, all of which are **open-access**, collect our work on the lexicographic entries in the Atticist lexica and their linguistic history; the major scholars and works of the ancient and Byzantine Atticist debate; and the transmission of the lexica in the medieval and early modern periods. Visit [About DEA](#) for more information.

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Lexicographic entries

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ἀγαθώτερος, ἀγαθώτατος

(Phryn. *Ecl.* 65)

A. Main sources

(1) Phryn. *Ecl.* 65: ἀγαθὸς μᾶλλον λέγε, μὴ ἀγαθώτερος, καὶ ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀγαθώτατος ἀγαθὸς μάλιστα.

Say ἀγαθὸς μᾶλλον, not ἀγαθώτερος, and in place of ἀγαθώτατος [say] ἀγαθὸς μάλιστα.

(2) Eust. *in Od.* 1.9.30–1 (= Ael.Dion. α 10): <ἀγαθός· ἢ σύγκρισις μᾶλλον ἀγαθός καὶ ἢ ὑπέρθεσις μάλιστα ἀγαθός>. ἀγαθώτερος <δὲ> καὶ ἀγαθώτατος παρ' οὐδενὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων κεῖται.

<ἀγαθός: The comparative [is] μᾶλλον ἀγαθός and the superlative [is] μάλιστα ἀγαθός>, [while] ἀγαθώτερος and ἀγαθώτατος occur in none of the Greek writers.

B. Other erudite sources

(1) Philox.Gramm. fr. 415 (= Orio 29.6–10): ὁ δὲ Φιλόξενος φησὶ σύνθετον αὐτὸ παρὰ τὸ ἄγαν καὶ θεῖος, καὶ συνθέσει καὶ συγκοπῇ ἀγαθός· ὅθεν οὐ λέγεται ἀγαθότερος <οὔτε ἀγαθώτατος>, ἵνα μὴ ᾧσιν ὡς δύο ἐπιτάσεις, ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄγαν καὶ τῆς συγκριτικῆς παραγωγῆς.

Philoxenus says that this word (i.e. ἀγαθός) is a compound of ἄγαν and θεῖος, and that, through composition and syncope, ἀγαθός [is created]. Hence, one does not say either ἀγαθότερος or ἀγαθώτατος, in order to avoid a double intensification, [one] from ἄγαν and [the other] from the comparative suffix.

(2) *EM* 5.19–26: ἀγαθός· παρὰ τὸ ἄγαν θέειν ἡμᾶς ἐπ’ αὐτό [...]. σύγκρισιν δὲ οὐ ποιεῖ, οὔτε ὑπέρθεσιν, ὡς ἐγκειμένου ἐπιτατικοῦ μορίου, ἵνα μὴ γένωνται δύο ἐπιτάσεις ὁμοῦ, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἀγαθός ὅδε τοῦδε.

ἀγαθός: From the fact that we strive for it (ἄγαν θέειν) [...]. It does not have a comparative or a superlative, because of the presence of an intensifying element (i.e. ἄγαν), in order not to have two intensifications at one time, but [say] ‘this one is more good (μᾶλλον ἀγαθός) than this one’.

(3) Schol. D.T. *GG* 1,3.371.26–8: καὶ τούτου χάριν τὸ ἀγαθός σύγκρισιν οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται· ὁ γὰρ ἤμελλεν αὐτῷ παρέχειν ἢ σύγκρισιν, τοῦτο ἔχει ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ· τίς γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀγαθός; ὁ ἄγαν θεῖος. (*Scholia Marciana* VN; cf. schol. D.T. [*scholia Londinensia* AE] *GG* 1,3.533.28–31)

And for this reason, ἀγαθός does not admit of a comparative: for it already has from itself what the comparative would have provided it with. For, who is a ἀγαθός? One [who is] ἄγαν θεῖος (‘very divine’).

C. *Loci classici*, other relevant texts

(1) *LXX Id.* 11.25: καὶ νῦν μὴ ἐν ἀγαθῷ ἀγαθώτερος σὺ ὑπὲρ Βαλακ υἱὸν Σεπφωρ βασιλέα Μωαβ;

And now are you better than Balak, son of Sepphor, king of Moab?

(2) *LXX Id.* 15.2: μὴ οὐχὶ ἡ ἀδελφὴ αὐτῆς ἢ νεωτέρα αὐτῆς ἀγαθωτέρα ὑπὲρ αὐτήν;

Is not her sister, who is younger than her, prettier than her?

(3) *D.S.* 8.12.8: εὐτυχέστερος μὲν οὖν ἴσως Ἀριστομένης, ἀγαθώτερος δ’ ἡμῶν οὐκ ἂν δικαίως κριθείη.

Therefore, Aristomenes might rightly be regarded as more fortunate, but not braver than us.

(4) *D.S.* 16.85.7: παρὰ δὲ τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις οἱ μὲν ἀγαθώτατοι τῶν στρατηγῶν ἐτετελευτήκεισαν.

Among the Athenians, the bravest generals had died.

(5) *Apoll.Dysc. Synt.* 1.65 (= *GG* 2,2.56.3–5): ἔτι πᾶσα δοτικὴ ἐπιθετικοῦ ὀνόματος κατ’ ἐπισταλτικὴν σύνταξιν συνέχει τὸ ἄρθρον, Διονύσιος Τρύφωνι τῷ ἀγαθωτάτῳ χαίρειν, τῷ τιμιωτάτῳ· ἀσύνητον γὰρ τὸ δίχα τοῦ ἄρθρου λεγόμενον.

Further, in the epistolary formulary all datives of the adjective of a name have the article, [as in] ‘Dionysius greets the excellent [or] the most honourable Tryphon’. For [the sentence] is unintelligible [if written] without the article.

(6) *Ps.Callisth. Historia Alexandri Magni (recensio α)* 1.4.2: Ὀλυμπιάς εἶπεν· Χαίροις ἀγαθώτατε μαθηματικέ, καὶ παραβάς καθέζου’.

Olympias said: ‘Welcome, excellent astrologer, come forward and take a seat’.

(7) *Georgius Nicomedensis Orationes ad Deiparam* 7.1452.15: ὦ ἀγαθῆς ρίζης ἀγαθώτατον ἐκφυσάσης βλαστόν.

Oh noble root, which produced an excellent shoot.

(8) Michael Psellus *Epistulae* 103.398.4–5: εἰ μὲν οὖν ἀγαθὸς τῷ παναγάθῳ σοι ἐντυχῶν γενήσεται ἀγαθώτερος.

If, then, a good person comes across you, who are absolutely good, he will become better.

(9) Michael Psellus *Epistulae* 80.333.1–9: ὥσπερ εἰσὶν ἔνιοι τῶν Μακεδόνων κατὰ τὸν δημῶδη λόγον κακότυχοι, καὶ οὐ πάντες Φιλιππίζοντες ἢ Ἀλεξανδρίζοντες, οὕτως εἰσὶ τινες καὶ τῶν Κατωτικῶν ἀπλούστατοι καὶ ἀγαθώτατοι ἄνθρωποι. [...] τούτων εἷς ἐστὶ καὶ ὁ θαυμάσιος οὗτος Προκόπιος, (ὥς γέ μοι δοκεῖ) ἄνθρωπος καὶ εὐπορώτατος καὶ δικαιοτάτος, καὶ φρονιμώτατος, καὶ ἀγαθώτατος, καὶ τὴν ἐμὴν φιλίαν διὰ ταῦτα κτησάμενος.

Just like some of the Macedonians, according to the popular saying, are unfortunate, and not all emulate Philip and Alexander, thus some of the Catotic are very frank and excellent men. [...] One of these is also this admirable Procopius here, a man, it seems to me, both very clever and very righteous and very sensible and who has gained my friendship through these [qualities].

D. General commentary

All collected sources agree on rejecting the synthetic comparative ἀγαθώτερος and the synthetic superlative ἀγαθώτατος, in place of which they recommend using the periphrastic comparative μάλλον ἀγαθός and the periphrastic superlative μάλιστα ἀγαθός. The Atticist lexicographers reach this conclusion due to the lack of attestation of the synthetic forms in canonical Attic writers. Aelius Dionysius seems to have been quite explicit about this ([A.2](#)); we can probably expect Phrynichus ([A.1](#)) to follow a similar approach, even though his proscriptive gloss is only peremptory. The other, properly ‘grammatical’ sources are more detailed in justifying the grounds on which ἀγαθώτερος and ἀγαθώτατος must be rejected. The problem is word formation: if one accepts the etymology of ἀθαγόν from ἄγαν + θεῖον ([B.1](#), [B.3](#); see also Philoponus’ *De opificio mundi* 298.21–5, where this etymology is part of a theological discussion, *Et.Gud.* 6.6–8, and *EM* 5.26) or from ἄγαν θεῖν ἡμᾶς ἐπ’ αὐτό ([B.2](#); see also Elias *in Porph.* 1.2–8), a comparative or superlative would then contain two degrees of intensification, the etymological being ἄγαν and the morphological being the comparative or superlative suffix. We can easily relate this reasoning to the doctrine on double comparatives, which are also rejected on the grounds that a doubly intensified form, such as the comparative of a comparative, is incorrect (see ἀμεινότερος, ῥαότερος [↗](#)).

The development of a new synthetic secondary comparative ἀγαθώτερος and a new synthetic superlative ἀγαθώτατος from the positive ἀγαθός takes part in the discussion on the history of primary comparatives and superlatives. From the start of the documentation, primary formations are recessive, and in Post-classical Greek they were very often replaced by analogical secondary comparatives and superlatives (see Barber 2013, 146 and ἀμεινότερος, ῥαότερος [↗](#)). This tendency was even stronger in the case of the polythematic comparatives and superlatives, and of those comparatives and superlatives that show little resemblance to the positive adjectives. Thus, ἀγαθώτερος and ἀγαθώτατος are related to other analogical comparatives and superlatives formed on the positive grade. Examples include (and this list is not exhaustive): μεγαλώτερος and μεγαλώτατος (< μέγας, in place of μείζων and μέγιστος), μικρότερος and μικρότατος (< μικρός, in place of the suppletive forms ἐλάσσων/ἐλάχιστος and μείων/μείστος), ὀλιγώτερος and ὀλιγώτατος (< ὀλίγος, in place of ὀλειζων and ὀλίγιστος), ῥαδιώτερος (< ῥάδιος, in place of ῥάων and ῥᾶστος). The distribution of these analogical forms varies widely from one case to another. The analogical comparatives and superlatives of the same adjective may also be quite different to one another.

The situation with ἀγαθώτερος and ἀγαθώτατος is as follows. (I shall avoid commenting on the distribution of the spellings with <ο> and <ω>, which soon became a matter of orthographical, rather than phonological, variation.)

The first occurrences of ἀγαθώτερος are in the Septuagint ([C.1](#) and [C.2](#), on which see [F.2](#)) and in Diodorus Siculus ([C.3](#)). In pagan literature, ἀγαθώτερος is a rarity, and the evidence is limited to Plotinus (5.5.9, 6.6.18) and Porphyrius (*in Ptol.* 5,4.221.4). On the contrary, a very high number of occurrences are found in a range of Christian texts dating from the early empire to late antiquity (notably the *Pastor* of Hermas, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Theodoretus, Procopius of Gaza). Interestingly, many of these authors normally write using the high form of the language. As far as documentary sources are concerned, the analogical comparative is unattested in papyri, though there is an isolated occurrence on a funerary inscription from Asia Minor ([MAMA 1.199.3–4](#) [Laodicea Combusta, undated]).

As regards the analogical superlative ἀγαθώτατος, the first occurrence is found, again, in Diodorus ([C.4](#)), and then this form is occasionally used by a plethora of later writers, notably Josephus (*BJ* 2.277), Apollonius Dyscolus ([C.5](#)), Clemens of Alexandria (*Strom.* 7.7.44.6), Heliodorus (5.15.2), Julian (*Epist.* 11.16 and 89a.57), Eusebius (*PE* 1.10.52), Synesius (*Epist.* 143.65), and John Chrysostom (*De sacerdotio* 1.7). These writers normally employ a rather formal variety of Greek, which suggests that ἀγαθώτατος was acceptable in the high koine. It is also worth stressing that ἀγαθώτατος occurs in the 3rd-century CE redaction of the *Historia Alexandri Magni (recensio α)* ([C.6](#)) alongside openly Atticising word choices such as βασιλεία (see Phryn. *Ecl.* 197 and 231) and καθέζου (see Phryn. *Ecl.* 233). We may then conclude that, despite the reservations of grammarians and lexicographers, the analogical superlative ἀγαθώτατος enjoyed slightly more popularity than the analogical comparative ἀγαθώτερος and was also admitted of in texts using formal language.

These conclusions are paralleled by evidence from papyri and inscriptions. In terms of the papyrological evidence, ἀγαθώτατος is ‘as common as βέλτιστος’ (Gignac 1981, 146–7). The following comprises a full list of occurrences: SB 24.15909.1 (= [TM 41420](#)) [Arsinoites, 6 CE], SB 24.15910.1 (= [TM 41421](#)) [Arsinoites, 6 CE], P.Mich. 5.244.4 (= [TM 12085](#)) [Tebtynis, 43 CE], SB 28.16889.3–4 (= [TM 99951](#)) [provenance unknown, 1st century CE], P.Sarap. 90.4 (= [TM 17115](#)) [Alexandria (?), 108 CE], P.Brem. 5.6–7 (= [TM 19590](#)) [Hermoupolis (?), 117–119 CE], SB 20.14279.7 (= [TM 29036](#)) [provenance unknown, 110–125 CE], P.Mich. 8.498 (= [TM 27108](#)) [provenance unknown, 110–147 CE], P.Oxy. 14.1757.26 (= [TM 22005](#)) [Oxyrhynchus, 2nd century CE], P.Oxy. 66.4544.12 (= [TM 78613](#)) [Oxyrhynchus, 3rd century CE], P.Paris 18.3 (= [TM 32147](#)) [provenance unknown, 3rd century CE], P.Ryl. 4.691.18 (= [TM 30590](#)) [Oxyrhynchus, 275–299 CE], P.Lond. 3.981 (= [TM 33777](#)) [Lykopolis, 375–399 CE]). Two of these papyri, namely SB 24.15909.1 and SB 24.15910.1, mirror the passage of Apollonius Dyscolus ([C.5](#)) and testify to the use of ἀγαθώτατος in the opening greeting formula of a private letter. In two other cases, ἀγαθώτατος appears in an internal or final section of the letter, where the sender delivers his greetings to the addressee and other loved ones (SB 20.14279.7, P.Oxy. 14.1757.26). The following are all the known occurrences in inscriptions: *Forschungen in Salona* 3.11.3 [Salona, 1st–3rd century CE], *RECAM* 2.182.4–5 [Çimşit, imperial period], *Funerary Stelae Kom Abou Billou*, 178.2 [Terenouthis, 3rd–4th century CE], *TAM* 2.459.9 [Patara, mid-2nd century CE], *IGUR 2.720.5* [Rome, undated], *IGUR 2.882.4–5* [Rome, undated], *IGUR 4.1695.3–4* [Rome, undated]. All these epigraphic examples are prose funerary inscriptions.

The language and style of the papyri and inscriptions in which ἀγαθώτατος appears differ widely. Some, for instance, are written in rather crude language. Besides the epigraphic occurrences, an eminent example is P.Paris 18 (= [TM 32147](#)): to mention just two remarkable features, one may notice φθάνω + preposition, meaning ‘arrive at’, and the genitive ἔσοῦ of the personal pronoun in place of σοῦ. In other cases, the language used is a far more respectable form of high koine. Especially noteworthy is the case of P.Ryl. 4.691 (= [TM 30590](#)): it begins with rather elaborate, though elegant, syntax at lines 4–15 and deploys obvious features of high Greek, like ἐθέλοι at line 9 (Clarysse 2008, 147 describes this letter as written ‘in rhetorical style’). As a further example, in P.Brem. 5 (= [TM](#)

19590), at lines 11–4, one finds slightly convoluted syntax, with a main clause followed by a first-degree final clause, inside which a second-degree hypothetical clause has been inserted. Hanson (1997, 422–3) provides extremely useful comments on the language and style of SB 24.15909 (= [TM 41420](#)) and SB 24.15910 (= [TM 41421](#)), together with the other letters of the same group. Occurrences in papyri written in high koine provide further confirmation that ἀγαθώτατος, unlike ἀγαθώτερος, was also acceptable in more formal Greek.

The evidence collected here shows that ἀγαθώτερος and ἀγαθώτατος are comparatively late developments, for which we have no proof before the 1st century BCE. This relative chronology is in line with the evidence for other analogical comparatives and superlatives, which may even be later. For instance, μεγαλώτερος and μεγαλώτατος are Byzantine innovations. However, a few similarly formed analogical comparatives and superlatives did develop remarkably early. A brief excursus may provide a more complete picture of these forms' development in the history of Greek.

One significant case is that of μικρός. The polythematic suppletive comparatives and superlatives ἐλάσσων/ἐλάχιστος and μείων/μείστος are soon challenged by the analogical μικρότερος and μικρότατος, which are both well-attested in the works of 5th- and 4th-century Attic writers (μικρότερος: Soph. *Ai.* 161, Ar. *Eq.* 789, X. *Eq.* 1.11, Pl. *Criti.* 117d 1–2, Hp. *Genit.–Nat.Puer.* [= *Morb.* 4] 39, Aen.Tact. 33.2 [though in this case it is an integration], 11x in the *corpus Aristotelicum*; μικρότατος: And. 130, 7x in Xenophon, Plat. *Plt.* 270a 8, 3x in the *corpus* of Demosthenes); μικρότερος and μικρότατος then become common in imperial prose at all levels of the language, from documentary papyri to Atticist prose.

Likewise, the first occurrence of ὀλιγώτερος is in the late 5th- or early 4th-century BCE Hippocratic treatise *De virginum morbis* (1.10), and this form is then widely attested in imperial literary prose, as well as in high-style and Atticising writers. Yet, unlike ὀλιγώτερος, the superlative ὀλιγώτατος is much rarer: the earliest occurrences appear in Origenes and Oribasius, while later on we are only aware of two occurrences, one in Metrophanes' commentary on Peter's first epistle and one (quite remarkably) in Eustathius' *Sermones* (11.183.10). A likely explanation as to why the analogical superlative develops differently to the comparative may be that while the comparative ὀλείζων is rarest (in Attic texts, it only occurs in [X.] *Ath.* 2.1, and aside from two instances in Nicander, it is confined to erudite literature) and so the polythematic suppletive comparatives ἐλάσσων, ἥσσω and μείων were used instead, ὀλίγιστος is not only a rather common form, but its derivation from ὀλίγος is also very easy to recognise.

Finally, we know from Pollux (5.107) that an analogical comparative ῥαδιώτερος was used by Hyperides (fr. 86 Jensen, though see below), and this form is also attested in imperial and Byzantine prose (even in Anna Comnene's *Alexiad*, 6.1.2). Unlike the comparative, the analogical superlative ῥαδιώτατος is unattested before Theodorus Prodromus in the 12th century CE. These are not the only analogical comparatives and superlatives of ῥάδιος. The comparative ῥαδιέστερος occurs in Hellenistic, imperial, and Byzantine prose, and Ath. 10.424d (= Philox.Gramm. fr. *338 ~ Eust. *in Il.* 2.699.3–9) also ascribes its use to Hyperides (fr. 86 Jensen), while a superlative ῥαδιέστατος occurs only once in Hero's *Parasceuastica et poliorcetica* (96.33). As regards the fragment of Hyperides (fr. 86 Jensen), if we compare the passage of Athenaeus on Hyperides' use of ῥαδιέστερος and Pollux's passage on Hyperides' use of ῥαδιώτερος, one may raise the suspicion that Athenaeus and Pollux have in fact the same passage in mind, but one of them has mistakenly ascribed the wrong comparative to Hyperides.

E. Byzantine and Modern Greek commentary

ἀγαθώτερος and ἀγαθώτατος are well-attested in a wide range of texts and genres, both in poetry and prose, and both in the context of marked and unmarked language. They may occasionally be used by learned and educated writers who normally use the high form of the language. By way of example, ἀγαθώτατος occurs twice in the

writings of George of Nicomedia ([C.7](#) and *Orationes ad Deiparam* 3.1396.24; on George of Nicomedia as an erudite man and an Atticist, see Baldwin 1986). In several cases, the reason for using ἀγαθώτερος and ἀγαθώτατος, instead of the polythematic comparatives, seems to be that they create rhetorically effective repetitions, or because they rhyme with other words. Regarding ἀγαθώτερος, one may think of the *figura etymologica* ἀγαθός – πανάγαθος – ἀγαθώτερος in the passage by Michael Psellus ([C.8](#)), while in other cases ἀγαθώτερος rhymes with other secondary comparatives (e.g. ἀγαθώτερον and τελεώτερον in Nicephorus Blemmydes' *Curriculum vitae* 1.22.10–1). Similarly, ἀγαθώτατος may be used in the same sentence with other superlatives ending in -τατος ([C.9](#), where this happens twice in quick succession; see also Nicetas Paphlagonius' *Encomium in Prophetam Isaiam* 13.8 and Neophytus Inclusus' *Decem homiliae* 6.14.1). At any rate, the more strictly Atticising authors tend to avoid using ἀγαθώτερος and ἀγαθώτατος.

F. Commentary on individual texts and occurrences

(1) Philox.Gramm. fr. 415 (= Orio 29.6–10) ([B.1](#))

The Philoxenus fragment is *incertae sedis*, but its derivation from the treatise *On comparatives* (Philox.Gramm. fr. 336–353) is a strong possibility (see Theodoridis 1976, 12 on this treatise and 284 on the ascription of fr. 415 to it). The same doctrine, though with no reference to Philoxenus, is quoted in another passage of Orion's *Etymologicum* (1.2–6), from which Theodoridis derives the integration of <οὔτε ἀγαθώτατος> in fr. 415.

(2) LXX *Id.* 11.25 ([C.1](#)), LXX *Id.* 15.2 ([C.2](#))

Both passages belong to the redaction of the book of Judges preserved by the *codex Vaticanus* (text B), as opposed to the other redaction (text A), whose main witness is the *codex Alexandrinus*, together with the Origenian or Hexaplaric *recensio* (O) and the Lucianic or Antiochene *recensio* (L). The mutual relationship between text A and text B is a controversial subject, and one that cannot be discussed here (see Lindars 1971, Fernández Marcos 2006, Fernández Marcos 2014, 88, and Fernández Marcos 2021, 205–11). Suffice it to say, the divergences in style and language may point to the fact that A and B reflect two independent revisions of the same Old Greek model. Text B is commonly thought to be later and has been systematically revised to adhere closely to the Hebrew model. Text A, too, although generally retaining older readings, has been subject to some stylistic improvements in the Greek. As far as the dating of these texts is concerned, A (arguably produced in Alexandria) has recently been dated to the first part of the 3rd century BCE, while B (more likely produced in Palestine) to between 50 BCE and 50 CE (see Fernández Marcos 2021, 209 with references to previous bibliography).

In both passages where ἀγαθώτερος occurs in text B ([C.1](#), [C.2](#)), the corresponding passage of text A has the suppletive polythematic primary comparative κρείσσων (for the individual manuscripts see the apparatus *ad loc.* in Brooke, McLean 1917, 841 and 853). The differences extend beyond these two passages. While the positive adjective ἀγαθός appears in both redactions, text A, as represented by the *codex Alexandrinus*, also features two occurrences of βέλτιον (9.2 and 18.19, respectively 'What is better etc.' and 'Is it not better etc.'). whereas in the corresponding passages, text B, as represented by the *codex Vaticanus*, has the positive ἀγαθός. This is unexceptional: Hebrew does not have a synthetic comparative equivalent to the Greek suffixes -ίων and -ότερος, and so in these cases the translator opted for a strictly literal rendering of the Hebrew text. Additionally, in the only passage where the *codex Vaticanus* has the polythematic comparative κρείσσων (8.2, adverbial neuter 'Not better etc.') text A of the *codex Alexandrinus* has κρείπτω instead (the shorter forms of the comparatives were still common in the Hellenistic period, see Mayser, *Gramm.* vol. 1,2, 59–61). (Harlé 1999, 53–8 offers a systematic analysis of the vocabulary of the book of Judges, but he does not address this specific issue.) It should be preliminarily pointed out that in all these passages the Masoretic Text has the same adjectival meaning 'good' (in the widest possible

sense of the word). This is translated in the Septuagint using a variety of forms, including not only ἀγαθός (and its compounds), βελτίων, and κρείσσων/κράτιστος, but many more (see Muraoka 1998, 57 s.v. גִּיט). In [C.1](#), the ἀγαθώτερος of text B (and likewise κρείσσων in text A) indicates superiority in rank and power (see LSJ s.v. κρείσσων I.2; unrecorded in Muraoka 2009, s.v. ἀγαθός). In [C.2](#), ἀγαθώτερος in text B (and κρείσσων in A) indicates physical beauty; on this semantic nuance of ἀγαθός in Septuagint Greek, see Muraoka 2009, s.v. ἀγαθός, and notice that καλός too, besides ἀγαθός, is one of the many possible renderings of the underlying Hebrew adjective (see Muraoka 1998, 57 s.v. גִּיט).

In the two passages under consideration, the issue is whether ἀγαθώτερος in the *codex Vaticanus* is the reading of the Old Greek version and κρείσσων in text A is a stylistic improvement to avoid using too low a word, or whether κρείσσων in text A is indeed the reading of the Old Greek version, while ἀγαθώτερος in text B has been introduced in a later revision of the Greek text. In principle, the passage from both κρείσσων to ἀγαθώτερος and ἀγαθώτερος to κρείσσων are possible. However, the former option seems to me far likelier. This is also the conclusion of Soisalon-Soininen (1951, 62), though we may add a few more observations. Firstly, it may well be that the revisor of the translation opted for ἀγαθώτερος because it is morphologically closer to ἀγαθός, which he routinely employs to translate the Hebrew word for ‘good’ (with only one exception, see above). Further, the fact that ἀγαθώτερος is first paralleled in the other Greek sources in Diodorus Siculus and in 1st-century CE papyri is not only a further indication that κρείσσων has a better chance of being the reading of the Old Greek version, but the use of ἀγαθώτερος may also be supplementary evidence in favour of the proposed dating of text B to between 50 BCE and 50 CE (see also Lee 1983, 148 for a discussion of other linguistic elements which are relevant for the relative dating of the two redactions of the book of Judges).

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a philological and linguistic commentary on the comparative ἀγαθώτερος and the superlative ἀγαθώτατος discussed in the Atticist lexicon Phryn. Ecl. 65.

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