

THE ADDRESSEE OF THE THIRD KINGSHIP ORATION OF DIO CHRYSOSTOM

In his important recent book on Dio Chrysostom P. Desideri argues, against the traditional view, that the Third Kingship Oration was addressed to Nerva, not Trajan (1). C. P. Jones includes this among several new hypotheses of Desideri "which, if not necessarily mistaken, will at least raise eyebrows" (2). In this article I shall show that this particular hypothesis is indeed "necessarily mistaken", even though Desideri's original arguments often elsewhere command our admiration and nearly always stimulate us to look at old problems in a fresh way.

The nub of Desideri's case is as follows 1): "il fatto che Dione dichiarare di conoscere bene l'imperatore in carica, e il tono confidenziale di cui è pervaso tutto il discorso, sembrano concordare perfettamente con quanto Dione dice altrove dei suoi rapporti con Nerva, accennando alla sua morte: 'mi fu tolto un imperatore benevolo e che mi amava e da tempo era mio amico'". He also maintains, however, that 2) the wording of 3, 2 would apply less well to Trajan with whom "Dione appare assai più riservato, anche a distanza di anni dal loro primo incontro: *συνηθείας οὔσης μοι πρὸς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα, ἵσως δὲ καὶ φιλίας* (47, 22; cfr. 45, 3)", 3) a Nervan dating better fits the fact that "Dione allude al periodo dell'esilio come a cosa molto recente (13), specialmente per la contrapposizione *πρότερον μὲν ... νῦν δέ*", and 4) the Trajanic dating depends solely on the hypothesis that Dio did not return to Rome immediately on the assassination of Domitian — a hypothesis Desideri himself necessarily contests (3).

Arguments 1), 2), and 3) need not detain us long. We cannot really

(1) P. Desideri, *Dione di Prusa: un intellettuale greco nell'impero romano*, Messina-Firenze 1978, 279; the traditional view: H. von Arnim, *Leben und Werke des Dio von Prusa*, Berlin 1898, 399; C. P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom*, Cambridge Mass. and London 1978, 119, and many others.

(2) Jones, "Phoenix" 34, 1980, 172 (reviewing Desideri).

(3) Desideri 297, 344 nn. 2 and 3. Or. 3, 2 runs: *ἐγὼ δέ, ὦ γενναῖε αὐτόκρατορ, παραγέγονά σοι καὶ τυχὸν οὐδενὸς ἤττον ἔμπειρος εἰμὶ τῆς σῆς φύσεως....* 3, 13 runs: *εἰ δὲ ἐγὼ πρότερον μὲν ὅτε πᾶσι ἀναγκαῖον ἐδόκει ψεύδεσθαι διὰ φόβον, μόνος ἀληθεύειν ἐτόλμων, καὶ ταῦτα κωδυνεύων ὑπὲρ τῆς ψυχῆς, νῦν δέ, ὅτε πᾶσι ἔξεστι τάληθῇ λέγειν, ψεύδομαι, μηδενὸς κινδύνου παρεστῶτος, οὐκ ἂν εἰδείην οὔτε παρρησίας οὔτε κολακείας καιρόν.*

know how friendly Dio's relations with Trajan were: we can only consider how Dio represents them. From that point of view 3, 2 makes just as good sense on the hypothesis of delivery to Trajan: after the First Kingship Oration Dio has moved (*ex hypothesi*) to a position of greater intimacy with Trajan (4) (or at least can claim to have done so), 47, 22 and 45, 3 *do* attest *φιλία* with Trajan, and if in 47, 22 Dio does not stress this too much, we can see why (he wishes to avoid the charge of excessive cultivation of the emperor and prominent Romans, to the neglect of local interests). There could be equally good reasons for great emphasis on his *φιλία* with Trajan in the Third Kingship Oration: one of the main concerns of the beginning of the speech is to defend Dio against accusations of flattery and it is important that he should stress his knowledge of the emperor's character in order to demonstrate both that he knows what he is talking about and that Trajan is by nature opposed to sycophancy. As for the implication that the exile was recent, if there really is such an implication (5), the exile could still be 'recent' under Trajan three or four years later, and the broad contrast between life under Domitian and life under Trajan, without allusion to the intervening rule of Nerva, is common elsewhere both in Dio himself and in Pliny's *Panegyricus* (6). These three arguments, then, do not support Desideri's case, though equally they do not count against it.

But it is in argument 4) that we find the first major difficulty for Desideri's hypothesis. Desideri ignores the fact that there are positive arguments for a Trajanic dating. More important, against the usual view that Dio did not return to Rome on Domitian's assassination, Desideri refers us to his earlier discussion of this period of Dio's career, but when we consult this discussion we are simply told that 'In realtà a Dione non devono essere mancate occasioni di incontrarsi con Nerva a Roma dopo la sua ascesa al trono, come dimostra lo stesso terzo discorso Sulla regalità, che è stato pronunciato secondo me di fronte a Nerva' (7). Thus a difficulty in the hypothesised dating of Or. 3 is resolved by reference to ... the hypothesised dating of Or. 3! This methodologically dubious procedure could only be justified if other arguments for the hypothesised dating were very strong. As we have seen, they are not.

(4) So Von Arnim 399; J. W. Cohoon, Loeb ed., I, 103; Jones 119.

(5) This is the sort of inference historians often make. It is not unreasonable, but neither is it compelling.

(6) Cfr. Jones 118 for examples from Dio's First Kingship Oration and my own *The Date and Purpose of the Fourth Kingship Oration of Dio Chrysostom*, forthcoming in "Classical Antiquity", for examples from Or. 4; Plin. *Paneg.* 47-49.

(7) Desideri 263.

Moreover, the usual hypothesis that Dio did not return to Rome immediately on Domitian's assassination seems soundly based. The critical passage is Dio's own account of his movements in Or. 45, 2-3: Τελευτήσαντος δὲ ἐκείνου καὶ τῆς μεταβολῆς γενομένης ἀνῆειν μὲν πρὸς τὸν βέλτιστον Νέρβαν ὑπὸ δὲ νόσου χαλεπῆς κατασχεθεὶς ὅλον ἐκείνον ἐξημιώθη τὸν καιρὸν, ἀραιρεθεὶς αὐτοκράτορος φιλανθρώπου καμὲ ἀγαπῶντος καὶ πάλαι φίλου. καὶ ὁμνῶ τοὺς θεοὺς ὑμῖν ἅπαντας, οὐκ ἐφ' οἷς ἂν εἰς ἐμαυτὸν ἢ τῶν ἐμῶν τινα ἔλαβον, οὐκ ἐπὶ τοῦτοις ἄχθομαι διαμαρτῶν, ἀλλ' ἐφ' οἷς ὑμῶν καὶ δημοσίᾳ τῇ πόλει παρασχεῖν ἐδυνάμην, ταύτην ἐγὼ μεγάλην ἀριθμῶ βλάβην καὶ ζημίαν. ὦν γὰρ νῦν ἐτύχομεν, τότε ἐξῆν ταῦτα ἔχειν καὶ τῷ παρόντι καιρῷ πρὸς ἐτέρας κεκρησθαι δωρεάς. ἐπεὶ δ' οὖν ὑπῆρξε παρὰ τούτου φιλανθρωπία καὶ σπουδὴ τοσαύτη περὶ ἡμᾶς ὅσην ἐπίστανται μὲν οἱ παρατυχόντες, ἐγὼ δὲ ἂν λέγω νῦν, σφόδρα λυπήσω τινάς — ἴσως δὲ οὐδὲ φανεῖται πιστὸς ὁ λόγος τὸ τηλικαύτης τιμῆς τυγχάνοντα καὶ συνηθείας καὶ φιλίας ἅπαντα ταῦτα ἐᾶσαι καὶ παριδεῖν, ἐπιθυμήσαντα τῆς ἐνταῦθα ταραχῆς καὶ τῆς ἀσχολίας, ἵνα μηδὲν εἴπω πλέον — ὅμως δ' εἰς οὐδὲν τῶν ἰδίων κατεθέμην τὸν καιρὸν ἐκείνον οὐδὲ τὴν τοῦ κρατοῦντος εὐνοίαν οὐδὲ ἀπὸ μέρους, οἷον τὰ τῆς οὐσίας ἐπανορθώσας διεφθαρμένης ἢ προσλαβὼν τινα ἀρχὴν ἢ δύναμιν, ἀλλ' ἅπαν ὅσον ποτὲ ἦν εἰς ὑμᾶς ἔτρεψα καὶ μόνον εἶδον τὸ τῆς πόλεως.

On the usual interpretation the imperfect ἀνῆειν is inceptive or conative and implies that Dio did not *succeed* in reaching Nerva (8). This reading is supported by (i) the μὲν ... δέ contrast ('I was going to Nerva, but I was κατασχεθεὶς by a serious illness') and (ii) the verbal contrast between 'movement' and 'stopping' and ἀνα- and κατα-. Although κατέχω can be used of a disease in the sense 'seize, come upon' (9), I do not believe that a skilful stylist like Dio could have written ἀνῆειν μὲν ... ὑπὸ δὲ νόσου ... κατασχεθεὶς without being aware of the implication 'I made a movement which was stopped'. Dio surely cannot be interpreted as meaning 'I went to Nerva but when I reached him a severe illness prevented me from soliciting him on behalf of Prusa (though I did deliver a kingship oration before him)'. The sequel demonstrates this still more plainly. By his illness Dio lost ὅλον ἐκείνον τὸν καιρὸν, and the καιρός he missed under Nerva and the lost opportunities of that period are implicitly contrasted with the καιρός he did obtain with Trajan and the successful solicitations he then made (ὅλον ἐκείνον τὸν καιρὸν - τῷ παρόντι καιρῷ - τὸν καιρὸν ἐκείνον, αὐτοκράτορος ... φίλου

(8) So H. L. Crosby, Loeb ed., IV, 209: 'I was on the point of going to visit Nerva; but, having been prevented by a serious illness...'; von Arnim 335; Jones 52.

(9) Cfr. LSJ s. v., II, 6, 10.

- παρὰ τούτου ... συνηθείας καὶ φιλίας, οὐκ ἐφ' οἷς ... ἀλλ' ἐφ' οἷς... ὅμως δ' ... ἀλλ' ... πόλεως). Dio had no opportunity to speak with Nerva at all. This reading finds further confirmation from two other passages in Dio's works. In Or. 44, 12 (a speech delivered in Prusa after Dio's return from exile) Dio writes: ἵνα δὲ καὶ ἀλλαχόθεν εἰδῆτε τὴν ἐμὴν γνώμην, ἀναγνώσομαι ὑμῖν ἐπιστολὴν ἣν τε αὐτὸς ἐπέστειλα τῷ αὐτοκράτορι ὅτε ἐκλήθην, ὅτι ἐν ἐκείνῃ παρεκάλουν ἀρεθῆναι πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἦν ἐκεῖνος ἀντέγραψεν. Since the emperor here in question must be Nerva (10), this passage confirms that Dio did not succeed in reaching Rome in the period 96-98. Similarly, in Or. 40, 5 Dio describes his activities since his return from exile: Πρότερον γὰρ οὐδ' ἐπ' ὀλίγον σχολὴν ἤγαγον ἵσως διὰ τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ πολυπραγμοσύνην, ὃς δέον ἐν-τυχεῖν ὑμῶν καὶ φιλοφρονήσασθαι τοσοῦτο μόνον καὶ θῦσαι τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ νῆ Δία ἀναγνώσαι τὰ γράμματα τὰ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος, ὅτι ἀναγκαῖον ἦν, ἔπειτα εὐθὺς ἀναχωρῆσαι καὶ τρέπεσθαι καθ' αὐτόν, λόγον τινὰ εἶπον ὑπὲρ ἔργου τινός, οὐκ αὐτὸς μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἡγεμόνων ἐσπουδα-κότων, ἵσως μὲν ὑμῖν, ἵσως δὲ κάμοι χαρίζεσθαι βουλομένων καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἄμεινον κατασκευάζειν καὶ σεμνοτέραν ποιεῖν ἅπασαν. There is no mention here of any meeting with Nerva, as there surely would have been had such a meeting taken place, but there is a reference to a letter from 'the emperor', and this letter must be the same one as at that referred to in 44, 12 (11).

In my opinion, therefore, the evidence is absolutely decisive that Dio did not manage to visit Nerva after his accession.

However, even if this conclusion is not accepted, there are several internal indications within Or. 3 which rule out delivery before Nerva, unless indeed we are prepared to attribute to Dio a quite incredible degree of stupidity and tactlessness:

(i) The addressee of the speech is 'a general more courageous than the soldiers in the ranks' (3, 5), whose 'courage is able, not only to save the less valiant, but even to fire them with greater courage' (3, 7), and 'with whom victory is certain' (3, 8). All this is much too specific to be dismissed as merely an allusion to conventional imperial 'virtus': it

(10) So, rightly, von Arnim 315; Jones' dating of Or. 44 to after Dio's return from the embassy to Trajan is demonstrably incorrect (44, 11 does *not* imply that Prusa has already gained the various privileges mentioned - cfr. 44, 10); Desideri's dating of Dio's return to Prusa to 100 or later (Desideri 264), which entails that the emperor of 44, 12 be Trajan, seems too late; on both these points see a forthcoming article by A. R. R. Sheppard in "L'Antiquité Classique".

(11) So von Arnim 345; Desideri 277 n. 20 (though for Desideri the emperor is Trajan); Jones' belief that two different letters are referred to (Jones 176 n. 65) depends on an erroneous reconstruction - cfr. n. 10 above.

would be highly inappropriate to Nerva, who was not a soldier and who was indeed threatened by military revolt, but highly appropriate to Trajan, the great soldier-emperor.

(ii) At 3, 12 ff. Dio defends himself at length against the charge of flattering the addressee. Later he also defends his practice of 'always saying the same things' about kingship (3, 26). It is natural to infer (a) that he has already in the past spoken to the addressee about *βασιλεια* and (b) that this material has provided his enemies with ammunition for the charge of flattery. This picture coheres badly with delivery before Nerva (why should Dio defend himself against flattering Nerva? what other speeches about kingship is he supposed to have made to Nerva?) but excellently with delivery before Trajan (before whom, on the normal view, he had already spoken at least Or. 1, some of which could indeed be represented by hostile critics as 'flattery').

(iii) The addressee is devoted to *πόνος* and in some cases this implies actual *physical* toil (e.g. 3, 3; 56; 83-84; 123; 127). He is also distinguished by *καρτερία* and is physically extremely fit (3, 123 ff.). This is appropriate to Trajan, a tough man who took strenuous physical exercise, but not at all to Nerva, whose physical frailty during his brief reign was notorious (12).

(iv) In 3, 133 ff. Dio considers the various recreations open to kings. One former king (clearly Nero) wasted his time in singing and acting; another (clearly Ptolemy Auletes) filled his leisure by playing the *αυλος*; but the good king 'considers hunting his best recreation'. Dio then describes the pleasures of hunting in some detail (3, 135 ff.). Not only is Nerva not known ever to have hunted, but in his physical state in 96-98 any suggestion that he should do so would have been grotesque. But hunting was Trajan's favourite sport (13).

Thus Desideri's hypothesis that Or. 3 was delivered before Nerva is refuted by 1) the evidence of Or. 45, 2, which clearly shows that Dio never met Nerva after he had become emperor, and 2) the internal indications of Or. 3, which contains several ideas incompatible with delivery before Nerva and extremely suitable to delivery before Trajan. The traditional view is right.

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(12) It is well understood that, although from 3, 25 Dio is explicitly describing the ideal king, there are numerous points of contact between this ideal and the addressee: cfr. especially Jones 116 ff.

Trajan's toughness: cfr. e.g. Plin. Paneg. 81-82: Nerva's frailty: cfr. e.g. C. D. 68, 1, 3.

(13) Plin. Paneg. 81: C. D. 68, 7, 3. Indeed, there is a certain generic resemblance between 3, 133 ff. and Paneg. 81 f.