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THE CRITICISM OF MONARCHY IN ISOCRATES' *CYPRIAN ORATIONS**

The three orations sent to Nicocles, the king of Salamis, by his former teacher Isocrates are traditionally regarded as one of the most significant praises of monarchy in his works. These orations include: *To Nicocles*, *Nicocles or the Cyprians*, and *Euagoras*. As was suggested by G. Mathieu and É. Bremond, these works were composed from around 370 – a probable date of the first oration in this cycle – to 365 BC, when the third and the last work *Euagoras* was finished. The reason for writing these orations was Nicocles' ascension to the throne,¹ which became possible due to the deaths of his elder brother and his father. Indeed, one may easily find passages overtly stating that monarchy exceeds all other types of constitution (Isoc. *Nicochl.* 12–13, 17, 25); a monarch, especially in Nicocles' words, is shown as a benevolent and wise leader (*ibid.* 31–42). This as well as the criticism of democracy clearly expressed in the second oration of this cycle (*ibid.* 14–25) could create a certain impression about Isocrates' views on monarchical power.

There are two main approaches to Isocrates' evaluation of monarchy in these orations. Some scholars acknowledge the praise of monarchy, while others contest this point. Probably the most radical opinion on the nature of monarchical power in the Cyprian cycle is expressed by N. Baynes,² who labels them “laudation of a ‘totalitarian’ State”. This conclusion is based on the passages in which Nicocles demands from his subjects not to create any clubs without the king's permission (*Nicochl.* 55) and not to conceal anything from the king (*ibid.* 52); even an advice to teach children obedience (*ibid.* 57) is regarded as an assault on citizens'

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¹ This is expressed in the speech's hypothesis: see also Forster 1912, 21; Blass 1874, 50–51.

² Baynes 1974, 150–151.

rights and freedom. Out of context, these passages could seem a bit authoritarian, but when seen in context, they are perceived differently. In the case of children's obedience, it must be said that these words are followed by the explanation: before one is to rule, one must learn how to be ruled. Nicocles also explains the prohibition of clubs: these organizations are useful in their own way in democratic states, while in a monarchy they might be dangerous. It is true that this explanation leaves much to guess, but it is certainly not an instigation to someone to "practice delation against his fellow-citizens".³ The main argument in favor of the "totalitarian" approach seems to be the passage in which Nicocles encourages the king's subjects to obey his words as laws. Nevertheless, this might not be a call to fulfill every absurd wish put into words, but rather to regard the king as the supreme authority, whose judgments are more significant and, which is much more important, better than laws whether they are written or not. Isocrates does not hide his practical view of laws: they do not reveal absolute wisdom, and they should be changed if needed.

Other scholars, who tend to have more moderate opinion, believing that these orations contain praise of monarchy, base their arguments first on Isocrates' interest in monarchy in general and his criticism of the contemporaneous Athenian democratic system, which can be traced not only in the Cyprian cycle, but also in other speeches (*Areop.*, *Pac.*), and second on the passage (*Nicocl.* 14–26) in which Isocrates via Nicocles compares the king's power with oligarchy and democracy, preferring monarchy. This could be an allusion to the famous Debate of the Persian Grandees (Hdt. 3. 80–82).⁴ The comparison serves the purpose of defending the thesis formulated by Nicocles: monarchy is βελτίστη τῶν πολιτειῶν. This passage is interpreted in different ways. W. Jaeger⁵ believes that Isocrates "does more than accept tyranny as a given fact in power-politics. He brings it under an ideal standard; so that he can then fairly explain that monarchy is the best form of constitution". N. Crick⁶ suggests that, addressing Nicocles in the first speech, Isocrates describes an ideal ruler, so the orator prefers monarchical power to any form of democracy or oligarchy. E. Frolov thinks that in these speeches Isocrates tries to present and develop an approach to monarchy as the best form

³ Baynes 1974, 150.

⁴ This similarity was first noticed by E. Maass; however, he concludes that here Isocrates is not referring to Herodotus, see Maass 1887, 586–588.

⁵ Jaeger 1986, 87.

⁶ Crick 2015, 180–186.

of government.⁷ P. Cloché,⁸ despite his general opinion that the orator is a man whose political preferences lie between democracy and aristocracy, calls this cycle “un éloge très net et vigoureux, parfois même enthousiaste, de la monarchie, éloge accompagné d’une critique non moins décidée et longuement motivée, elle aussi, des autres constitutions”.

There is an important detail that should be also considered – all these words are put into the mouth of the king. It would be strange to hear from a king anything but praise of his own power and an attempt to make his subjects believe that a monarchical constitution is the best. It is also worth mentioning that Isocrates forces Nicocles to admit some statements that could not be regarded as parts of this eulogy. The orator states some of these admonishments himself.

Another approach tends to see in the speech not a laudation of monarchy, but general advice to the king on how he should govern his city. The most radical position is presented by T. Poulakos.⁹ He believes that in these orations Isocrates portrays Nicocles not as a hereditary king, to whom all his subjects must obey by his birthright and greater power, but as a citizen of a polis, who must persuade all his citizens to take his side by using his eloquence and mind. This approach would provide a good explanation of the “hymn to *logos*” that opens the second oration (*Nicocl.* 1–9), as well as the attempt to “explain” to his subjects why monarchical power is the best one, which might seem unusual.

It seems, however, that too much attention is paid to the fact of Nicocles' addressing the subjects. Here is what he says (*Nicocl.* 11–12):¹⁰

τὸν δ' ἐχόμενον, ἃ δεῖ ποιεῖν τοὺς ἀρχομένους, ἐγὼ πειράσομαι διελθεῖν, οὐχ ὥς ἐκεῖνον ὑπερβαλούμενος, ἀλλ' ὥς προσήκόν μοι περὶ τούτων μάλιστα διαλεχθῆναι πρὸς ὑμᾶς. Εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἐμοῦ μὴ δηλώσαντος ἃ βούλομαι ποιεῖν ὑμᾶς διαμάρτοτε τῆς ἐμῆς γνώμης, οὐκ ἂν εἰκότως ὑμῖν ὀργιζοίμην· εἰ δὲ προειπόντος ἐμοῦ μηδὲν γίγνοιτο τούτων, δικαίως ἂν ἤδη τοῖς μὴ πειθομένοις μεμφοίμην. Ἦγοῦμαι δ' οὕτως ἂν μάλιστα παρακαλέσαι καὶ προτρέψαι πρὸς τὸ μνημονεύειν ὑμᾶς τὰ ρηθέντα καὶ πειθαρχεῖν αὐτοῖς, οὐκ εἰ περὶ τὸ συμβουλευεῖν μόνον γενοίμην καὶ ταῦτ' ἀπαριθμήσας ἀπαλλαγείην,

⁷ Isaeva 1994 [В. И. Исаева, *Античная Греция в зеркале риторики: Исократ*], 119–122; Фролов 2013 [Э. Д. Фролов (ed.), *Исократ. Речи. Письма; Малые антические ораторы. Речи*], 834; 853.

⁸ Cloché 1978, 76.

⁹ Poulakos 1997, 27–41.

¹⁰ All of Isocrates' works cited here are from the edition Mathieu–Bremond 1967.

ἀλλ' εἰ προεπιδείξαιμι πρῶτον μὲν τὴν πολιτείαν τὴν παροῦσαν ὡς ἄξιόν ἐστιν ἀγαπᾶν οὐ μόνον διὰ τὴν ἀνάγκην, οὐδ' ὅτι πάντα τὸν χρόνον μετὰ ταύτης οἰκοῦμεν, ἀλλ' ὅτι βελτίστη τῶν πολιτειῶν ἐστίν.

...what his (ruler's – *D. K.*) subjects must do, I shall attempt to discourse, not with any thought of excelling him (Isocrates – *D. K.*), but because this is the most fitting subject for me to discuss with you. For if I did not make clear what I desire you to do, I could not reasonably be angry with you if you were to mistake my purpose; but if, after I have announced my policy beforehand, none of my desires are carried out, then I should justly blame those who fail to obey me. And I believe that I should most effectively exhort you and urge you to remember my words and heed them, not if I should confine myself to giving you advice and then, after counting out my precepts, make an end, but if, before doing this, I should prove to you, first, that you ought to be content with our present government, not only from necessity, nor because we have lived under it all our lives, but because it is the best of all governments.¹¹

One should take into consideration the overall spirit of this phrase. The king believes it to be important to clarify what he wants, so that in the case of disobedience he can punish those who will not follow his commands. “The approval due to necessity” is also an important part in this thought. These words are expected from an absolute monarch and not from a democratic leader. The king is kind to his subjects, but that does not mean that he will not force them if needed. This addressing is indeed a peculiar one, but it does not show an attempt of Isocrates to present Nicocles as the first among equals, ruling by the right of his outstanding citizen virtues. Both the orator and the king clearly understand the sovereign position of the latter, and the whole dialogue is formed as a dialogue between a ruler and his subjects.

A more moderate position seems to explain this cycle better. F. Blass¹² believes that the goal of Isocrates is not a laudation of monarchy, it is rather a set of rules for kings as well as subjects serving the only purpose of the city's prosperity. Y. L. Too,¹³ in his introduction to *Nicocles*, suggests not to regard this oration as an endorsement of absolute or monarchical ideology. K. Bringmann¹⁴ states that it is unlikely that

¹¹ Here and forthwith, G. Norlin's translation of Isocrates' works is used with minor changes.

¹² Blass 1874, 50–51.

¹³ Too 2000, 169.

¹⁴ Bringmann 1965, 108.

Isocrates would see in a monarchical regime the best type of government. Interestingly, S. Usher¹⁵ comments that Isocrates urges Nicocles to use contemporary Athens as an example, namely, to govern Salamis with laws, with full understanding that a tyrant is able to change those laws in his favor. It seems that he refers to the paragraph in which Isocrates tries to convince Nicocles to borrow good institutions from others (*Ad Nicocl.* 17). Οἱ ἄλλοι in that phrase indeed refers to Athens. The orator probably insists on using some good ideas in legislation, but it is unlikely that the Athenian constitution is intended to be regarded as an example for the young king. Athenian democracy is criticized both by Nicocles (*Nicocl.* 18–21) and Isocrates (*Ad Nicocl.* 18); furthermore, the fact that the city will be ruled with laws does not imply that it will be ruled as Athens is. Another phrase that, according to Usher, refers to the Athenian governmental system is Isocrates' call to examine those who will be put into public office: ἀκριβεῖς ποιοῦ τὰς δοκιμασίας τῶν συνόντων (*Ad Nicocl.* 27). Usher believes that the word δοκιμασία is used as a terminus technicus – “a scrutiny of magistrates made after election, to see if they fulfill the legal requirements”,¹⁶ but this is hardly the case. A search of the corpus shows that Isocrates uses this word as well as the verb δοκιμάζω (and a variant with prefix ἀπο-) 33 times. It is clearly used as the technical term only once: ἔτι γὰρ καὶ νῦν ἀπάντων τῶν περὶ τὴν αἵρεσιν καὶ τὴν δοκιμασίαν κατημελημένων ἴδοιμεν (*Areop.* 38). It is evident that context and the word αἵρεσις indicate here the terminological usage; however, in other cases, this word is used in a more general sense. The nature of the advice of *Ad Nicocl.* 27 points not to a special examination traditional for Athens, but to the idea of the following passage (*Panath.* 222):

Χρὴ δὲ τοὺς ὀρθῶς δοκιμάζειν βουλομένους περὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἐν ἀρχῇ μὲν ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν καὶ μηδεμίαν δόξαν ἔχειν περὶ αὐτῶν, ἐπειδὴν δ' εἰς τὸν χρόνον ἐκεῖνον ἔλθωσιν ἐν ᾧ καὶ λέγοντας καὶ πράττοντας αὐτοὺς ὄψονται καὶ περὶ τῶν ἰδίων καὶ περὶ τῶν κοινῶν, τότε θεωρεῖν ἀκριβῶς ἕκαστον αὐτῶν.

However, those who desire to form a correct judgement about such people should remain silent and have no opinion about them in the beginning, but when the time comes when they can observe them both speaking and taking action regarding both private and public affairs.

¹⁵ Usher 1999, 310.

¹⁶ Usher 1990, 210.

Ὅρθῳς δοκιμάζειν should mean the same as ἀκριβεῖς ποιῶν τὰς δοκιμασίας and refer to general comprehension of a person's nature and whether this person is worthy.

This short overview of the main opinions on these orations shows that there is no consensus yet on Isocrates' views of monarchy. The goal of this article is not to solve all the difficulties, but rather to examine some passages in which criticism of monarchy displayed by Isocrates himself or put into Nicocles' words could be found.¹⁷

It would be easier to start with the criticisms expressed by Isocrates directly. In the oration *To Nicocles* the orator, recounting things that contribute to education of common people, namely necessities of their life, laws, criticism by their friends and enemies, and the precepts of poets, says (*Ad Nicocl.* 3):

τοῖς δὲ τυράννοις¹⁸ οὐδὲν ὑπάρχει τοιοῦτον, ἀλλ' οὕς ἔδει παιδεύεσθαι μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων, ἐπειδὴν εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν καταστῶσιν, ἀνουθέτητοι διατελοῦσιν.

for the tyrants there is no such thing (means of education – *D. K.*), on the contrary, when the men, who should be educated rather than anyone else, gain their power, they spend their life unadmonished.

One could find a similar thought in *Antidosis* (71):

ἐπιτιμῶ ταῖς μοναρχίαις, ὅτι δέον αὐτοὺς τὴν φρόνησιν ἀσκεῖν μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων, οἱ δὲ χεῖρον παιδεύονται τῶν ἰδιωτῶν.

I accuse monarchies that despite the fact that they (monarchs – *D. K.*) must exercise their wisdom more than others, they receive education worse than common people.

In the latter case it is expressed a bit more distinctively and even aggressively, since the author speaks to the Athenian public.

Lack of necessary educational institutions for kings and their own reluctance to be educated are underlined at the end of *Euagoras*, where

¹⁷ For a survey of monarchy's flaws found in other orations, see Mathieu 1925, 134–135.

¹⁸ Concerning the usage of the words τυραννίς, τύραννος and their meaning, see Parker 1998, 165–166; Alexiou 2010, 113. In short, notice that these terms do not have negative connotations here, rather they mean the absolute power of a king.

Isocrates says to his former student: *πρῶτος καὶ μόνος τῶν ἐν τυραννίδι καὶ πλούτῳ καὶ τρυφαίῃς ὄντων φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ πονεῖν ἐπικεχέρηκας* (78). In the same paragraph, the orator emphasizes that the king will make other rulers envy his *παίδευσις*, as well. The author compares kingship with priesthood and notices that lots of people believe that any mediocre person can fill both offices, while in reality they are most important and demand extraordinary care (*Ad Nicocl.* 6).

That formula *πρῶτος καὶ μόνος* should mean that other rulers' education is not enough to fulfill their duties, and consequently they tend to rule their subjects badly. However, it does not imply that all rulers govern their states this way. The author displays two contrary examples of rulers who did not have any special education, but nonetheless succeeded: Theseus and Euagoras.

The problem with one of these examples is obvious: Theseus is a legendary character, so it is difficult to tell the truth from the myth and his figure is used only as an example of a perfect leader. On the other hand, our evidence about the Cyprian king from other authors shows that the Athenian orator was quite liberal with the truth. First, he omits some details about the Cyprian war, namely defeats at sea and in the siege of Salamis.¹⁹ Isocrates also leaves unspoken the fact that when Euagoras returned to the city, he was left by his allies. The war was finished with a defeat and Salamis came under Arthaxerxes' control (*Diod.* 15. 9. 2). Indirect evidence of this could be the pitiful state of the city described by Nicocles (*Nicocl.* 31). The audience hears a description of a crisis, to which the good king finds a solution. How did the city come to this devastated state? Most probably because of the expensive and unfortunate war led by Euagoras. This fact could also partly explain why Nicocles' recounting of all the martial triumphs achieved by monarchical and tyrannical leaders fails to refer to his father's triumphs.

This brings us to the first point about which the monarchical rulers are criticized – their lack of proper education and training and lack of will to acquire it.

The next critical note, which is spoken by the orator himself, could result from the previous one and concerns the quality of a kings' advisors. Kings are surrounded by flatterers (*Ad Nicocl.* 4). Tyrants do not succeed in getting proper education *before* they come to power, and they stay *ἀνουθέτητοι* *after* they gain it, since there is no one to guide them. Among the things Isocrates says have a positive influence on the education of

¹⁹ Alexiou 2010, 156; Frolov 2013, 905.

common people, he mentions this: ἔτι δ' ἡ παρρησία καὶ τὸ φανερώς ἐξεῖναι τοῖς τε φίλοις ἐπιπληξαι καὶ τοῖς ἐχθροῖς ἐπιθέσθαι ταῖς ἀλλήλων ἀμαρτίαις (*Ad Nicocl.* 3). Παρρησία²⁰ in this case is the possibility for people to criticize each other, while a tyrant is deprived of it due to his high position and others' fear of punishment. The beneficial spirit of constructive critics is underlined here. Undoubtedly, a tyrant is able to criticize others, but he fails to receive criticism in return; furthermore, Isocrates gives the advice: δίδου παρρησίαν τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσιν, ἵνα περὶ ὧν ἂν ἀμφιγνοῇς ἔξης τοὺς συνδοκιμάσοντας (*Ad Nicocl.* 28). In both cases, the author uses the term that is usually associated with Athenian democracy; but contrary to the usual practice in Athens, Isocrates insists on giving the right of speech only to οἱ εὖ φρονοῦντες and not the whole demos. This form of elitism is not unusual for him. He speaks about the monarch's duty to care about his people, but at the same time not to lose control over them. This thesis is presented as a πρῶτα καὶ μέγιστα στοιχεῖα χρηστῆς πολιτείας (*Ad Nicocl.* 16). It is also important to realize who are understood as οἱ εὖ φρονοῦντες.

The real political situation²¹ in the Cyprian cities shows that the king (βασιλεύς) possessed the main power in the state and ruled the kingdom with the help of the local aristocracy called ἄνακτες. It is not clear enough whether official polis institutes were presented there, but in any case, they played an insignificant role; power was concentrated in the hands of the king, his family, and elites. Most probably the latter are meant when Isocrates mentions freedom of speech. This is supported by a preface to *Nicocles* composed by an anonymous grammarian, who says that the king is addressing πρὸς τοὺς τῶν ὑπηκόων τιμιωτάτους (*Hypoth. Nicocl.*); the reader should understand that before the king's speech, the audience has already heard the orator's advice, as is mentioned by Nicocles himself (*Nicocl.* 11). Usher believes that by mentioning παρρησία and laws, Isocrates is trying to convince Nicocles to rule his state like a Greek polis.²² It would have been too unwise of the orator to suggest that an absolute king such as Nicocles would give up his power because of the advice from his former teacher. It is more probable that he is trying to convince Nicocles not to suppress any opposition, but to give the elites the right to express their disagreement – it would be παρρησία – and to adjudicate his subjects on a par, so they would know what to expect in

²⁰ See more about Isocrates' usage of this word in Giannone 2017.

²¹ For a detailed description of the Cyprian political system, see Pestarino–Körner 2017, 217–243.

²² Usher 1990, 203.

court; the laws would serve this purpose.²³ In that case, the king remains the absolute source of power, but the subjects could expect the king not to act arbitrarily.

The necessity for qualified advisors is additionally stressed at the end of the speech: σύμβουλος ἀγαθὸς χρησιμώτατον καὶ τυραννικότατον ἀπάντων τῶν κτημάτων ἐστίν (*Ad Nicocl.* 53). Furthermore, in *Euagoras*, Isocrates uses Nicocles' father as an example by saying: "He consulted with his friends, though he had no need of advisors" (*Euagor.* 44).

This is followed by another remark about tyrants. At first it seems a *locus communis*, however it could be connected to the circumstances of the death of the king's father and brother. He says (*Ad Nicocl.* 5):

ἐπειδὴν δ' ἐνθυμηθῶσιν τοὺς φόβους καὶ τοὺς κινδύνους, καὶ διεξιόντες ὁρᾶσιν τοὺς μὲν ὅν ἤκιστα χρῆν διεφθαρμένους, τοὺς δ' εἰς τοὺς οἰκειοτάτους ἐξαμαρτεῖν ἠναγκασμένους, τοῖς δ' ἀμφοτέρω ταῦτα συμβεβηκότα.

But when they (the common people – *D. K.*) reflect on their (monarch's – *D. K.*) fears and their dangers, and when, as they review the history of monarchs, they see instances where they have been slain by those from whom they least deserved that fate, other instances where they have been constrained to sin against those nearest and dearest to them, and still others where they have experienced both of these calamities.

This could be interpreted as a common criticism of tyrants, who, as they gain power, become cruel even to those closest to them. Describing the difficult position of tyrants in *Encomium Helenae*, Isocrates notes that they do not trust people close to them (*Hel.* 33). In *De pace*, a similar criticism is repeated (111–113), and Xenophon's complaint in *Hiero* about the miserable position of a tyrant mentions the same things (*Xen. Hier.* 3. 8). It seems as if Isocrates simply resorts to a *topos*.

It is possible that Isocrates' criticism is confined to a general *topos*; however, recalling the details of Nicocles' ascension to the throne, note that Euagoras and his elder son Pnytagoras were killed by a eunuch, Thrasideus, for raping the daughter of Nicocreon, another Cyprian king.

²³ This thought is additionally stressed in *Ad Nicocl.* 18. M. Gianonne does not see here any reference to ἄνακτες. She believes that the only conditions for granting the right to criticize to a person should be legal citizenship and the moral qualities of the speaker. This is of course possible when applied to Athens, while here Isocrates deals with Cyprian reality (Gianonne 2017, 99).

There is no clear evidence of what happened, since the versions all differ in their details. Diodorus says that Nicocles was that eunuch and the killer of Euagoras (15. 47. 8). This is more than doubtful, and there must be a confusion between the king's son and the eunuch. Furthermore, this evidence is not supported by any other authors; it is possible that Diodorus excessively abbreviated his source and thereby made Nicocles the eunuch.²⁴ Aristotle, on the other hand, gives another version, which is preferable to that of Diodorus, although it lacks details. He states that Euagoras' death was an act of revenge accomplished by this eunuch, for the king's son had taken away his wife (Aristot. *Pol.* 1311 b 5–6). Yet, the uncertainty as to which of the sons is meant here and the oddity of a eunuch having a wife leaves some doubts. The closest to reality seems to be the version of Theopompus, who says the following (Theop. *FrGrH* 115 F 103. 12):

καὶ ὥς τῇ ἐκείνου παιδί καταλειφθείσῃ κόρῃ Εὐαγόρας τε καὶ ὁ τοῦτου παῖς Πνυταγόρας λανθάνοντες ἀλλήλους συνεκάθευδον, Θρασυδαίου τοῦ εὐνούχου, ὃς ἦν Ἡλεῖος τὸ γένος, αὐτοῖς παρὰ μέρος ὑπηρετουμένου τῇ πρὸς τὴν κόρην ἀκολασίᾳ· καὶ ὥς τοῦτο αὐτοῖς αἵτιον ὀλέθρου γέγονε, Θρασυδαίου τὴν ἐκείνων ἀναίρεσιν κατεργασαμένου.

And then (he described) how Euagoras and his son Pnytagoras secretly from each other slept with the daughter that he (Nicocreon – *D. K.*) left, while Thrasydeus the eunuch from Elis served them in rotation in their licentiousness towards this girl; and how this resulted in their deaths, for Thrasydeus committed their murder.

This version is the most detailed, and it mentions Pnytagoras, Nicocles' elder brother, who is also mentioned by Isocrates (*Euagor.* 62). It does not contradict Aristotle's version, either. Theopompus' knowledge is not surprising, since he was Isocrates' pupil.²⁵ However, F. Jacoby rightly notes that this story does not clarify the reasons for Thrasydeus' assassination.²⁶ This version has more credibility, since the author could have used Isocrates' evidence and knowledge to describe these events.

²⁴ Sherman 1907, 81. He also believes that Nicocles did not participate in the assassination.

²⁵ Laqueur 1934, 2181–2182.

²⁶ Jacoby 1962, 374.

It is highly unlikely that Isocrates was unaware of these events, since he spent some time teaching the future king.²⁷ Nicocles for his part stresses his fidelity to his wife²⁸ when describing his own virtues (*Nicocl.* 36–42). He also mentions that violence against those closest to one has already ruined lots of people (*ibid.* 36). It seems that this phrase was a clear allusion for the audience, whose memory of the deaths of Euagoras and Pnytagoras was still fresh. In an attempt to be perceived as a better ruler, Nicocles intentionally mentions this and pays a lot of attention to it. Given all this, one might assume that this was more than just self-praise. Some vagueness of wording allows those who know the details of the scandalous death to take this hint, and for others it serves as a usual reminder of the perils of monarchy. Death at the hands of a eunuch is indeed a death by the most unexpected person, and forced intercourse that father and son both had with the same woman is surely vice against those closest to one, so Euagoras suffers both of these, which Isocrates alludes to. The necessity for this allusion could have arisen from the fact that the best argument is an example from the life of a close person, which the orator himself states (*Euagor.* 77). The tragic death of his own father would show the importance of this advice.

That is the end of the criticism expressed by Isocrates personally. These are the main theses: (1) tyrants do not receive a proper education; (2) once they gain power, they do not have good advisors; (3) the cruelty of tyrants against even those closest to them leads them to a tragic death. The first two points seem to be the most important, since these are the reasons for such poor governance, and they cause the pitiful condition not only of subjects, but of the tyrants themselves, as well. The question is, however: is this a criticism of monarchy as an institution or admonishments about the perils that lie in a monarch's path? In the case of Isocrates, it is hard

²⁷ It is unknown whether Isocrates visited Salamis or if it is Nicocles who was sent to Athens. K. Münscher believes that the orator never visited the island (Münsher 1934, 2189), and Blass thinks it more probable that the prince came to Athens (Blass 1874, 54), but this contradicts the evidence of Ps.-Plut. (*Vit.* F 838), who mentions Isocrates' participation in a symposium held by a Cyprian tyrant, Nicocreon. This could be a misunderstanding of the name Nicocles, but of course this is uncertain. In any case, Isocrates was well-informed about Salamis and its reality.

²⁸ Other sources portray the young king as a lustful and spoiled tyrant. He is described in this way by Theopompus (*FrGrH* 115 F 114), but it is contested by F. Maier, who believes this to be a stereotypical description of an eastern tyrant (Maier 1994, 328). More evidence of Nicocles' lavish lifestyle is given by Anaximenes (*FrGrH* 72 F 18), who compares him to a well-known spendthrift, Strato of Sidon.

to tell the difference, for he prefers giving advice on general principles rather than sharing practical formulas. It is evident that he does not praise monarchy over other forms of government, and these warnings aim to let others see this. The hidden criticism expressed by Nicocles starts by stating the main principles of the three forms of government (*Nicocl.* 15):

αἱ μὲν τοίνυν ὀλιγαρχίαι καὶ δημοκρατίαι τὰς ἰσότητας τοῖς μετέχουσιν τῶν πολιτειῶν ζητοῦσιν, καὶ τοῦτ' εὐδοκιμεῖ παρ' αὐταῖς ἢν μηδὲν ἕτερος ἐτέρου δύνηται πλεόν ἔχειν· ὁ τοῖς πονηροῖς συμφέρον ἐστίν. Αἱ δὲ μοναρχίαι πλεῖστον μὲν νέμονται τῷ βελτίστῳ, δευτέρῳ δὲ τῷ μετ' ἐκείνῳ, τρίτῳ δὲ καὶ τετάρτῳ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον. Καὶ ταῦτ' εἰ μὴ πανταχοῦ καθέστηκεν, ἀλλὰ τό γε βούλημα τῆς πολιτείας τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν.

Oligarchies and democracies seek equality for those who share political rights, and it is praised among them, if nobody is able to have more than the other. It is a benefit for malevolent people. Monarchies on the other hand allot the most to the best, the second-most to the second-best, then to the third and to others with the same order. And even if it is not established everywhere, the principle of this government is such.

There are in fact two main principles – the equality of rights and honors between all who share political rights (only democracies give it to a large number of men, while oligarchies have strict qualifications), on the one hand, and inequality of rights, on the other. The first principle, which was applied in Athens, is criticized as profitable for unworthy people. Inequality, however, should serve better, since this principle grants each citizen rights according to his merits. Without a doubt, this is an ideal situation, when the king has no will to meddle with this system and does not honor those who do not deserve it.

Some questions arise from this point. Foremost, is this a merit of monarchy as a particular institution, or is it the principle that counts, not the form? The second question is whether this principle is already realized or remains to be realized. The latter is easier to answer, since the king acknowledges it himself by saying ταῦτ' εἰ μὴ πανταχοῦ καθέστηκεν. This is a realistic stroke, of course, but is there any evidence of this principle being realized in a monarchical government? The only examples from history that were recalled are Sparta, Carthage, Sicily, and Persia, and all of these examples were used only to show the military strength of monarchies, so it would seem that no examples of the fulfillment of this principle are to be found, or at least Isocrates thinks so.

The first question is more difficult to answer. The same thought occurs in *Areopagiticus* (21–22), where the author attributes the same principle to the Athens of old, which made it superior to other Greek states. There are no doubts that the ancestors of the Athenians were ruled by a democratic regime, but it was stricter than the contemporary one. So, it is not a feature of monarchy as a regime, but rather of any well-functioning government. Βούλημα τῆς πολιτείας should be taken more generally as “a principle of the state that distributes honors according to everyone’s merit”. The reason for using the word μοναρχία is the nature of this speech – it is a king’s speech, so it is expected that he will praise monarchy and his own rule.²⁹

The next remark addresses the existence of the Cyprian secret police. It is possible that Isocrates refers to it when he has Nicocles say this (*Nicocl.* 51):³⁰

Ὅ τι ἂν ὑμῶν ἕκαστος αὐτὸς αὐτῷ τύχῃ συνειδῶς, ἡγείσθω μὴδ’ ἐμὲ λήσειν, ἀλλ’ ἐὰν καὶ τὸ σῶμα μὴ παρῇ, τὴν διάνοιαν τὴν ἐμὴν οἰέσθω τοῖς γιγνομένοις παρεστάναι.

If any of you acknowledges his wrongdoing, let him not think that it will escape my notice, but believe that even in the absence of my body my mind will be present.

The context of this phrase is somewhat terrifying. Describing how his subjects should behave, the young king tries to install the thought of inescapable punishment that will sooner or later reach wrongdoers. Along with the expected warning that even those who conceal their knowledge of any schemes will be punished the same as real conspirators, he assures his people that every criminal will be punished sooner or later. This phrase could simply serve the purpose of installing dread in his subjects and not refer to this police. However, it seems important that Nicocles specifies what kind of wrongdoing his subjects should be looking for. He says: μὴ κατασιωπᾶτ’ ἂν τινας ὁρᾶτε περὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν τὴν ἐμὴν πονηροῦς ὄντας (53). Undermining his power is his main concern. This line could be interpreted differently. Does it refer to danger to his position as king or to any violation of the king’s law, such as petty theft?

²⁹ C. Eucken believes that this principle was originally developed by Isocrates for Athenian democracy and then applied to monarchy, so that he does not doubt that this merit is not restricted to monarchies (Eucken 1983, 256–257).

³⁰ This thought was suggested to me by S. Takhtajan.

Another possible hint can be seen in *Euagoras*, where Isocrates says about the king (42):

ἀλλ' οὕτως ἀκριβῶς καὶ τὰς πράξεις ᾔδει καὶ τῶν πολιτῶν ἕκαστον ἐγίγνωσκεν ὥστε μήτε τοὺς ἐπιβουλεύοντας αὐτῷ φθάνειν μήτε τοὺς ἐπεικεῖς ὄντας λανθάνειν, ἀλλὰ πάντα τυγχάνειν τῶν προσηγόντων.

But he (Euagoras – *D. K.*) exactly knew government affairs and each of the citizens, so neither those who plotted against him took him by surprise, nor did worthy people escape his notice, but everyone got what they deserved.

The reason for this striking awareness could be a well-functioning secret police. However, E. Alexiou believes it to be the philanthropic attitude toward his people that led Euagoras to be aware of everything and escape the usual hatred between demos and tyrants.³¹ It is possible and fits well with Euagoras' image as a benevolent king involved in the polis' internal affairs; but nonetheless, if loyal people who wish to show the king their eagerness and loyalty are easy to discern, οἱ ἐπιβουλεύοντες are much harder to recognize, so most probably Euagoras resorted to some kind of secret service. Of course, this does not mean that the king would use this service to investigate his citizens' virtues and try to find those who serve him well; but the presence of such intelligence would be a great help in dealing with hostile conspirators. The idea of giving subjects what they deserve is found also in Nicocles' speech, where he claims that all conspirators will receive a proper punishment and all decent citizens will receive rewards (53).

The main difficulty with this interpretation is that neither Nicocles nor Isocrates speak of this directly. The young king could be speaking about an imaginary situation and exhorting his subjects to act as if he were present and as if even their most secret of thoughts were open to him. The orator, on the other hand, might just be describing the virtues of Euagoras and ascribing to him an unusual wisdom and knowledge of human nature, which should be natural for an ideal monarch. Thus, it is difficult to choose between the two possible explanations, and additional arguments in favor of any interpretation are needed.

³¹ Alexiou 2010, 131.

Evidence of the existence of such police can be found in the following fragments of Clearchus of Soli (fr. 19 Wehrli):³²

παραδεγμένοι δ' εἰσὶ πάντες οἱ κατὰ Κύπρον μόναρχοι τὸ τῶν εὐγενῶν κολάκων γένος ὡς χρήσιμον· πάνυ γάρ τὸ κτῆμα τυραννικὸν ἐστὶ. Καὶ τούτων οἶον Ἀρεοπαγιτῶν τινων οὔτε τὸ πλῆθος οὔτε τὰς ὄψεις ἔξω τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων οἶδεν οὐδεὶς. Δηρημένων δὲ διχῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ Σαλαμῖνι κολάκων κατὰ συγγένειαν, ἀφ' ὧν εἰσιν οἱ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην Κύπρον κόλακες, τοὺς μὲν Γεργίνους, τοὺς δὲ Προμαλάγγους προσαγορεύουσι. Ὡς οἱ μὲν Γεργίνοι συναναμιγνύμενοι τοῖς κατὰ τὴν πόλιν ἐν τε τοῖς ἐργαστηρίοις καὶ ταῖς ἀγοραῖς ὠτακουστοῦσι, ὃ τι δ' ἂν ἀκούσωσιν ἀναφέρουσιν ἐκάστης ἡμέρας πρὸς τοὺς καλουμένους ἀνακτας. Οἱ δὲ Προμάλαγγες ζητοῦσιν ἀντὶ τῶν ὑπὸ τῶν Γεργίνων προσαγγελθέντων, οὐκ ἀνάξιον εἶναι ζητήσεως δόξη, ὄντες τινὲς ἐρευνηταί.

All the monarchs in Cyprus have adopted this kind of well-born flatterers as useful; for having them is thoroughly characteristic of tyranny. And like some on the Areopagus Council, no one knows how many they are or what they look like, except for the most distinguished ones. The flatterers in Salamis, who inspired those everywhere else in Cyprus, are divided into two groups by kinship, one called Gergini [“informers”], the others Promalanges [“manipulators”]. The Gergini mingle with the townspeople in their workshops and the markets, listening in on everyone in their role as spies, and whatever they hear they report back to their so-called “lords” every day. The Promalanges then investigate anything reported by the Gergini deemed to warrant investigation, serving as detectives of a sort.³³

Clearchus states that this is rather a secret organization, which is little known to the common people; even their appearance and number are kept in secrecy. According to the historian, these noble flatterers originate in Salamis. B. Pestarino, for his part, contests this and claims that it could be related to the agenda of the king's court in Salamis.³⁴ It is interesting that Clearchus mentions the methods of this secret police. After delation, another branch of the service started investigation, while ἀνακτες headed

³² Here only the main Greek evidence will be presented; for a more detailed description of this service with inscription sources and parallels from other eastern kingdoms, see Pestarino 2022, 33–35.

³³ The translation of this passage is by T. Dorandi and S. White (see Mayhew et al. 2022).

³⁴ Pestarino 2022, 33.

this organization, receiving information and giving orders. It seems that Clearchus himself esteemed their work highly.

Finally, F. Poldrugo³⁵ claims that Isocrates could be referring to this police when he advises Nicocles to distinguish between skillful flatterers and diligent servants (*Ad Nicocl.* 28), but it does not seem to be so. Here the author mentions παρρησία, which was already discussed, and only then urges Nicocles to distinguish the two kinds of servants. It is more likely that here Isocrates means not “professional flatterers”, but those who wish to please the king by agreeing to his every word, in contrast with those who can see that the king is in fact wrong in his judgment and disagree with him. The reason for this remark is given by the author himself: ἵνα μὴ πλέον οἱ πονηροὶ τῶν χρηστῶν ἔχωσιν (*ibid.*). It is an advice not to use any special services for preventing crimes, but rather to see through people and take them for what they really are. This is most applicable to the council, while the intelligence is used to spy on the common people. This thought could also be related to the advantage of monarchy that Nicocles claims, namely that tyrannies discern people’s natures and deeds best of all.

As mentioned before, it is more probable that Nicocles refers to this police by mentioning that, in the absence of his physical body, his mind will be there. The same motif can be found also in the cited paragraph of *Euagoras*. The question is, however: what is the orator’s attitude toward this service? Isocrates does not speak about it directly, but some suggestions can be deduced from the advice to relieve people of their fears (*Ad Nicocl.* 23). Mathieu and Bremond connect this thought to *Nicocl.* 51,³⁶ but they believe it to be used only for the interests of the audience. Though this is possible, it does not necessarily mean that Nicocles is not referring to his intelligence service. His audience is ἄνακτες and, according to Clearchus’ evidence, they are aware of its existence, so it is suitable for the moment when he is warning them about what they must not do, to mention that the king possesses the means to keep watch over them. Nevertheless, this suggestion leads to a problem: since it is known that his audience consists mostly of aristocrats and that Clearchus states that κόλακες spy on common people and obey those ἄνακτες and their number and faces are not a secret to them, how can the king threaten the audience with this service? As Poldrugo³⁷ rightly claims, Clearchus is wrong about the secrecy of this police, and inscriptions attest to this. Is

³⁵ Poldrugo 2000, 40.

³⁶ Mathieu–Bremond 1961, 133.

³⁷ Poldrugo 2000, 40.

it possible that he is also wrong about spying exclusively on the demos? It is difficult to say and this needs a detailed investigation.

Referring back to the original question of Isocrates' attitude, one may say that it is not surveillance that he could oppose, but the nature of this surveillance. If it is used to terrorize the subjects, then indeed it is inappropriate, but to keep an eye on people's moral qualities and not let them overstep the boundaries is something he would refer to later in *Areopagiticus* (36–37), where he says that when this institution watched over Athenians they were generally better. Of course, the perils of such an institution are not a secret to him, but he believes that the perfect king, who Nicocles should be, will use it only for good.

All the main lines of criticism of monarchical power examined, it is now important to match them with the political views of the orator. As mentioned above, it is highly unlikely that Isocrates viewed monarchy as an ideal form of government or even as one suitable for Greeks. He was well aware of the impossibility of its application in a Greek polis, but he uses this opportunity to find flaws in democracy and oligarchy and to give advice on how to overcome them. It seems that Blass³⁸ formulated Isocrates' position in the best possible way, saying that it is not the form, but rather the spirit that is important for him. This view is further supported by lack of practical formulas for the organization of the state in Isocrates' works. However, to understand his position fully, it is necessary to examine thoroughly the advantages of monarchy that he highlights.

To summarize, one may claim with certainty only the following theses: these three orations indeed contain some criticism of monarchy, and Isocrates does not wish even theoretically to justify the superiority of ideal monarchy over others forms of government.

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³⁸ Blass 1874, 74.

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The *Cyprian Orations*, addressed by Isocrates to his former student Nicocles on the occasion of the latter's ascension to the throne of Salamis, have caused discussions among scholars about the orator's political thought for a long time. Do these works clearly outline Isocrates' monarchical preferences, or are they nothing but a set of advice to a young king on how, according to Isocrates, he should behave as a king? The aim of this article is to highlight some passages in which Isocrates covertly or openly criticizes monarchical power.

Цикл *Кипрских речей*, посвященных Исократом своему бывшему ученику Никоклу по случаю его восшествия на престол Саламина, давно вызывает споры среди исследователей политической мысли оратора: являются ли эти сочинения прямым указанием на монархические предпочтения Исократа или же это набор советов юному царю о том, как, по мнению автора, должен вести себя монарх? В статье анализируются некоторые места из речей, в которых, как доказывается, Исократ завуалированно или явно критикует монархическое устройство.

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