

PD07 - Post By EP - "Darius" by CP Cavafy

Post by "Cassius" of September 24, 2016 at 3:09 PM

[Elli Pensa](#)

[September 22 at 11:31am](#)

Doctrine 7. For the sake of feeling confidence and security in regard to other men, some men wish to be eminent and powerful, failing to remember the limits of kingly power. If such men happen to achieve a life of safety, then they have attained their goal, which is a good. But if their lives are not in fact safe, they have failed in obtaining the goal for the sake of which they originally desired power, and that is the result that generally occurs according to Nature.

E.S. 67. A free life cannot acquire many possessions, because this is not easy to do without servility to mobs or monarchs, yet it possesses all things in unfailing abundance; and if by chance it obtains many possessions, it is easy to distribute them so as to win the gratitude of neighbors.

E.S. 81. The disturbance of the soul cannot be ended nor true joy created either by the possession of the greatest wealth or by honor and respect in the eyes of the mob or by anything else that is associated with or caused by unlimited desire.

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"Darius", by C.P. Cavafy

The poet Phernazes is at work
upon an important passage in his epic poem;
how the Kingdom of Persia
is secured by Darius, son of Hystaspes
(from whom is descended our glorious king
Mithradates Dionysus Eupator).

The passage is philosophic. He has to describe
the feelings that animated Darius:

"arrogance" perhaps and "exultation"; or no—
more probably a sense of the vanity of human greatness.

The poet is meditating deeply on his theme.

Running in, his servant interrupts him,
and brings a most serious piece of news.

The war with the Romans has begun.

Our army in full force has crossed the frontier.

The poet is speechless. What a misfortune!

How will our glorious king

Mithradates Dionysus Eupator

find time to listen to Greek poetry now?

In the middle of a war —Greek poetry, indeed!

Phernazes is in despair. Alas, alas!
His "Darius" was certain to bring him fame
and silence once for all those envious detractors.
What a set-back, what a set-back to his plans!
Were it only a set-back, no matter,
but shall we be quite safe at Amisus?
The city walls are none of the strongest,
the Romans are most terrible enemies.
Can we hold our own against them,
we Cappadocians? Is it likely?
Can we make a stand against the legions?
Help! Help! O ye Great Gods, protectors of Asia, defend us.
Yet through all his distress and anxiety
the poetic obsession still comes and goes;
surely "arrogance" and "exultation" are more probable;
yes, "arrogance" and "exultation" were the feelings that animated Darius.

Analysis of the poem "Darius", by C.P. Cavafy

The poet Phernazes is concerned to write an epic poem for Darius thinking what position he should keep on the way that he took the power. Does he write honestly what happened (Darius killed his brother to reap the power) assigning arrogance and drunkenness of power and displeasure the current king Mithridates, as he considered descendant of Darius, or embellish the reality in order to win the favor of the king ?

He decides to become likeable to Mithridates and reap the benefit of its own priorities as a poet. Thus, it is an opportunistic and selfish driven by his own personal interest. A slimy flatterer who is "selling out" and even his art to secure the favor of the powerful king and to be grown among his competitors, the other poets . Even though he learns that the war was starting, he does not lament, for the evil that finds his country, but only just because his plans were canceled.

However, the poet Phernazes will change his attitude when he would realize the change of historical and real circumstances. The initial disappointment at the cancellation of his poetic projects succeeded by uncertainty of the fate of the city but also of his own. He considers now that the city of Amisus is not a sufficiently fortified city and the Romans are the most terrible enemies. His agitation from fear, and as his despair is been escalated, he invokes the gods ("gods, great protectors of Asia, defend us"). From this point we conclude that his Asian descent prevails in his thought, while his Greek culture has been marginalized. The Cavafy irony discharges the dramatic intensity of the lyrics.

"The poetic idea comes and goes despite the turmoil and trouble.

The defeat and the end of Mithridates is near; and now Phernazes will decide without fear, to serve his poetic art from the path of truth (perhaps thinking that with this, he will win the favor of the Romans who now are taking the power in his conquered country) Thus, Phernazes is honest when the new world order will entrain him just we to understand this honesty as alignment with this new order.

However Phernazes becomes poet again influenced by the war climate, and he adjusts his

poetic thought. In such crucial times of agitation and poor reflective of thought "like an understanding of the vanity of greatness" does not match, while the attribution of arrogance and drunkenness of power fit and to Darius ; and to Mithridates ; and to the Romans and all executers of an arrogant power.

Cavafy seems to believe that the poetic activity can not be suspended, even under such adverse conditions; when the poetic practice can be adapted, influenced by the surrounding historical and social facts.

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