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ALEXANDER THE ARISTOTELIAN, TEACHER OF PRINCES: AN INQUIRY INTO THE CULTURAL UNDERCURRENTS OF *DE FATO**

KEYWORDS: Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De fato*, Aristotelian philosophy, education of kings, rhetoric

SUMMARY: The present paper investigates the autopresentation of Alexander of Aphrodisias as the philosopher – teacher of kings.

Forming one of the most important testimonies on the imperial debates on the theory of predestination, and counted among the primary sources on both the deterministic and non-deterministic theories that were developed by the ancient schools of philosophy[1], Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De fato* enjoys a philosophical importance that has almost entirely overshadowed its cultural and political frame. Indeed, the modern commentaries are nearly dismissive of the contents of the

* It is to be noted that this is not the paper originally prepared for the *Leadership* volume: however, as most of my historian colleagues focused on the reality of ruling and more tangible aspects of leadership, I thought that the present subject would fit better with the prevalently political or state-related nature of the recurrent themes. I thank dr Joanna Janik and dr hab. Sławomir Sprawski for their understanding in the matter.
All translations from Alexander's *On fate* according to R.W. Sharples' seminal edition (Sharples 1983).

[1] Compare Sharples 1983: 3-4; Verbeke 1968, and others.

introductory and closing passages of the treatise (in fact these are usually treated only with a view to recover the chronological data that enable the dating of the work) and almost no attention is paid to the latter's possible rooting in the cultural and intellectual preconceptions of the time[2]. Yet, the structuring and the contents of these highly (at least in comparison to the remaining part of the work) rhetorical chapters of the work, together with the choice of subject, seem to carry considerable meaning should we regard it against the mirror of earlier and contemporary notions of wisdom, sage, and political involvement of philosophy. The present essay will aim at demonstrating that while remaining the exhaustive treatment of the predestination issue, the *de fato* is carefully presented as an instrument of instruction, the means of educating the governing class in the art of responsible behavior. This, one should understand, in no way diminishes the philosophical worth of the treatise: to the contrary, what I seek to explore is an additional, in a way secondary, dimension, contributing not so much to our understanding of its philosophical contents, but rather to the image we have of the author, the man behind the treatise, and of his world. As such, the present investigation shall necessarily relate to the portrayal of the emperor and his family as implicit in the work, highlighting its dependence from the predominant notions of rulership and power.

Let us start by considering the ramifications of the opening chapter of the treatise. Two facts are of paramount importance for the present subject: first, the *De fato* is dedicated to the ruling emperor of Severan dynasty; to be precise to Septimius Severus and his son and co-ruler Caracalla (μέγιστοι αὐτοκράτορες Σεβῆρε και ᾽Αντωνῖνε, *De fato* 164, 3 B), the circumstance which allows for the dating of the whole treatise for 198-209 AD; second, in the opening sentences Alexander presents the treatise as a fulfillment of an obligation placed on

[2] Sharples' commentary, which has the merit of at least indicating some cultural aspects of Alexander's position, remarks only on the ironic aspect of the opening passage as addressed to the Severi, comparing it to the praise of Commodus in Pollux' *Onomasticon* (Sharples 1983: 125). Thillet dispenses with the dedicatory passages in few brief sentences, focusing mostly on the position of the treatise within Alexander's *corpus* (Thillet 1984: lxxvi-vii). He does, however, link Alexander's reticence with regard to his adversaries with the predominantly anti-Stoic tendencies of the Severan court (Thillet 1984: lxxxvi-xc), a fact which indubitably attests to political awareness and skill of our author.

him incumbent upon him as the officially approved instructor of (Aristotelian) philosophy[3], or to be more precise, as an official expression of gratitude framed into the most appropriate form (καθομολογῆσαι χάριν ἀνθ' ὧν ἔπαθον εὖ παρ' ὑμῶν πολλάκις, κτλ. *De fato* 164, 2-3). As an effect of this second circumstance, the treatise, regardless of its philosophical depth, constitutes an offering of a grateful subject, a gift expressly compared to the *gratiarum actio* in front of the gods. It seems useful to invoke the exact wording of the chapter in question:

> ἐπει δε ἐφεῖται, και εἰ μη παρών τις τοῖς ἱεροῖς θύειν δύναται, το θύειν αὐτοῖς πανταχόθεν τε και πανταχοῦ και πέμπειν ἀναθήματα, ἃ μη κομίζειν αὐτοῖς οἷόν τε, ἐθάρσησα προ ς ὑμᾶς τῇ προ ς το θεῖον ἐξουσίᾳ, καί τινα ἀπαρχη ν ὑμῖν τῶν ἡμετέρων καρπῶν ἀνάθημα πέμψαι οἰκειότατον ὑμῖν ἀναθημάτων ἁπάντων. (<u>*De fato*</u> 164, 6-12 B)
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> *But even if we cannot sacrifice to the gods by being present at their sacred rites, [we are] commanded to sacrifice to them everywhere and from every place, and to send votive offerings which we cannot bring ourselves; [and so] I have ventured to follow in your case the example of what is allowed in the case of the divine, so as to send to you, as a votive offering, some offering of my first fruits, the most appropriate for you of all offerings.*

As the agricultural metaphor transforms the philosophical treatise into the traditional offering of the chosen first fruits which were routinely sacrificed to the gods to guarantee their continued favor, the imperial dedicees become an analogon of the respective, benefactory divinities. It seems important that Alexander's metaphor exploits an act as traditional as to be almost archetypal: effectively, he substitutes an intellectual offering for the more established element of the traditional rite, hence introducing a mutation into the whole process and, quite possibly, hinting at certain culturally advanced aspect of the involved triad individual-offering-divinity (after all, in switching the offering we are transported from the simplicity and relative primitiveness of rural life into the sublime realm of intellectual endeavor, the intellectual development being frequently equated with the notion

[3] For the discussion concerning the location of Alexander's philosophical activity compare Thillet 1984: xlix-l.

of cultural advancement[4]). Furthermore, the sacrificial simile employed in the chapter brings forward another facet of Alexander's gift: after all, certain rules govern sacrifices directed at various divinities of the Greco-Roman pantheon – this link may have been originally regarded as hinting at additional correspondence existing between religious rite and the present act of homage: the chapter expressly states that the offering (philosophical treatise) befits the status of the person offering the sacrifice, but also, possibly more strikingly, highlights certain correspondence linking the offering to the personae of the *honorandi*. In other words: a philosophical treatise is the offering worthy of a publicly appointed teacher of philosophy, but also a gift worthy of his benefactors to whom it is sent.

Alexander begins by professing regret at not being able to deliver his offering in person, yet expresses his belief that a written treatise may provide an equally efficient way of expressing his gratitude. As a result, he portrays his work as a votive offering parallel to the sacrifice of the first fruits of agricultural labor, – thus, he draws a subtle parallel between emperor and divinity, a complimentary practice well attested in earlier rhetorical practice. After all, Zeus' role as archetypal ruler and emperor was emphasized e.g. by Dio Chrysostomus, who in turn traced the practice as far as Homeric poems[5]. One notices, though, that we are dealing with a purely analogous argument (the link between ruler and god is constituted by parallelism of behavior, not nature) – in other words, there is no explicit mention of the possible divinity of imperial nature[6].

Its complimentary implications notwithstanding, the main focus of the proem is on the appropriateness of the gift: the treatise is described as 'the most appropriate for you of all offerings', while the emperors are praised for their interest in philosophical matters:

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[4] For the ancient understanding of progress see the study of Edelstein 1967 and much briefer treatment of Dodds 1973), for the ancient portrayal of the imperial era compare e.g. Firmicus Maternus *Math.* III, 1.

[5] Possibly most prominently in the *First Discourse on Kingship* (*Or*. 1, 37-41).

[6] Since we know that the Severi were supportive of the notion of imperial uniqueness (on the subject compare Thillet 1984: lxxxix, n. 6; the tendency was most visibly and most disastrously manifested by Elagabalus), the parallel may be taken to furnish yet another testimony to the court skills of Alexander.

τί γα ρ οἰκειότερον τοῖς γνησίως φιλοσοφίαν τιμῶσίν τε και προάγουσιν ἀνάθημα γένοιτο βιβλίου ὑπισχνουμένου θεωρίαν φιλόσοφον (*De fato* 164, 11-13 B)

For what could be a more appropriate offering to those who genuinely honour and promote philosophy than a book that undertakes philosophical speculation?

Though one may wonder at the intellectualist hopefulness of the implied claim (after all, Caracalla detested Aristotelians in the belief that the Stagirite contributed to the demise of his idol, Alexander[7]), it remains nevertheless noteworthy that Alexander seeks to establish certain connection between the choice of gift and the characters of its dedicees. Regardless of the true state of things, the resulting portrait of the Severi is that of rulers deeply appreciative of philosophical wisdom, an image very much in keeping with the panegyrist tradition, but also with the intellectual paradigm of the ideal ruler: to appreciate the influence of this first, it seems reasonable to invoke the bevy of adjectives describing a good ruler in the rhetorical handbook of Julius Pollux; meanwhile, the actual image of the ruler surrounded by sages emerges quite possibly at its clearest in Dio's *Discourses on Kingship* – thus, the presence of ʾΟρθος Λόγος, known also as a Σύμβουλος or Πάρεδρος in the court of Royalty, Zeus' child and the incarnation of proper rule, is portrayed as indispensable – it seems significant that he holds the utmost sway in the whole court, no decision being made without his approval[8]. It is also in Dio's works that we encounter the idealized Alexander, pupil of Aristotle, expounding on the duties of the king and emphasizing the importance of philosophy as source of ethical as well as political

[7] Compare Cassius Dio *ep*. 78 (77) 11, 7, 3.

[8] Compare *Or*. 1, 75: ὁ δ' ἐγγυςοῦτος ἑστηκως τῆς Βασιλείαςπαρ' αὐτο το σκῆπτρον ἔμπροσθεν ἰσχυρος ἀνήρ, πολιος και μεγαλόφρων, οὗτος δη καλεῖται Νομος, ὁ δε αὐτος και Λόγος ʾΟρθος κέκληται Σύμβουλος και Πάρεδρος, οὗ χωρις οὐ δεν ἐκείναιςπρᾶξαι θέμιςοὐδε διανοηθῆναι (*But he, who stands near Royalty, just beside the scepter and somewhat in front of it, a strong man, grey-haired and proud, has the name of Law; but he has also been called Right Reason, Counsellor, Coadjutor, without whom those women are not permitted to take any action or even to purpose one.*) All quotations from Dio in the English translation of J.W. Cohoon (Loeb Classical Library, vol. 257, Cambridge 1932).

instruction. Thus, while the *Second Oration*, through the words of Alexander, questions necessity of achieving the philosophical perfection, it also calls for certain sensitivity to philosophical advice, affirming:

> τῶν γε μη ν λόγων ἡδέως ἀκούοντα τῶν ἐκ φιλοσοφίας, ὁπόταν καιρός, ἅτε οὐκ ἐναντίων φαινομένων, ἀλλα συμφώνων τοῖς αὐτοῦ τρόποις (*Or*. 2, 26)[9]

> *He* [ie. the ruler] *should, indeed, lend a willing ear to the teachings of philosophy whenever opportunity offers, inasmuch as these are manifestly not opposed to his own character but in accord with it* .

Consistent with this postulate, Dio has a somewhat less self-conscious version of Alexander listen to the lectures of Diogenes (*Or.* 4). Effectively, in Dio's speeches the ability to listen to the sage and to benefit from what one hears even when the tone of the speech appears irreverent or even derisory forms one of the prerequisites of good ruler, a fact possibly most manifest in the *Fourth Oration*, where the incipient vices of Alexander are offset by the intransigent wisdom of Diogenes, and where this latter emphasizes the role exercised by education in the formation of the kingly character[10].

Still, it is Aphrodisian's justification for his choice of the actual subject that seems most pertinent to the main theme of the present discussion. Study of fate, praised as the most useful emerges here as the most elevated of all philosophical researches:

> ἔστι δε οὐδενο ς δεύτερον τῶν κατα φιλοσοφίαν δογμάτων τουτι το δόγμα· ἥ τε γα ρ απ᾽ αὐτοῦ χρεῖα πανταχοῦ τε και ἐπι πάντα διατείνει (*De fato* 1, 164, 15-17 B).

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[9] In Dio's estimate, a princely soul would of necessity be foreign to certain philosophical tenets such as e.g. the Epicurean principle of priority of pleasure or, for that effect, the enticement for an actual withdrawal from the political life (this seems manifest once we consider the contents of *Or*. 1, 21-23).

[10] *Or*. 4, 38 (in Cohoon's translation): *And you, since you have been born with the right nature, if you come upon man of understanding* (ἐπισταμένου ἀνδρός)*, will find single day sufficient to get a grasp of his subject and art, and you will have no longer any need for subtle claptrap and discussions, etc.* Significantly, the failure to find a proper teacher results in a basic inability to actualize the inborn qualities of one's nature and in a confusion concerning the ultimate goal of life.

This part of philosophical doctrine is second to no other; for its usefulness extends everywhere and to all things.

The statement is interesting in its own right: after all, when thinking of the summit of philosophical research – particularly in the context of Aristotelianism – one is possibly more inclined to think of theoretical philosophy[11]; still, it is to be remembered that the theory of fate stands right between the realm of practice and theory, its tenets being intrinsically connected both with the metaphysical doctrines and with the actual practice of ethics[12]. It is not by chance, after all, that Alexander emphasizes the difference in human behavior that results from the chosen understanding of fate:

οὐ γα ρ ὁμοίως περι τα ς πράξεις ἔχουσι οἵ τε πάντα ἐξ ἀνάγκης και καθ᾽ εἱμαρμένην γίγνεσθαι πεπιστευκότες και οἷς οὐ δοκει γίνεσθαί τινα και μη τοῦ πάντως ἔσεσθαι προκαταβεβλημένας αἰτίας ἔχοντα (*De fato* 164, 17-20).

For there is a difference, where their actions are concerned, between those who believe that all things come to be of necessity and in accordance with fate, and those who suppose that some things come to be that do not have causes of their existing with no alternative laid down beforehand.

For all we know, the Severi were known for their attachment to divinatory arts (with particular emphasis on astrology): Septimius himself is known to have displayed pronounced interest in the matters, manifested to such an extent that he came down in history as one of

[11] As stipulated in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* E, 1025b2-26a32, for the repercussions in imperial era one may compare Ptolemy's *Syntaxis math.* I proem.

[12] The complexity of the issue seems to be related to its Stoic ramifications: as Platonic and Aristotelian stands on fate were developed in answer to the Stoic compatibilism, they silently acknowledged the original standing of inquiry. The roots of this latter reach to the basic assumptions concerning the physical cosmos, thus being firmly located in the realm of either physics as it was understood by the Stoics or theoretical philosophy (metaphysics as it concerns the inquiry into the first cause, physics as it concerns the inquiry into the actual causes of events), but its importance extends far into the realm of ethics or practical philosophy (as it concerns the problem of individual causation, will, merit, virtue, etc.).

the most ardent supporters of astrology[13]; the case was hardly different with his spouse, the influential Julia Domna[14]; similarly, his son, Caracalla is described as entertaining considerable attachment to astral *mantike* – indeed, both the account of Herodianus and the biography contained in the *HA* portray his fateful consultation in the Harranian temple of Sin[15]. As a result, one seems justified in an assumption that the members of the dynasty entertained a stand that was at best deterministic: such, at the very least, would be a reasonable assumption in regard to the belief in astrology among Severan near contemporaries (one thinks of Tacitus' description of the fatalistic stance as inherent in the astrological doctrine[16]). To present such rulers with a treatise on fate, a treatise containing express denouncement of the fatalist doctrine, seems at the one hand strikingly inappropriate, even dangerous (indeed, Caracalla was to manifest a marked enmity toward the Aristotelian thought), while on the other it appears particularly appropriate. After all, the non-fatalistic doctrine, with its emphasis on individual's control of his own life choices, would – at least on Aristotelian or Platonic terms – be considered as naturally favoring human self-improvement and wisdom. In Aristotelian philosophy, as it is known from the *Nicomachean Ethics* and, generally speaking, as it is portrayed by Alexander, an individual is prompted by desires and urges, yet properly speaking acts (i.e. acts in his capacity of a human) solely when acting according to a rational choice. This latter enables him to choose according to his own understanding of good, to act with an intention of achieving happiness, the latter being identical with a fulfillment of human potential, i.e.

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[13] See e.g. *HA Severus* 1, 6-10; 3, 4-5; 15, 4-5; Cassius Dio *ep*. 77, 11, 1; 79 (78), 8, 5-6; Herodianus 2, 9, 2sq. For the overview of the surviving sources compare Cramer 1954: 209-214.

[14] Compare Cramer 1954: 210-211; on Julia Domna's interest in divinatory arts compare e.g. *HA Geta* 1, 5; daughter of the Emesene Sun-priest, even her marriage to Septimius Severus was said to be decided by the position of stars in her horoscope (*HA Severus* 3, 9; *Geta* 3, 1).

[15] Herodianus 4, 16; *HA Caracalla* 6, 6-7.

[16] On Tacitus discussion of the various approaches toward the fatalistic doctrine (*ann*. 6, 22) compare Theiler 1966. Though some of his remarks on the ancient Stoicism and Aristotelianism were put in doubt by the subsequent findings of historians of philosophy, he duly stresses the essential link between the belief in stellar prognostication and the assumption of the universal rule of fate.

actualization of one's intellectual powers[17]. In acting on his own will, in choosing to act in a certain way, the human assumes full responsibility for his own conduct, but also, ultimately, for his own mental stand[18]. In the essence, we are accountable for the sort of persons we become, a fact not so manifestly clear in the fatalistic doctrine, which makes our actions (and our character dispositions) dependent on the external circumstance. To put it possibly most succinctly: for Alexander, the Aristotelian thought holds the merit of making the human actions originate in a human individual; meanwhile, the fatalistic doctrines tend to locate the origin of human actions in the purely external circumstances, a shift which on Aristotelian terms removes any responsibility for blame or merit[19]. Hence, by contrast, in maintaining throughout his *De fato* that some or even majority of actions are in fact in our power, Alexander preserves – as he strives to demonstrate throughout the second, polemic, part of his treatise – the notions of merit and vice, all the while insisting on the possibility of individual's ethical development as dependent on the appropriateness of our choices.

In light of the above considerations, some weight seems to be attached to Alexander's statement in the prologue, the statement that asserted the use of Aristotelian theory of fate. After all, to speak of responsibility, merit and to ἐφ' ἡμιν to the actual or future ruler of the Empire seems, at the very least, significant. This didactic dimension of the exposition is further highlighted in the closing chapter 39, as Alexander enumerates the major benefits of the belief that human action results, above all, from individual's own choice:

1. piety (due to the belief that divine gifts are not predestined):

> εἴς τε θεου ς εὐσηβήσομεν, τα με ν εἰδότες αὐτοῖς χάριν ἀνθ' ὧν φθάνομεν ὑπ' αὐτῶν εὖ πεπονθότες, τα δε αἰτούμενοι παρ' αὐτῶν ὡς ὄ ντων και τοῦ δοῦναι και τοῦ μη κυρίων (*De fato* 212, 7-9).

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[17] On the proper *telos* of human life as divined by Aristotle compare the short overview of Hutchinson (1995; most prominently 199-205).

[18] Hardly surprisingly, the interconnected acts of reflection (*bouleusis*) and choice (*prohairesis*) forms the principal themes of reflection in Book Three of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (with particular emphasis in chapters 1-5).

[19] Compare *EN* 3, 1110a1-4; 15-18; the assumptions are convincingly discussed by Kenny 1979: 27-37, compare also Sauvé-Meyer 2003; for Alexander see *De fato* 15-19, et al.

We will, first, be pious toward the gods, giving them thanks for the benefits we have already received from them and asking things from them on the ground that they are in control both of giving and of not giving.

2. gratitude and obedience toward the rulers (due to the belief that favors result from ruler's own decision):

ἐσόμεθα δε και περι του ς ἡμῖν ὁμοίους ἄρχοντας εὐχάριστοι ταῦτα πράττεται εἰς ἡμᾶς τε και ἡ περι *** ὑμῶν προαίρεσις πράττειν ὑμᾶς αἱρέσει τοῦ βελτίονος και τοῦ περι τη ν κρίσιν αὐτοῦ φροντίζειν ποιοῦντας ἃ ποιεῖτε κτλ (*De fato* 212, 9-12).

We shall also feel gratitude concerning both you [yourselves] and rulers like you, since you act toward us as your own choice leads you, doing what you do through choice of what is better and by taking thought concerning judgement of it.

3. virtue (due to the assumption of individual's control over his ethical development):

ποιησόμεθα δε και ἀρετῆς ἐπιμέλειαν ὡς ὄντες αὐτοι κύριοι τοῦ βελτίους ἢ χείρους γενέσθαι (*De fato* 212, 13-14).

We will also be concerned about virtue, as being ourselves in control of becoming better or worse.

Clearly, the advantages of non-determinist position are manifold: conscious of his inferior (as compared with that of the gods) position in the universe, and yet equally aware of his exceptional potential, a human individual results capable of modifying nature (a fact persuasively illustrated by the famous anecdote concerning Socrates' meeting with the physiognomist Zopyrus[20]). Simultaneously, the non-determinist stand contributes to the communal life: preserving the religious spirit (conciliating gods is necessary for our continued welfare), it encourages cult and provides men with a shared experience of being dependent on a superior principle; at the same moment, the same stand binds

[20] *De fato* 6, 171, 17-30 B.

the subject to their ruler in manifesting the latter's bounty and munificence: these two come at his own choice, unforced by any exterior force. And then, we respect and obey our sovereigns because they are worthy of these feelings, not because we are forced to do so by the stellar powers. The feeling of gratitude, being of paramount importance in preserving the ruler, comes only to those believing in merit and responsibility, a belief that Alexander portrays as irreconcilable with an assumption of fate-ruled universe: hence, the non-deterministic approach to reality may be of some use to the ruler: believed to be a true, self-governing cause of his subjects' welfare, the 'non-determinist' ruler enjoys the gratitude of people where the more deterministic stand would see his actions as stemming from inexorable chain of destiny and thus independent of his will. Thus, regardless of the level of rhetoric embellishments, the benefits listed in the closing passage are consistently portrayed as regarding both individual and communal life, affecting both the subjects and the ruler, and thus effectively guaranteeing both the goodness (justice) and stability of the rule/ state. In fact, one may be tempted to think, the assumption that what we do, we do according to choice, is thought to furnish the very foundation of properly human life. As Alexander puts it:

> και τα ἄλλα δε ὅσα πράττομεν κατα το ν βίον ὅτι μόνως εὐλόγως πράττειν ἂν δοκοῖμεν, εἰ κατα τη ν Ἀριστοτέλους δόξαν περι αὐτῶν ἀ ποδιδοίημεν τα ς αἰτίας, ἃς δια παντο ς ἐπειράθην ὑμῖν παραστῆσαι τοῦ λόγου (*De fato* 36, 212, 29-32 B)

> *And, as I tried to present to you throughout my account, we will only seem to do other things that we do in life reasonably, if we assign their causes in accordance with the opinion of Aristotle concerning them.*

Their allegiance to the arts of divination notwithstanding, the intellectual currents in the times of the Severi seem to favor the image of politically active sage: Philostratus' *Vitae sophistarum*, a major literary work composed under the auspices of none other than Julia Domna, is quite manifest in its preference for the ideal of civic responsibility and political involvement of the intellectual. Throughout the work, the sophists are consistently presented as politicians, actively participating

in the life of their communities, not to mention the empire: in fact, their public engagement constitutes one of the defining qualities of the group[21]. Throughout the work, its members and representatives appear as state conscious counselors aiming at the improvement of citizenry and rulers, a tendency manifest also in the Philostratean *Vita Apollonii*[22]. This ideal of politically aware and involved sage, quite prominent in the speeches of Dio, patently visible in the Aristidean speeches in defense of oratory, and looking back to the great Plato vs. Isocrates controversy, is hardly new in the Greco-Roman culture: Socrates himself was convincingly portrayed as dying as a result of his attempt at the instruction of the Athenians[23]. Yet, the *Vitae* endow it (yet again) with an imperial approval. As a result, some interest in political matters (or to put it more succinctly, in actual political practice) seems to be expected of even an aspiring sage.

While the political or public involvement is consistently portrayed as characteristic of a sage, his role is frequently defined as that of counselor to the ruler – the most persuasive example is that of the Cynic Diogenes who instructs Alexander on the art of government in Dio's *Fourth Oration*, where the wisdom of the sage complements the courage and zest of the young Macedonian, tempering – at least for the time – the less flattering traits of this latter's character. Most importantly, however, the parahistorical narrative has notable parallels in the actual setting: in portraying Diogenes as the 'teacher' of Alexander, Dio reflects upon his own role in the instruction of more contemporary ruler, the emperor Trajan. The sage and the warrior complement each other, their alliance being consistently portrayed as bringing considerable benefits to the ruled: yet, the total blending of the two is achieved in Zeus alone, the omnipotent, unfailing and ever just lord of the universe,

[21] Compare Goulet 1998: 241 et al. I discussed the influence exercised by this civic interest on the choice and evaluation of the material exploited in the *Vitae* in Komorowska 2009.

[22] For intellectual and ideological undercurrent of this latter compare Swain 1996: 380-400.

[23] The motif is recurrent throughout *Apologia* and *Crito*, and was discussed in several studies of these dialogues, possibly most comprehensively by Kraut 1984; for the discussion of the wider 'intellectual' involvement in the state matters compare (from vastly differing perspectives) Ober 1998 (for Isocrates see 248-289) and Nightingale 2004: 123-138.

a parallel, but also a paradigm for the imperial ruler of Rome. The figure of Nestor, advisor to Agamemnon, Phoenix, Achilles' tutor, and that of Hermes, the divine counselor, representing the manifestly non-military, intellectual contribution to the course of events, seems to illustrate the importance of this latter: capable of resolving differences and conciliating angry souls of the warriors, the human speech (representing the external facet of actual wisdom) provides the most tangible proof of the communal use of wisdom[24]. Advice, instruction and admonition become the proper instruments of sage's influence, providing an intellectual or a philosopher with the best opportunity to fulfill his civic obligations. It is not by accident that Dio repeatedly portrays his paradigmatic rulers as giving heed to sages, or indeed, allowing those latter a considerable freedom: quite manifestly, such allowances are indispensable to the optimal rule, reflecting both upon the ruler and upon his advisors. The principle of reciprocity is well reflected in the concluding remarks of the *Second Discourse on Kingship,* as put in the mouth of king Philip of Macedon:

> Οὐ μάτην, εἶπεν, Ἀλέξανδρε, περι πολλοῦ ποιοῦμεθα το ν᾽Αριστοτέλη, και τη ν πατρίδα αὐτῷ συνεχωρήσαμεν ἀνακτίζειν, Στάγειρα τῆς᾽ Ολυνθίας οὖσαν. ὁ γα ρ ἀνη ρ ἄξιος πολλων και μεγάλων δωρεῶν, εἰ τοιαῦτά σε διδάσκει περί τε ἀρχῆς και βασιλείας, εἴτε ̋Ομηρον ἐ ξηγούμενος εἴτε ἄλλον τρόπον (*Or*. 2, 79)

> *Alexander, it wasn't for naught that we esteemed Aristotle so highly, and permitted him to rebuild his home-town of Stagira, which is in the domain of Olynthus. He is a man who merits many large gifts, if such are the lessons which he gives you in government and the duties of a king, be it as interpreter of Homer or in any other way.*

Manifestly, a sage (or a philosopher) has much to offer: a ruler may benefit from his expertise and counsel, as well as from his superior understanding of the world. A kingly education relies on the contribution of sages as well as on their good will – yet, at the same time, a tendency to consult with those wiser remains a mark of good ruler.

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[24] For Nestor compare Dio, *Or*. 2, 20-25, for Phoenix Dio, *Or*. 2, 19; the figure of Hermes, Zeus' messenger, plays a prominent role in the tale of Heracles told in *Or*. 1.

The excellence of Alexander (portrayed here as the paradigm of a wise ruler) depends on his education: for this latter, however, he is indebted to Aristotle, a thinker and a philosopher, man of science and letters rather than action. In a way, Dio reminds us, there would be no Alexander were it not for Greek philosophy, as represented by the Stagirite.

Clearly, it is against this very background that we have to consider Alexander's rhetoricized addresses in the *De fato*: as he proclaims the usefulness of his work, he relies on the notion quite widespread in the contemporary world, a notion which transforms a man of letters into an instructor of politically active and powerful men, a Greek intellectual into a teacher of Roman rulers. As the result, the dedication (as well as the *peroratio*) serves a twofold purpose: on one hand, in its praise of the imperial munificence and power it flaunts the nearly obligatory complimentary aspect, on the other, it extols the philosophical wisdom and establishes the author as the true exponent of useful and formative knowledge. In paying the obligatory compliment to the Severi, and in praising their alleged philosophical interest, Alexander also compliments himself, fitting his work into the conceptual framework of the imperial culture. The philosophical wisdom on issues as seemingly remote as the complexities of fatalistic theory are portrayed as bearing on the more tangible issues of communal life, and hence, on the actuality of government, while it is intimated that the Aristotelian doctrine is a system allowing for the easiest preservation of subjects' loyalty (and hence, the social and political order). In short, the Severi may be comparable to divine rulers of the universe, but the philosopher emerges as the teacher of terrestrial princes, a wielder of knowledge of immense use in the actual government.

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