

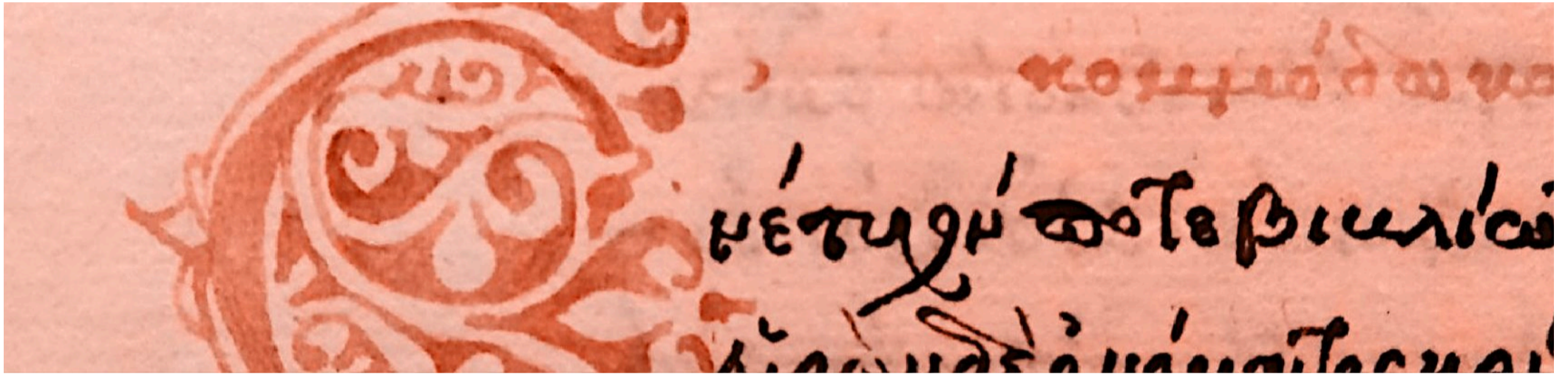


Digital Encyclopedia of Atticism



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

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



Lexicographic Entries



Scholars & works



Transmission: Manuscripts & Editions



Search



About DEA

About us

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.

How to cite this resource

O. Tribulato (ed.), *Digital Encyclopedia of Atticism*. With the assistance of E. N. Merisio. Venice, Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2022-. e-ISSN 2974-8240.

Contacts

For information about DEA, please email dea_editor@unive.it. For information about the PURA project, please contact the Principal Investigator: Prof. Olga Tribulato, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Università Ca' Foscari

Venezia, Dorsoduro 3484/D, 30123 Venezia, Italia. olga.tribulato@unive.it.



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

[ve]dph
Venice Centre for
Digital and Public
Humanities



This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 865817)

© 2024 PURA - Digital Encyclopedia of Atticism - This work is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Hosting by GARR Cloud



Lexicographic entries

[← Back to index](#)

ἀμφορίστερος, ἐπαρίστερος

(Phryn. *PS* 2.7–8, Phryn. *Ecl.* 227, Poll. 2.160)

A. Main sources

(1) Phryn. *PS* 2.7–8: ἀμφορίστερος· ἐνάντιον τοῦτο τῷ περιδέξιος. σκωπτικὸν πάνυ τὸ ὄνομα.

ἀμφορίστερος: This is the opposite of περιδέξιος ('ambidextrous', 'very dexterous'). The word is very insulting.

(2) Phryn. *Ecl.* 227: ἐπαρίστερον οὐ χρὴ λέγειν, ἀλλὰ σκαιόν.

One should not say ἐπαρίστερος ('from right to left', 'clumsy'), but rather σκαιός ('awkward', 'clumsy').

(3) Poll. 2.160: τὸ δ' ἐπαρίστερος ἰδιωτικόν, τό γε μὴν ἀμφορίστερος Ἄττικόν.

ἐπαρίστερος ('towards the left', 'left-handed') is low-level Greek, whereas ἀμφορίστερος ('with two left hands', 'left-handed on both hands') is Attic.

(4) Hsch. α 3900: ἀμφορίστερος· ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἀριστερός. οὐκ αἰσίος. οὐ δεξιός (~ *EM* 489.25–6). ἐναντίος τῷ περιδεξίῳ.

ἀμφορίστερος: Left-handed on both sides. Not auspicious. Not dexterous. (Such a person) is the opposite of a περιδέξιος ('ambidextrous', 'very dexterous').

(5) Phot. α 1292: ἀμφορίστερος· ἀμφοτέρωθεν <ἀριστερός>, οὐκ αἰσίος οὐδὲ ἐπιτήδειος. σκωπτικὴ δὲ ἡ φωνή, ὡς φησι Φρόνιχος.

ἀμφαρίστερος: Left-handed on both sides. Not auspicious, nor helpful. The word is insulting, as Phrynichus says (cf. [A.1](#)).

B. Other erudite sources

(1) Gal. 18b.147.18–148.2 Kühn: κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἀμφαριστερόν Ἀριστοφάνης εἶπεν ἐν Ταγηνισταῖς ἄνθρωπον <ἀμφοτέρωθεν> ἀριστερόν.

In the same way (i.e. like ἀμφιδέξιος and περιδέξιος), Aristophanes in *Tagenistai* (fr. 526 = [C.4](#)) calls ἀμφαριστερός a man who is left-handed on both hands.

(2) Hsch. ε 4222: *ἐπαρίστερα· κακά· ἀηδὴ (AS).

ἐπαρίστερα: Bad, unpleasant.

(3) Eust. *in Il.* 4.476.11–3: δῆλον δὲ ὅτι ὡσπερ ἀμφιδέξιος, οὕτω καὶ ἀμφαρίστερος παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς, ὡς καὶ ἀλλαχοῦ δηλοῦται, ὁ ἐναντίος τῷ ἀμφιδεξίῳ.

It is clear that, like ἀμφιδέξιος ('ambidextrous'), in the same way ἀμφαρίστερος ('with two left hands', 'left-handed on both sides') too in the ancient authors was the opposite of an ambidextrous [person], as it is shown also elsewhere.

(4) Eust. *in Il.* 4.476.13–8: ὅτι δὲ ἀγαθὰ μὲν καὶ εὐοίωνιστα παρὰ τοῖς παλαιοῖς τὰ δεξιὰ ἐκρίνοντο, οὐ τοιαῦτα δὲ τὰ λαιὰ, ἔκ τε τῶν οἰωνοσκοπιῶν δῆλον, καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐξ ἀριστερᾶς πταρμῶν, καθ' ὧν οὐκ εὐεμφάτως ἢ κωμῶδία ἔπαιξεν. ἀκολούθως οὖν ψέγεται καὶ τὸ ἀμφαρίστερον καὶ τὸ ἐπαρίστερον. φέρεται δὲ καὶ παρωδία σύμφωνος τούτοις παλαιά, τὸ 'οὓς ἐδίδαξαν ἀριστερὰ γράμματα Μοῦσαι'.

The things on the right side were regarded by the ancients as good and propitious. Those on the left side were not so, clearly from the practice of augury and from sneezing on the left side, against which comic poets made jests in a non-positive sense. Consequently, then, what is ἀμφαρίστερον ('with two left hands', 'left-handed on both sides') and ἐπαρίστερον ('left-handed') is reproached. An ancient parody that is consonant with these [matters] is also known: '[those] whom the Muses taught the letters from right to left'.

(5) Eust. *in Od.* 1.31.3–5: διότι ἐν κακῇ μοίρᾳ οἱ παλαιοὶ ἐτίθεντο τὰ μὴ δεξιὰ. ὅθεν καὶ τὰ φαῦλα συμπτώματα, λαιὰ καὶ ἐπαρίστερα ἔλεγον. καὶ ἀμφαρίστερον, τὸ ἀμφοτέρωθεν οὐκ αἴσιον. ἀπεναντίας τῷ ἀμφιδεξίῳ.

Thus, the ancients assigned those things which were not on the right side to the area of bad luck. From this, they called bad things συμπτώματα ('mishaps'), λαιὰ ('on the left side') and ἐπαρίστερα ('left-handed'). There is also ἀμφαρίστερον ('with two left hands', 'left-handed on both sides'), indicating what is not auspicious on either side, the opposite of an ἀμφιδέξιος ('ambidextrous').

(6) Eust. *in Od.* 1.128.27–8: ἐπισημαντέον δὲ καὶ ὡς εἴπερ σκαιὸν λέγεται καὶ τὸ ὡς ἐρρέθη ἀριστερόν, λέγοιτ' ἂν σκαιὸς καὶ ὁ παρ' Ἀττικοῖς, ἐπαρίστερος, ὃ δὴ ἀλλαχοῦ ἐγράφη.

One should also notice that although it is called σκαιόν ('left') also the fact that it streamed towards the left, σκαιός ('clumsy') could additionally be called the Attic ἐπαρίστερος ('clumsy'), as it was written elsewhere.

(7) Thom.Mag. 334.14–335.3: σκαιός, οὐκ ἐπαρίστερος. σκαιὰ χεὶρ καὶ λαιά· τὸ δὲ ἀριστερά κοινότερον. ἀριστεροστάτης μέντοι ὁ ἐν ἀριστερῷ ἰστάμενος κάλλιστον. Ἀριστείδης ἐν Μιλτιάδῃ· ‘πλὴν ὅσον οὐκ ἀριστεροστάτης ἀνὴρ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ δεξιοῦ τοῖς Ἑλλησι κέρως’. ἔστι δὲ καὶ σκαιὰ γνώμη ἢ κακὴ καὶ ἀπαίδευτο.

σκαιός ('left', 'on the left-hand side'), not ἐπαρίστερος ('towards the left'). The σκαιὰ χεὶρ ('left hand') is also λαιά. But ἀριστερά ('left', i.e. hand) is the more common form. ἀριστεροστάτης ('stander on the left'), the person who stands on the left, is very beautiful. Aristides in Miltiades (3.154 Lenz–Behr [= 46.2–3 Dindorf]): 'Except that the man (i.e. Miltiades) is not a 'stander on the left', but rather he belongs to the right wing for the Greeks (i.e. of the battle line)'. There is also σκαιὰ γνώμη ('awkward opinion'), meaning the bad and boorish one.

C. *Loci classici*, other relevant texts

(1) Hdt. 2.36.4: γράμματα γράφουσι καὶ λογίζονται ψήφοισι Ἑλληνες μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀριστερῶν ἐπὶ τὰ δεξιὰ φέροντες τὴν χεῖρα, Αἰγύπτιοι δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν δεξιῶν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀριστερά· καὶ ποιεῦντες ταῦτα αὐτοὶ μὲν φασι ἐπιδέξια ποιέειν, Ἑλληνας δὲ ἐπαρίστερα.

The Greeks write the letters and count with the pebbles moving the hand from those on the left to those on the right, while the Egyptians from those on the right to those on the left. Although they do so, they say that they do these things in the right direction (i.e. rightly), whereas the Greeks [do these things] towards the left (i.e. wrong) direction.

(2) Soph. *Ai.* 182–4:

οὐποτε γὰρ φρενόθεν γ' ἐπ' ἀριστερά,
παῖ Τελαμώνος, ἔβας
τόσσον ἐν ποιίμναις πίτνων.

For surely not of your own accord, son of Telamon, you went astray so much when falling upon the flocks.

(3) Ar. *An.* 1567:

οὗτος, τί δρᾷς; ἐπαρίστερ' οὕτως ἀμπέχει;

You, what are you doing? Do you put the cloak around yourself like this, towards the left?

(4) Ar. fr. 526 = Gal. 18b.147.18–148.2 Kühn re. ἀμφαρίστερός ([B.1](#)).

(5) *DTA* 67.8–10: ὡσπερ ταῦτα ψυχρὰ καὶ ἐπαρίστερα | οὕτως τὰ Κράτητος τὰ ῥήματα ψυχρὰ [καὶ | ἐπαρί]στερα γέν[οι]το.

Like these (i.e. letters, γράμματα) are cold and backwards, so may Crates' words be cold and backwards.

(6) Hyp. fr. novum (= Phot. ε 1374): ἐπαρίστερα· Ὑπερείδης.

ἐπαρίστερα: [It is used by] Hyperides.

(7) Eripp. fr. 23:

ὡς σκαιὸς εἶ κάγροικος αἰσχροεπῶν ~ ~
ἐπαρίστερ' ἐν τῷ στόματι τὴν γλῶσσαν φορεῖς

How awkward and crude you are, when using foul language ... you clumsily carry the tongue in your mouth.

(8) Men. fr. 236.1–4:

(ΣΙ.) πρὸς τὸ πράγμ' ἔχω
κακῶς. (Β) ἐπαριστέρως γὰρ αὐτὸ λαμβάνεις·
τὰ δυσχερῆ γὰρ καὶ τὰ λυπήσοντά σε
ὄρας ἐν αὐτῷ, τὰ δ' ἀγαθ' οὐκ ἐπιβλέπεις.

(Si.) I am doing badly regarding this matter. (B) That's because you take it from the wrong side. For in it you look at the unpleasant things and those which will hurt you, but you do not look at the good ones.

(9) Theognet. fr. 1.5–8:

ὦ τάλας ἐγώ,
οἶω μ' ὁ δαίμων φιλοσόφω συνώκισεν.
ἐπαρίστερ' ἔμαθες, ὦ πονηρέ, γράμματα·
ἀνατέτροφέν σου τὸν βίον τὰ βυβλία

Poor me, what a philosopher does fate have me share the house with. You have learned the letters from right to left, you idiot: the books have turned your life upside down.

(10) Ath. 13.571b: δοκεῖς γὰρ μοι ἐκείνων εἶς εἶναι 'οὓς ἐδίδαξαν ἀριστερὰ γράμματα Μοῦσαι', ὡς τις ἔφη τῶν παρωδῶν.

You look to me like one of those 'whom the Muses taught the letters from right to left', as one of the parodists said.

(11) D.S. 8.5.1: ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ πόλει πολλάκις ἐπαριστέροις βουλευμάσιν ἐπιδέξιος ἀκολουθήσει τύχη.

In this city a favourable fate will often follow clumsy decisions.

(12) Synes. *Provid.* 2.4 Lamoureux–Aujoulat: ὁ δὲ πρεσβύτερος, ὁ Τυφῶς, ἐνὶ λόγῳ, πάντα ἐπαρίστερος.

The elder son, Typhon, was, in one word, utterly awkward.

(13) Michael Psellus *Historia brevis* 50 Aerts: τοῦτο δὲ πολλάκις δημοσίᾳ εἰώθει φθέγγεσθαι, ὅτι οὐ τὸν στρατιώτην δεῖ μόνον ἐπὶ τὰ δεξιὰ καὶ τὰ ἀριστερὰ τὴν ἀσπίδα μετενεγκεῖν δύνασθαι, ὃ φησιν Ὅμηρος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν βασιλέα ἐπιδέξιόν τε εἶναι καὶ ἐπαρίστερον καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἀγαθοῖς προτείνειν τὴν δεξιάν, τῶν δὲ πονηρῶν τῇ εὐωνύμῳ ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι.

It was customary for him to say in public that it is not only necessary for a soldier to be able to move the shield towards the right and the left, as Homer says, but that it is also necessary for a king to be benign and unfavourable, to offer the right hand to the good ones and to hold the evil ones with the left hand.

(14) Leo Choerosphactes *Chilistichos theologia* 309–10 Vassis:

ἀλλ' ἀντέφησας αὐθις ἀμφαριστέρους
ἀντιπροσώπους, ἡμιμοχθήρους φύσεις.

But then you replied that the adversaries, the half-bad natures, are awkward.

(15) Eust. *in D.P.* 431.45: τὸ τοῖς ἐγχωρίοις ἐπαριστερόν κέρας τοῦ ποταμοῦ.

The left horn of the river with respect to the inhabitants.

(16) *Anacharsis sive Ananias* 1114–8 Chrestides: ναὶ δὴ καὶ τοξικὴν ἐς ἄκρον ἐξήσκησε καὶ τόξω καὶ φαρέτρα τὴν ὀσφῦν περιζώννυται καὶ τὸν τοξότην σκιαγραφεῖ, οὐ μὴν καὶ χεῖρας εὖ ἀραρυίας πρὸς τὸ τοξεύειν ἐπλούτησεν· εἰ γὰρ καὶ τινες ἀμφιδεξίως χρῶνται τῷ τόξω καὶ δι' ἑκατέρας χειρὸς τοὺς ὀιστοὺς ἀποπέμπονται, ὁ δὲ καὶ πάνυ τι τὸ ἀμφαρίστερον ἔλαχεν οὐκ ἔχων ὀποτέραν χειρῶν τῇ δεξιωνυμίᾳ προσδεξιώσαιτο.

He also practiced archery: he girds himself with an arrow and quiver and casts the shadow of an archer, but he was not gifted with hands that were fitted for shooting arrows. For if some use the arrow ambidextrously and shoot the arrows with either hand, he received by fate to have two left hands, since he did not have one of the hands that he would refer to with the name 'right'.

(17) Michael Choniates *Epistulae* 95.1 Kolonou: εἰς ἣν ἄλλος μὲν τις τῶν ῥαδίως χαυνουμένων, ὡς εἰς τρίτον οὐρανὸν ἀρπαγείς, τὰ τε ἄλλα ἑτεροῖος ἂν ἐφάνη, οὐ κατὰ ἀλλοίωσιν τῆς δεξιᾶς τοῦ ὑψίστου, τὴν ἀνθρωπικὴν δὲ μάλλον καὶ ἐπαρίστερον.

For which (i.e. the status of patriarch) another person, one of those who easily become vain, as though he had been brought up to the third heaven, would have looked entirely different, not according to a transformation of the right hand of the Highest, but rather a human transformation and a bad one (literally: 'a left one').

D. General commentary

The adjective ἀμφαρίστερος is a compound of ἀμφί 'on both sides' and ἀριστερός 'left-handed'. This form does not occur in extant classical texts but is recorded by erudite sources, which testify to its occurrence in Aristophanes' *Tagenistai* (C.4) and to its meaning 'clumsy', a derivation from the concrete meaning 'with two left hands' and 'left-handed on either side' (A.4, A.5, B.1, B.4). The erudite sources also oppose ἀμφαρίστερος to its natural antonyms – ἀμφιδέξιος 'with two right hands' and 'ambidextrous' (B.1, B.3, B.5) and περιδέξιος 'with two right hands' and 'ambidextrous' (A.1, A.4, B.1) – and rightly explain the metaphorical use of these adjectives in light of the popular notion that the right side is good and lucky, while the opposite is true for the left side (A.4, A.5, B.3, B.4). Atticist lexicographers (A.1, A.3) had a special interest in ἀμφαρίστερος, which they regarded (together with σκαῖός) as an approved word for indicating a clumsy person. The comparison with Galen (B.1) confirms that the *locus classicus* from which they derived ἀμφαρίστερος and approved of its use is the passage of Aristophanes' *Tagenistai* (C.4). Interestingly, we have reason to believe that Aristophanes' ἀμφαρίστερος may have been an *ad hoc* formation for comic purposes (see Bagordo 2020, 94–5, who stresses the lack of lengthening in ἀμφᾶρίστερος and the possibility that it may have been a parody of ἀμφιδέξιος and περιδέξιος). The Atticist lexicographers do not appear to have noticed this, and they treat ἀμφαρίστερος as proper Attic simply because it is used by Aristophanes. In the *PS*,

Phrynichus ([A.1](#), cf. [A.5](#)) describes ἀμφαρίστερος as ‘very insulting’ (σχωπτικὸν πάνυ); this judgment may reflect the way Aristophanes used ἀμφαρίστερος, but it may also indicate the register to which such derogatory terms belonged in the élite Greek of Phrynichus’ times.

Pollux ([A.2](#)) and Eustathius ([B.4](#), [B.5](#)) also compare ἀμφαρίστερος with its synonym ἐπαρίστερος. Unlike ἀμφαρίστερος, ἐπαρίστερος is a later derivation (univerbation) from the adverbial ἐπαρίστερα (< ἐπ’ ἀριστερά) ‘towards the left’, which then acquired the translated and metaphorical meanings ‘in the wrong direction’ and ‘clumsily’. An almost identical formation is the adjective ἐπιδέξιος, which is also a development of adverbial ἐπιδέξια (< ἐπὶ δεξιᾷ) ‘towards the right’, then ‘in the right direction’ and ‘dexterously’ (see Olson 2014, 72).

In comparing ἀμφαρίστερος and ἐπαρίστερος, Pollux regards the latter as unacceptable and recommends using the former. A similar view is shared by Phrynichus in the *Eclogue* ([A.2](#)), the difference being that Phrynichus advises the use of σκαῖός rather than ἀμφαρίστερος, as the proper Attic equivalent of ἐπαρίστερος. Lobeck (1820, 259–60) and Rutherford (1881, 324) argue that the reason Pollux and Phrynichus condemn ἐπαρίστερος is because the metaphorical sense of ‘clumsy’ is not attested before Middle and New Comedy ([C.7](#), [C.8](#)). This explanation is open to discussion. For a start, Pollux is not as restrictive an Atticist as Phrynichus when it comes to evidence provided by later comedy, and so the fact that ἐπαρίστερος is only attested in 4th-century comedy does not fully justify his disapproval of this word. Further, in Herodotus ([C.1](#), see [F.1](#)) and Sophocles ([C.2](#), see [F.2](#)), ἐπαρίστερα does not carry the concrete meaning ‘from right to left’, but rather the abstract one ‘in the wrong direction’ and ‘astray’. Thus, one cannot easily say that ἐπαρίστερος ‘clumsy’ is entirely unparalleled before Middle and New Comedy, although it is true that the semantic nuance is slightly different and that Herodotus, unlike Sophocles, would not have counted as good evidence for a strict Atticist like Phrynichus (though this would not have been a problem for Pollux, see Tribulato 2014, 185–6).

In light of these observations, a more balanced explanation for why both Phrynichus and Pollux denounce ἐπαρίστερος may be that, besides the semantics, the adjective ἐπαρίστερος is not documented in any classical literary texts. Instead, in all 5th- and 4th-century occurrences ἐπαρίστερα is still only used adverbially (see [C.1](#), [C.3](#), [C.7](#), on [C.6](#) see [F.4](#)). Regarding Demetr. Phal. fr. 190 Wehrli (= fr. 143 Fortenbaugh–Schütrumpf = Athen. 5.177e) Δημήτριος δ’ ὁ Φαληρεὺς ἐπαρίστερον τὴν τοῦ στίχου παράληψιν ἐπειπὼν καὶ τῆς ποιήσεως ἀλλοτρίαν (‘Demetrius of Phalerum, judging the interpolation of the line clumsy and foreign to this style of poetry’), it remains unclear whether the wording of the comment that the interpolation is clumsy belongs to Demetrius or Athenaeus. In consequence, the first documented literary occurrence of the adjective ἐπαρίστερος is only as late as Diodorus ([C.11](#)). However, two details help us provide a more nuanced picture. To begin with, the first indirect evidence for an adjective ἐπαρίστερος could be Menander’s ἐπαριστέρως ([C.8](#)). Further, taking into account the evidence from non-literary texts, occurrences of the adjective ἐπαρίστερος may first appear in a 4th- or 3rd-century Attic *defixio* ([C.5](#), see [F.3](#)). If one takes this additional evidence on board, it is possible to infer that the development of the adjective ἐπαρίστερος may have been informal or colloquial (note Pollux’s comment that ἐπαρίστερος is ἰδιωτικόν ‘low level’), which explains why it is almost entirely absent from 5th- and 4th-century literary Attic (except Menander’s ἐπαριστέρως).

For a parallel in support of this interpretation, one may think of the chronological distribution of the adjective ἐπιδέξιος. In texts up to the 4th century we encounter only adverbial ἐπιδέξια (Hom. *Il.* 2.353, Hom. *Od.* 21.141, Hdt. 2.36.4, Dion. Chal. fr. 1.2 and 4.1 West, Crit. fr. 6.6 West, Eup. fr. 354, Ar. *Pax* 957, *Av.* 1568, *Theaet.* 175e.6–7, Lys. fr. 431 Carey), while the first occurrence of the adjective ἐπιδέξιος is as late as Aeschines’ 345 BCE oration *Against Timarchus* (1.178). One can also note that although Pollux records ἐπιδέξιος among words related to the right hand and the right side, he only quotes classical literary evidence for adverbial ἐπιδέξια (Poll. 2.159 χειρῶν δὲ ἢ μὲν δεξιὰ κατὰ τὴν θέσιν [...] καὶ δεξιός, ἐπιδέξιος, δεξιῶς, ἐπιδεξιῶς, ἐπιδέξια· δηλοῖ δὲ τοῦτο παρὰ μὲν Πλάτωνι τὸ δεξιῶς·

ἀναβάλλεσθαι δὲ οὐκ ἐπισταμένου ἐπιδέξια, παρὰ δὲ Λυσία τὸ ἐκ δεξιᾶς χειρός· εἰσιόντων πρὸς τῇ Νεμέᾳ ἔστηκεν ἐπιδέξια, παρὰ δὲ Εὐπόλιδι προπόσεως σχῆμα· ὅταν δὲ δὴ πίνωσι τὴν ἐπιδέξια, ‘One of the hands is the right one according to its position [...] And there are δεξιός (‘on the right side’, ‘lucky’), ἐπιδέξιος (‘towards the right’, ‘lucky’, ‘clever’), δεξιῶς (‘rightly’, ‘luckily’, ‘cleverly’), ἐπιδεξιῶς (‘rightly’, ‘luckily’, ‘cleverly’), ἐπιδέξια (‘towards the right’, ‘rightly’). In Plato, this (i.e. ἐπιδέξια) means ‘rightly’: ‘He does not know to rightly throw the cloak around himself’ (*Theaet.* 175e.6–7). In Lysias, the word means ‘from the right side’: ‘It stands on the right side of those entering Nemea’ (fr. 431 Carey). Lastly, in Eupolis it is a type of celebratory toast: ‘But when they drink the (cup) towards the right’ (fr. 354).

Returning to ἐπαρίστερος, this adjective is well-documented in Imperial Greek: there are two occurrences in Plutarch (*Cato* 19.7, *Quomodo adul.* 34a.4–6), one in Arrian (*Epict.* 3.12.119), and two in Athenaeus (5.179f, 5.182e). Although ἐπαρίστερος is often a prosaic word, Manetho uses it once (3.375 αὐτοὶ δ’ ἀπρόκοποι, πάμπαν τ’ ἐπαρίστεροι ἄνδρες ‘They are incapable of making progress, utterly awkward men’); note, however, that ἐπαρίστεροι appears alongside the recent formation of ἀπρόποκος, and that the register appears rather low-level.

E. Byzantine and Modern Greek commentary

We have evidence for only two Byzantine occurrences of ἀμφαρίστερος ([C.14](#), [C.16](#)). They are both to be connected with the consultation of Atticist sources, which explains how such a cultism was brought back into use (see [E.7](#) and [E.8](#)).

As regards ἐπαρίστερος, this adjective occurs over fifty times in high-register Greek from the early Byzantine period (Themistius, Synesius) to the fall of Byzantium (the last documented occurrence is found in Gennadius Scholarius). Some writers appear to have been particularly fond of this word: Michael Psellos used it seven times, Eustathius four times (plus nine times in the Homeric commentaries), and Michael Choniates four times. Nearly all Byzantine occurrences of ἐπαρίστερος appear in Atticising prose, and the one poetic occurrence is Georgios Lapithes *Versus politici* 353. This type of paraenetic literature does not stand out for its use of poeticising language, but Georgios Lapithes’ poem surely counts as Atticising Greek (especially when compared with similar, roughly contemporary texts: a comparison with *Spaneas*, for instance, is provided by Danezis 1986–1987).

In the extant Byzantine examples, ἐπαρίστερος is used both in the concrete sense (‘towards the left’) and in the metaphorical one (‘clumsy’, ‘awkward’). Notably, ἐπαρίστερος also appears to have undergone a double semantic development in Byzantine Greek. For a start, this adjective is sometimes used with the meaning ‘left’ and ‘on the left’, as if it were the classical ἀριστερός, rather than ‘towards the left’. Instances of this use are provided by Eustathius ([C.15](#)), Michael Choniates ([C.17](#); a wordplay with the metaphorical meaning also appears), and Thomas Magister ([B.7](#), on which see [E.9](#)). ἐπαρίστερος undergoes a further semantic development: the translated and metaphorical meaning is enlarged to indicate ‘unfavourable’, ‘hostile’, ‘sinister’. The first documented occurrence of this semantic nuance is found in Michael Psellos ([C.13](#)), to which a few further examples can be added (Michael Psellos *Historia brevis* 71 and 73 Aerts; Michael Choniates *Epistulae* 90.4 Kolovou; Nicetas Choniates *Historia* 91.16 van Dieten; Nicephorus Chrysoberges *Oratio ad Ioannem X Camaterum Patriarcham* 12).

The Byzantines, despite their erudition, seem to have been unaware of the Atticist lexicographers’ reservations regarding ἐπαρίστερος ([A.2](#), [A.3](#)). Not only is this form regularly used in higher levels of Greek and by openly Atticising authors (Michael Psellos, Eustathius, and Michael Choniates being the most eminent examples), Eustathius ([B.6](#)) even explicitly labels ἐπαρίστερος as a proper Attic form. One isolated exception is the condemnation of ἐπαρίστερος by Thomas Magister ([B.7](#)), though he clearly relies (with some manipulation) on Phrynichus’ *Eclogue* ([A.3](#), see [E.9](#)). How, then, does one explain the promotion of ἐπαρίστερος into the vocabulary

of Atticising Greek, as witnessed in Byzantine times? Where do Byzantine writers derive this use of ἐπαρίστερος from? While it is true that ἐπαρίστερος is attested in classical authors who were read continuously by the Byzantines (such as Plutarch: for a sketch see Pade 2013, 535–6), it would be hazardous to imagine that ἐπαρίστερος is a cultism derived simply from the literary tradition. This is all the more so given that the imperial authors who used ἐπαρίστερος never had the status of being linguistic models. Another option is that ἐπαρίστερος may have retained an element of informal, though not low, language. For instance, in Synesius (C.12) ἐπαρίστερος may well function as a mildly colloquial form that is effectively used to make a point clearer. Although ἐπαρίστερος was originally a colloquialism, it may have been part of a sociolect perceived as being more distinctive, and this too may have gradually influenced the register that ἐπαρίστερος belonged to overall – thus, ἐπαρίστερος ended up being associated with Atticising Greek. On the other hand, such a scenario would also explain the way this form developed semantically in Byzantine Greek.

F. Commentary on individual texts and occurrences

(1) Hdt. 2.36.4 (C.1)

This passage contains an element of *Witz*. The Egyptians are accustomed to writing from right to left and therefore claim to be writing ‘in the right direction’ (ἐπιδέξια), while they accuse the Greeks, who write in turn from left to right, of writing ‘in the wrong (ἐπαρίστερα, literally ‘towards the left’) direction’.

(2) Soph. *Ai.* 182–4 (C.2), Ar. *Av.* 1567 (C.3)

Univerbated ἐπαρίστερα is normally employed when the meaning is translated or metaphorical, and Herodotus provides clear evidence of this: compare ἐπαρίστερα ‘in the wrong direction’ in C.1 with ἐπ’ ἀριστερά ‘towards the left’ in the other occurrences (1.51.1, 2.93.3–4, 4.191.1, 6.33.1, 7.39.3). In some instances, however, the manuscript evidence oscillates between one form and the other, and editors do not always adjust the transmitted writing in accordance with the semantic distribution of ἐπ’ ἀριστερά and ἐπαρίστερα. As regards Sophocles’ *Ajax* (C.2), the sense is clearly metaphorical, and Finglass (2011, 196) rightly compares this occurrence with the univerbated adverbial ἐπαρίστερα. However, since the manuscript tradition is unanimous in presenting the segmentation ἐπ’ ἀριστερά (no variant reading is recorded in modern editions), editors of *Ajax* consistently retain this spelling. The opposite is true in the passage of Aristophanes’ *Birds* (C.3): although the sense is the concrete one (‘from right to left’, see details in Dunbar 1995, 716), and even though some of the later manuscripts do have the reading ἐπ’ ἀριστερά, more recent editors have retained the univerbated reading ἐπαρίστερ’ of the older manuscripts (see Dunbar 1995, 120 and Wilson 2007 vol. 1, 419).

(3) *DTA* 67.8–10 (C.5)

The composition of this *defixio* is retrograde (line 8: ὡσπερ ταῦτα ψυχρὰ καὶ ἐπαρίστερα ‘Like these [i.e. letters, γράμματα] are cold and towards the left [i.e. backwards]’). The aim here is for the distorted writing, through an act of sympathetic magic, to be reflected in the cursed person’s words, which the curser hopes will be ‘clumsy’ and ‘inept’ (lines 9–10: οὕτως τὰ Κράτητος τὰ ῥήματα ψυχρὰ [καὶ | ἐπαρί]στερα γέν[οι]το ‘So may Crates’ words be cold and backwards’). A comparable use of ἐπαρίστερα (as an adverb, though) occurs in another Attic *defixio*, that is, *DTA* 109.2–5 (3rd century BCE; see Eidinow 2007, 384) Ἑρμῆ κά|τοχε κάτεχε Μανῆν καὶ τὰ Μανούς καὶ τὴν ἐργ|α[σί]αν ἦν [ἐ]ργάζεται Μ[α]νῆς ἄ[πα]σαν εἰς τάναν|τία καὶ ἐπαρίστερα γίνεσθαι Μανεῖ (‘Hermes binder, bind Manes and the goods of Manes and the work that Manes does may it all go astray and backwards’). In the latter inscription, not only is the writing retrograde, as in the former case, but the ordering of the lines is also inverted (that is, the text runs from bottom to top). Parallel examples in Greek and Latin *defixiones* involving the inversion of writing as a magical act are collected by Urbanová, Franek (2020).

(4) Hyp. fr. novum (= Phot. ε 1374) ([C.6](#))

In light of the other 5th- and 4th-century parallels, it would be easy to assume that Hyperides too used ἐπαρίστερα as an adverb. At any rate, even if Hyperides used ἐπαρίστερα as an adjective and in the metaphorical sense, an isolated occurrence would not *ipso facto* guarantee the Attic pedigree of a doubtful form such as the adjective ἐπαρίστερος. Additionally, Hyperides may well have been criticised by Atticists when his language choices were deemed poor or openly incorrect (see Phryn. *Ecl.* 309 and 311 and the discussion in Matthaios 2013, 77 and n. 57).

(5) Men. fr. 236.1–4 ([C.8](#))

The comedy from which this fragment is quoted, *Misogynes*, is quite often cited in Atticist lexicography (see Lamagna 1993, 61–5 and Sonnino 2014, 187–9).

(6) Theognet. fr. 1.7 ([C.9](#))

The punchy comment ἐπαρίστερ' ἔμαθες, ὦ πονηρέ, γράμματα ('Idiot, you have learned the letters in the wrong direction') is paralleled by the parodic hexameter quoted by Athenaeus ([C.10](#)) and Eustathius ([B.4](#)). However, while in the parodic hexameter ἀριστερά is an adjective, Theognetus' ἐπαρίστερα is an adverb. Despite the different view proposed by Rutherford (1881, 324) and LSJ s.v. ἐπαρίστερος II, Theognetus' fragment does not testify to the meaning 'clumsily': ἐπαρίστερα rather means 'in the wrong direction'. The Stoic philosopher to whom these lines are addressed is being teased for his paradoxical views about human life (at lines 3–5, the idea that wealth, unlike wisdom, is irrelevant for mankind is ascribed to him). The question at line 7 – whether he had learned to read 'in the wrong direction', 'from right to left' (which is then elaborated upon at line 8 with the comment 'the books have turned your life upside down') – means that he had not learned what really mattered in life (that is, wealth).

(7) Leo Choerosphactes *Chilistichos theologia* 309–10 Vassis ([C.14](#))

The addressees of this passage are Mani and Manicheism (see further Vassis 2002, 168). Leo Choerosphactes follows Phrynichus' instruction that ἀμφορίστερος is insulting. In addition to ἡμιμοχθήρους φύσεις ('half-bad natures') at line 310, which is an open allusion to the Manichean doctrine postulating the existence of two opposing principles of Good and Evil, one may also notice the participle πλύνας (with the translated meaning 'rinse out', 'vituperate') at line 324.

(8) *Anacharsis vel Ananias* 1114–8 Chrestides ([C.16](#))

The *Anacharsis vel Ananias* is a 12th-century dialogue between Aristagoras and Lady Grammar, both of whom enumerate and reproach Anacharsis' wickedness – the embodiment of what an aristocrat should not be like (for an introduction to this text, see Cullhed 2021). This text is written in imitation of Lucian's dialogues, and the language is equally mimetic. It is therefore almost certain that the author of this text had access to Atticist sources recommending the use of such a rare form as ἀμφορίστερος.

(9) Thom.Mag. 334.14–335.3 ([B.7](#))

- (i) Thomas Magister's comment σκαιός, οὐκ ἐπαρίστερος likely relies on Phrynichus' similarly expressed condemnation of ἐπαρίστερος in the *PS* ([A.2](#)). However, while Phrynichus disapproved of ἐπαρίστερος 'clumsy' and 'awkward', for which he recommended using σκαιός instead (one may compare Pollux's analogous criticism of ἐπαρίστερος in [A.3](#)), Thomas Magister (like other Byzantine authors, see [E.](#)) treats ἐπαρίστερος almost as if it were an equivalent of ἀριστερός, and thus with the meaning 'left' and 'on the left-hand side' rather than 'towards the left'.
- (ii) Here is the full passage of Aelius Aristides' *Pro quattuor* quoted by Thomas Magister: Μιλτιάδην δὲ τὸν ἐν Μαραθῶνι ποῦ χοροῦ τάξομεν ἢ τάξιν τίνα; ἢ δῆλον ὅτι τὴν πρὸ τοῦ θεάτρου καὶ οὐ πᾶσιν ἐν καλῷ τῆς θεᾶς ἔσται; πλὴν γ' ὅσον οὐκ ἀριστεροστάτης ἀνήρ μάλλον ἢ τοῦ δεξιοῦ τοῖς Ἑλλησι κέρως ('In what part of the chorus shall we place

Miltiades in Marathon or in what line? Or is it evident that we shall place him in the line before the theatre and where he will be in a good position for being visible to all? Except that the man is not quite a stander on the left, but rather he belongs in the right wing for the Greeks'). Aristides is drawing a comparison between Miltiades' position in the rank of soldiers on the battlefield, where he belongs in the right wing, and the position on the left-hand side of the chorus, where the most able choreuts are placed so as to be most visible to the audience, as well as to conceal the less-gifted ones from view (see Csapo, Slater 1995, 353; Olson, Seaberg 2018, 300–2). The text quoted by Thomas Magister shows some minor divergences from the direct tradition of *Pro quattuor*, which are compatible with Thomas quoting from memory.

Bibliography

Bagordo, A. (2020). *Aristophanes fr. 487–589. Übersetzung und Kommentar*. Göttingen.

Csapo, E. G.; Slater, W. J. (1995). *The Context of Ancient Drama*. Ann Arbor.

Cullhed, E. (2021). 'The Consolation of Philology. *Anacharsis or Ananias*'. Marciniak, P.; Nilsson, A. (eds.), *Satire in the Middle Byzantine Period. The Golden Age of Laughter?*. Leiden, 213–23.

Danezis, G. (1986–1987). 'Ο Σπανέας και οι πολιτικοί στίχοι του Γεωργίου Λαπίθη'. *Δίπτυχα* 4, 413–25.

Dunbar, N. (1995). *Aristophanes. Birds. Edited with Introduction and Commentary*. Oxford.

Eidinow, E. (2007). *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks*. Oxford.

Finglass, P. J. (2011). *Sophocles. Ajax. Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*. Cambridge.

Lamagna, M. (1993). 'Il Misogino: la «più bella commedia» di Menandro?'. *Vichiana* 4, 48–66.

Lobeck, C. A. (1820). *Phrynichi Eclogae nominum et verborum Atticorum*. Leipzig.

Matthaios, S. (2013). 'Pollux' Onomastikon im Kontext der attizistischen Lexikographie. Gruppen «anonymer Sprecher» und ihre Stellung in der Sprachgeschichte und Stilistik'. Mauduit, C. (ed.), *L'Onomasticon de Pollux. Aspects culturels, rhétoriques et lexicographiques*. Paris, 67–140.

Olson, S. D. (2014). *Eupolis fr. 326–497. Translation and Commentary*. Heidelberg.

Olson, S. D.; Seaberg, R. (2018). *Kratinos fr. 299–514. Translation and Commentary*. Göttingen.

Pade, M. (2013). 'The Reception of Plutarch from Antiquity to the Italian Renaissance'. Beck, M. (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch*. Chichester, 529–43.

Rutherford, W. G. (1881). *The New Phrynichus. Being a Revised Text of the Ecloga of the Grammarian Phrynichus*. London.

Sonnino, M. (2014). 'I frammenti della commedia greca citati da Prisciano e la fonte del lessico sintattico del libro XVIII dell'Ars'. Martorelli, L. (ed.), *Greco antico nell'occidente carolingio. Frammenti di testi attici nell'Ars di Prisciano*. Hildesheim, Zürich, 163–204.

Tribulato, O. (2014). "Not even Menander Would use this Word!": Perceptions of Menander's Language in Greek Lexicography'. Sommerstein, A. H. (ed.), *Menander in Contexts*. New York, 199–214.

Urbanová, D.; Franek, J. (2020). 'Hoc ego averse scribo: The *aversus*-Formula on Ancient Greek and Latin Curse Tablets'. Bichlmeier, H.; Šefčík, O.; Sukač, R. (eds.), *Etymologus*. Festschrift for Václav Blažek. Hamburg, 375–91.

Vassis, I. (2002). *Leon Magistros Choirosphaktes. Chilistichos theologia*. Editio princeps. *Einleitung, kritischer Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar, Indices*. Berlin, New York.

Wilson, N. G. (2007). *Aristophanis fabulae*. 2 vols. Oxford.

CITE THIS

Federico Favi, 'ἀμφαρίστερος, ἐπαρίστερος (Phryn. PS 2.7–8, Phryn. Ecl. 227, Poll. 2.160)', in Olga Tribulato (ed.), *Digital Encyclopedia of Atticism*. With the assistance of E. N. Merisio.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30687/DEA/2021/01/041>

ABSTRACT

This article deals with the terms ἀμφαρίστερος and ἐπαρίστερος, discussed in the Atticist lexica Phryn. PS 2.7–8, Phryn. Ecl. 227, Poll. 2.160.

KEYWORDS

Clumsiness

Defixiones

Left

Right

ἀμφιδέξιος

ἐπιδέξιος

περιδέξιος

FIRST PUBLISHED ON

01/10/2022

LAST UPDATE

26/06/2024



Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

[ve]dph

Venice Centre for
Digital and Public
Humanities



Edizioni
Ca'Foscari

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 865817)

© 2023 PURA - Digital Encyclopedia of Atticism - This work is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Hosting by GARR Cloud