HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Archilochus (7th Cent. B.C.)

Archilochos as lyric presence. We have stressed the importance of the dactylic hexameter (in Homer and Hesiod). With Archilochos (and the other lyric poets we discuss here) we come into a pluralistic metrical world, in which, though there is 'direct expression' of the individual, there are multiple prosodic vehicles for that expression: the *iambic* meter (often, in Archilochos, used for 'attack' or 'invective' poetry); and various lyric meters, declarative (*trochaics*), *anapestic* (tripping and springing), and *dactylic*, an echo from the epic.

A**rchilochos and the remains of his work**. We know one date in Archilochos' life, 648 B.C., the occasion of a total eclipse of the sun over the Aegaean: 'Nothing in the world can surprise me now….for Zeus, father of the Olympians, has turned midday into black night by shielding light from the blossoming sun, and now dark terror hangs over mankind…' Apart from that event, what we know of Archilochos comes from his own poems—and in that he hardly differed from the Athenians of the fifth century; their lives have largely to be reconstructed by much later comments from others, often embedded in texts/papyri reduced to a line or two. The evidence we deduce from Archilochos' poems suggests he was a mercenary soldier, that on one occasion he had thrown away his shield and fled from battle, that he had a great love for Neoboule (not 'romance'), that he preferred short tough individualistic fighting men to aristocratic pretty boys, and so on: from his remaining poems and fragments we can create the profile of a Thasian fighting man with such and such traits. Yet as we are looking at the lyric of personal expression, here, we had better take a sharp look. It is true that, in his lyrics which are mostly incomplete, Archilochos gives us content-lines which purport to be autobiographical glimpses, but self-expression in the lyric is not that transparent. The reliability of information given in a lyric is always open to question, and must be read in terms of the speaker and the tone of the whole piece. In most cases, if we look closely at the ancient lyric, we will find many reasons to question how it is personally revelatory. Finally, what do you think you can learn about a man from a little poem like the following?

The fox knows many tricks, the hedgehog only one.
One good one.