

Homer and the Good Ruler in Antiquity and Beyond

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On the Good King according to Homer: A Sixteenth-Century Treatise by Christophoros Kondoleon

Filippomaria Pontani

To the best of our knowledge, two ancient authors devoted specific monographs to Homer's view of kingship and to his implicit ethical recommendations for princes and rulers: while we know nothing of Porphyry's ten books *On Homer's Usefulness for Kings* beyond the title recorded by the lexicon of Suidas,¹ Philodemus' much earlier treatise *On the Good King According to Homer* has come down to us in substantial fragments and has been edited by Tiziano Dorandi and more recently investigated by Jeffrey Fish.²

However, the only work in Greek on this topic to have been preserved in its entirety has so far escaped scholars' attention: it lies in manuscript form, under the title *ἐκλογή παρὰ τῶν Ὀμηρικῶν ἐπῶν περὶ ἀρίστου στρατηγοῦ καὶ στρατιώτου* ('Anthology of Homeric Passages Concerning the Best General and Soldier'), in ff. 29^r–74^r of ms. *Vaticanus Graecus* 1352, and it is an autograph of the little-known Monemvasian humanist Christophoros Kondoleon. Kondoleon lived in Western Europe, chiefly in Italy and France, during the first six decades of the sixteenth century, producing a remarkable body of works devoted to philosophical and theological issues, as well as to the moral (and partly allegorical) exegesis of Homer: none of these writings ever reached a published form during the author's lifetime.³

Little is known about Kondoleon's biography beyond his close relationship with the outstanding Cretan editor and scholar Arsenios/Aristoboulos Apostolis,⁴ and his contact with important members of the Roman curia, from the learned cardinal Niccolò Ridolfi, the owner of the most remarkable private library in sixteenth-century Rome,⁵ to pope Paul III, to whom he addressed a

1 Suid. π 2098: Περὶ τῆς ἐξ Ὀμήρου ὠφελείας τῶν βασιλέων.

2 Dorandi (1982); Fish (this volume).

3 Meschini (1973) and (1977), A. Pontani (1988), Piasentin & Pontani (forthcoming).

4 On Apostolis, see Geanakoplos (1962) 167–200, Pagliaroli (2004), Speranzi (2013), and Ferreri (2014) *ad indicem*. On Kondoleon's link with Apostolis as a copyist, see Cataldi Palau (1986a) and F. Pontani (2005) 495–496.

5 Muratore (2009) 70–71.

letter sketching the ambitious project of a college for Greek and Italian pupils.⁶ Kondoleon also spent some time in the entourage of Francis I, probably in an attempt to acquire French citizenship.⁷ The uncertainties surrounding Kondoleon's biography impair an exact dating of his works, which are largely preserved in autograph manuscripts and range from theology to philosophy, from poetical exegesis to political theory and beyond.⁸

His six Homeric writings all occur in ms. *Vaticanus Graecus* 1352, for which watermarks suggest a date well into the sixth or even seventh decade of the sixteenth century.⁹ Given that Kondoleon's first dated manuscript (*Monacensis Graecus* 400) bears the date 1517, this may imply that this collection of exegetical writings was copied and put together by the author in his old age. The forthcoming critical edition of these works by Marta Piasentin and myself will discuss their transmission and context in more detail,¹⁰ for my current purpose, it will suffice to present and contextualize the aforementioned *Ekloge*, as well as another, shorter treatise concerning Homeric kingship, to which we shall turn first.¹¹

The *Tractatio moralis*

Ms. *Vaticanus Graecus* 1352 opens (ff. 3^r–13^v) with a short, untitled dissertation, known under the modern name of *Tractatio moralis ex Homeri locis*. This text starts (§§ 1–2) with some very conventional claims about the nature of ἀρετή ('virtue') and its relevance for the highest of human activities, namely ἄρχειν ('government'), which is also the only way to acquire true εὐδαιμονία ('happiness'). In keeping with Kondoleon's overall philosophical preferences, which are marked by a mixture of Peripatetic and Neoplatonic elements, this introductory section bears an unmistakably Aristotelian flavour.¹² The essay then goes on to discuss a very particular aspect of Homeric kingship, namely the

6 Meschini (1973) 47–49 and 75–80.

7 This information emerges from Guillaume Pellicier's letter to Jean du Bellay of August 7th, 1536; see Dorez (1894) 232–240, Cataldi Palau (1986b) and (1986c).

8 Meschini (1973) 20–49.

9 See esp. *croissant* type 5377 Briquet (f. 13; Naples 1568), *fleur de lys* type 7104 Briquet (f. 23; Rome 1560), and *agneau* type 86809 Piccard (f. 76; Rome 1556).

10 Piasentin & Pontani (forthcoming).

11 All references by paragraph are to our forthcoming edition.

12 See e.g. § 1: Οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ τῶν φιλοσόφων τὸ μετ' ἀρετῆς βιώσαι καὶ τῶν ἐκτὸς ἐν βίῳ τελείῳ καλῶς κεχορηγημένον εἶναι τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ὥρισαντο ('Most philosophers have defined hap-

autourgia of rulers, princes, and noblewomen, i.e. their habit of performing humble everyday activities themselves, without the help of servants or assistants (§1):

Εὐδαιμονία γὰρ ἐκάστω, κατὰ τὸ ἀνήκον αὐτῷ, ἢ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἕξις αἴ τε μετ' ὀρθοῦ λόγου πράξεις· διὸ οἱ πάλαι βασιλεῖς τε καὶ ἥρωες, ὁμοῦ ταῖς ἡρωῖσι, τὸ αὐτουργεῖν αἰσχρὸν αὐτοῖς οὐκ ἦγον, τὸ ἀργὸν καὶ τὴν ῥαστώνην ὡς τὸν γενναῖον δουλοῦντα καὶ θῆλυν διατιθέντα προσηκόντως φεύγοντες.

Happiness means for everyone to possess virtue according to his faculties, and to act according to right reason; this is why the kings and heroes of old, as well as the heroines, did not regard manual work as shameful for them: they thus appropriately avoided inactivity and laziness, which enslave the nobleman and lead him to effeminacy.

The rest of the essay consists of a series of examples:

- §3—*Odyssey* 18.365–379: Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, invites Eurymachus to a contest of ploughing and harvesting. Had this activity been unfitting for noblemen, he would never have mentioned it;
- §4—*Odyssey* 23.183–204: Odysseus proves his identity to Penelope by recalling in detail how he had built their bed by his own hands;
- §5—*Odyssey* 5.241–257: Odysseus builds the raft by which he will leave Ogygia;
- §§6–7—*Odyssey* 1.345–358, 17.88–91 and 96–97: Penelope works at her loom;
- §8—*Iliad* 24.265–285: Priam's sons prepare his cart;
- §9—*Iliad* 6.488–492: Andromache works at her loom;
- §10—*Iliad* 6.254–258: Hecuba is about to go and fetch some wine for Hector, who is coming back from the battlefield;
- §11—*Odyssey* 6.56–65: Nausicaa does the laundry;
- §§14–15, 17, and 20—*Iliad* 2.41–44, 9.9–12, 10.131–134; *Odyssey* 4.306–309: Agamemnon, Nestor, and Menelaus all get dressed on their own, unaided by servants; Agamemnon gives orders directly to the heralds, not through servants or envoys;

pinness as “living in a virtuous way and being well provided with external advantages in a complete life”): cf. Arist. *MM* 1204a25–1206b35, *EE* 1219a33 etc.

- §§ 16 and 18—*Iliad* 9.206–217, 24.120–125: Achilles barbecues during a sacrifice; his comrades prepare dinner, and specifically humble lamb, not poultry or other delicacies;
- § 19—*Iliad* 3.121–125 and 128; *Odyssey* 4.120–135: Helen works at her loom.

At the heart of his essay (§§ 12–13), Kondoleon refutes a powerful objection to his positive view of the simplicity of Homeric heroes: to those who may argue that this simplicity depends less on the characters' ethical choice than on their primitive and underdeveloped civilisation, Kondoleon replies by referring to the description of Alcinous' palace in *Odyssey* 8.81–103, a building that displays a remarkably refined artistry, in spite of the fact that the Phaeacian princess who lived there did the laundry herself (§ 13):

Ὅ μὲν οὖν τοιούτους ἔχων οἴκους οὐ νομαδικὸν βίον, ἀλλὰ βασιλικώτερον ζῆν γε δοκεῖ· ἡ θυγάτηρ δ' ὅμως αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν αὐτῆς παιδίσκων ἐς πλυνοὺς ἀφίκεται· οὐ δορυφόροι προπέμπουσιν, οὐχ ἵππεῖς συνέπονται, ἀλλ' ὡς σπουδαία καὶ κοσμία μετὰ τῶν θεραπαινῶν αὐτῆς τὰ χρηστά ἔργα καὶ ἐπωφελῆ πράττειν οὐκ ἀναίεταί.

Having such a palace, he [sc. Alcinous] does not seem to lead a shepherd's life, but a regal one; and yet his daughter heads for the washing tanks together with her maidens: no bodyguards precede, no horsemen follow her, but she keeps being serious and honorable and does not refrain from performing necessary and useful tasks together with her servants.

The rationale for the entire essay lies in Kondoleon's view of Homer's epics as the ethical manifesto of the good old times, when leaders and kings did not disdain manual work: heroic *autourgia* is for him but an aspect of the *paideia* Homer designed for ancient and modern rulers—the faith in Homer's educative value being of course a very ancient and powerful *topos* of Greek culture,¹³ and one that was relatively easy to reconcile with the new, Christian horizon.¹⁴

The idea of singling out this specific topic is in itself far from original:¹⁵ the observation that Homeric heroes are πάντες ἔμπειροι καὶ αὐτουργοί ('all experts

13 See e.g. Morgan (1998) 67–73 and 105–115, Criboire (2001) *ad indicem*, Marrou (1948) 226–235. See also De Jong in this volume.

14 See e.g. Buffière (1956), Rahner (1957), Pépin (1976), von Haehling (2005).

15 The fullest treatment of the ancient debate is still Schmidt (1976) 159–173.

and *autourgoi*') goes back at least to Aristarchus of Samothrace, who appended it as a comment to the *Iliad* passage in which Priam drives his carriage without the help of any charioteer.¹⁶ In the so-called 'exegetical' (or bT-) scholia to the *Iliad*, we find an impressive list of Odysseus' manual skills.¹⁷ As concerns Achilles barbecuing and the heroes' humble meals (§§16, 18), this issue and its moral implications occupy an important section of Athenaeus' book 1 (8e–19a), part of which has been attributed by some scholars (though not by others) to the shadowy figure of Dioscurides, the author of a lost treatise *On Homer's Customs* (Περὶ τῶν παρ' Ὀμήρω νόμων);¹⁸ be that as it may, this obviously looks like a Stoic concept.¹⁹

However, if ancient exegetes agreed on the constation of *autourgia* in Homer, their interpretations of it differed widely, and it is precisely this background of ancient exegetical debates that serves to illuminate Kondoleon's observation in §§12–13.²⁰ While the Stoics and Athenaeus (or his source), as well as several of the 'exegetical' scholia on Homer, argued that Homer had deliberately designed the heroes' *autourgia* in view of his overall didactic purpose, Aristarchus of Samothrace believed that the heroic customs actually went back to a primitive stage of human history. In a sense, he thus followed in the footsteps of Thucydides' disparaging judgment of the customs of Homer's times as essentially 'barbarian' in his *archaiologia* (1.3–6). By referring to Alcinous' gardens,²¹ Kondoleon overtly sided with the Stoics, and more directly with the likely source of many of his critical observations on Greek epic, namely the bulky commentaries to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by the twelfth-century archbishop Eustathios of Thessalonike,²² in whose famous *editio princeps* (Rome 1542–1550) Kondoleon may have been directly involved.²³

16 See schol. A *Il.* 3.261–262a, schol. bT *Il.* 3.261–262b, schol. T *Il.* 24.148 and 326. On Priam's carriage, see §8 of Kondoleon's treatise.

17 See schol. A bT *Il.* 8.93a and Eust. *in Il.* 701.25. See §§3–5 of the *Tractatio moralis*.

18 See Schmidt (1976) 16–19 and 163–164, and for a different view Heath (2000), who also collects and discusses all the evidence.

19 See Chrysippus, *SVF* III.708: ἐπετήδευον γὰρ τὴν αὐτοδιακονίαν ('they practiced self-service'), quoted in Ath. 1.18b; Schmidt (1976) 163–164.

20 See Roemer (1924) 194–199, Schmidt (1976) 161.

21 Unsurprisingly, the *ekphrasis* of these gardens was to become a *pièce de résistance* of the philo-Homerists during the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*: see F. Pontani (2017) esp. 208.

22 See Eust. *in Il.* 413.14–16, with the *apparatus comparandorum* provided by Marchinus van der Valk (1971); F. Pontani (2017).

23 On Eustathios' *editio princeps*, see Liverani (2002). See also F. Pontani (2005) 495–498 on

Much like his Byzantine predecessor (who was *inter alia* particularly fond of Athenaeus), Kondoleon occasionally resorts to Biblical parallels for his analysis. For instance, when commenting on Achilles' self-made sacrifice, he observes (§ 18):

Πάντες γὰρ ἐκ γῆς ἐπλάσθημεν καὶ ὁ Πρωτοπάτωρ ἡμῶν γεωργῶν ἐν ἰδρότητι τὸν ἄρτον ἐσίτειτο· οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν αἰσχύνη τὸ ζῆν ἰδίῳ πόνῳ καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι, ἀλλὰ τὸ τὸν πλησίον βλάπτειν καὶ τὰ τοῦ νόμου παραβαίνειν·

For we have all been created from the earth, and our Forefather ate his bread after working the land by the sweat of his brow [cf. LXX, *Ge.* 3.18–19]: for there is no shame in living of one's own toil and work, but rather in damaging one's neighbour and in trespassing the law.

This allusion to the Bible is part of the powerful connection between classical and Christian *paideia* implicitly attempted by Kondoleon in several other writings throughout his career. That he conceived of Homer's teachings as still valuable in his own day, is made clear by § 15 of the *Tractatio*, which reveals most clearly the deeper nature of Kondoleon's essay as a sort of *j'accuse* against the moral decay of sixteenth-century elites, who indulged in a comfortable and luxurious way of life:

Ἴδοῦ δὴ ὁ τῆς Πελοποννήσου καὶ πολλῶν νήσων ἄρχων καὶ τοσοῦτου στρατοῦ καθεστῶς αὐτοκράτωρ οὐκ ἄλλον αὐτὸν ἐνδύσαι καὶ ὑποδησαι προσίεται, οὔτε θεράποντας ἢ στρατιώτας πέμπει ὅπως πρὸς αὐτὸν τοὺς κήρυκας καλέσαιεν ἢ τὸ προσταχθὲν αὐτοῖς ἀπαγγείλῃ, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς καὶ ἐνδύεται ὑποδέεται τε καὶ αὐτάγγελος εἰς τοὺς κήρυκας παραγίνεται. Νῦν δὲ κάπηλοι καὶ καπήλων παῖδες ὑπὸ τῶν θεραπόντων ἐνδύεσθαι καὶ ὑποδεῖσθαι θρυπτόμενοι βούλονται, καὶ τὸ καπηλεύειν καὶ μαστροπεύειν καὶ τοκεύειν τοῦ οἰκοδομεῖν ἢ τεκταίνεσθαι ἢ γεωργεῖν τιμιώτερον ἄγουσι.

Here is the ruler of the Peloponnese and of many islands, the leader of such a large army [sc. Agamemnon]: he does not wish someone else to help him wear clothes and shoes, nor does he send out servants or soldiers to summon the heralds or to tell them the orders, but he himself puts on his clothes and shoes, and serves as a messenger for the heralds.

a manuscript of (chiefly Eustathian) scholia to the *Odyssey* (*Taurinensis* B.1.19) copied by Kondoleon and annotated by Apostolis.

Nowadays, on the other hand, merchants and their families live in luxury and want to be dressed and put on shoes by their servants: they value trading, pandering, and money lending more highly than building houses, working wood or cultivating land.

The *Ekloge*

The treatise contained in ff. 29^r–74^v of *Vaticanus Graecus* 1352 shares some features with the aforementioned *Tractatio moralis*, most notably autography, a moralistic thrust, and the focus on Homer. However, it is definitely more ambitious than the *Tractatio* in both length and scope. It appears to have been left unfinished, as it peters out in the middle of a sentence (although it seems as if not much were to follow in the author's line of thought).²⁴ Moreover, it is replete, much more so than Kondoleon's other extant writings,²⁵ with linguistic improprieties and stylistic faults—precisely these features point to the lack of a proper final revision. Let us first of all follow the line of Kondoleon's argument.

The work starts from the constation of the inevitable decay of things human (§§ 1–3), as attested by the physical decline of mankind since the mythical age of the Giants, and by passages of Homer (*Iliad* 5.302–304, and more explicitly *Odyssey* 2.276–277), Herodotus (1.68.2–3, on Orestes' body in Tegea), and the Old Testament (LXX, *Nu.* 13.1–23). As a reaction—the author suggests—the whole of mankind, and military and political leaders in particular,²⁶ should at least endeavour to find in the Homeric poems a source of inspiration for their behaviour (§§ 4–6, here 5):

Ἄποῖον δ' εἶναι δεῖ κατὰ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα τὸν ἄριστον στρατηγὸν καὶ στρατιώτην ἐν τοῖς ἔπεσι τοῦ Ὀμήρου ἀκριβῶς καὶ σοφῶς κατεσπούδασται· ἐξ ὧν ξυλλέξαντες τὰ πρὸς τὸν ἄριστον στρατηγὸν καὶ στρατιώτην ξυντείνοντα, λόγῳ τὰ διεσπαρμένα ὁμοῦ ξυντετάχαμεν, μηδὲν ἡμέτερον προστιθέμενοι εἰ μὴ που ἡμᾶς

24 § 110: Ὁ δὲ φιλονεικίας ἢ κακίας ἄλλης ἕνεκα πολλοὺς τῶν δημοτῶν καὶ ξυμμάχων ἀποκτείνειας ἢ θρασέως ὑβρίσας καὶ ἀσεβῶς εἰς τὰ θεῖα βλασφημήσας ... ('The one who kills or violently attacks many of his fellow countrymen and allies because of ambition or of some other evil, and impiously insults the gods ...')

25 Cf. the linguistic analysis of other writings in Meschini (1977) 32–34 and A. Pontani (1988) 146–149. For more details, see the introduction to Piasentin & Pontani (forthcoming).

26 The undeclared and sudden shift between military and political leadership is ubiquitous in the treatise and not very surprising in view of both the Homeric and the Renaissance patterns of kingship.

ἀναπτύξεως ἀνάγκη τοῖς φιλολόγοις χάριν ἐνήγγεν, ἡγούμενοι τοῖς τὰ πολεμικά μετερχομένοις γενησομένην ἐκ τούτων μιμουμένοις οὐ μικράν τὴν ὠφέλειαν, καὶ μὴν καὶ τοῖς τὰ εἰρηνικά καὶ ἀκίνδυνα πράττουσιν.

Homer explains seriously and wisely in his epics what the best general and soldier should look like in both soul and body: by collecting the lines that outline the best general and soldier, we have assembled together in an orderly way what was previously scattered, without adding anything of our own save where the need for an explanation directed to scholars prompted us to do so; for we believe that specialists of warfare will draw no small advantage from these passages by way of imitation, and so will those who are keen on peaceful and safe activities.

The epics provide us with paradigms in each of the three fields of human nature singled out by Aristotle,²⁷ namely bodily gifts, moral qualities, and outer, 'accidental' characteristics. Being the most philosophical of poets, Homer has set up a stern opposition between Agamemnon and Odysseus on one side (the successful leaders) and Achilles and Thersites on the other (the losers, the simple soldiers: §§ 7–10, here 7).

Βουλόμενος ὁ τῶν ποιητῶν καὶ φιλοσόφων φιλοσοφώτατος "Ὀμηρος—ὡς καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις εἰρήκαμεν—τὸν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἡμᾶς ἄριστον διδάξει βίον, ὃς πράξει καὶ θεωρία κατ'ορθοῦται γιγνώμενος, τὸν μὲν θεωρητικὸν ὡς βαθέως δεόμενον κολυμβητοῦ πρὸς κατάληψιν ἐν τοῖς ἔπεσι μυθικώτερον τοῦτον παρέδωκε, τὸν δὲ πρακτικὸν ὡς παχύτερον σαφέστερον ἐν τοῖς πολεμικοῖς ἀπεικόνισεν ἔργοις.

Homer, the most philosophical of poets and philosophers, wanted (as we have made clear elsewhere) to teach us mankind's best way of life, which is achieved by means of action and speculation: in his poems, he presented speculative life, in a more 'fabulous' way [*mythikoteron*], as needing a deep dive to be grasped, whereas he depicted more clearly practical life, which is grosser and thicker, in war scenes.²⁸

27 See Arist. *EN* 1098b13, *Pol.* 1323a25 etc.

28 This passage resonates with the traditional distinction between the 'ethical' and 'mythical' character of the *Odyssey* and the more 'concrete' and 'historical' one of the *Iliad*, which is well attested in ancient criticism (e.g. Longin. 9.15, Heraclit. *All.* 60, Eust. *in Od.* 1379.40, but already Arist. *Po.* 1459b15), and assumed by Kondoleon himself throughout his treatise *On the Poem of the Odyssey* (Matranga [1850] 504–510; see Piasentin & Pontani [forthcom-

That Achilles, the best of the Achaeans, should be almost on a par with Thersites, and anyway on the losing side with respect to Agamemnon, is by no means an obvious or traditional choice in the frame of the exegetical tradition on Homer, all the more so as this has nothing to do with the typical reproach made to Achilles, namely his irascible character.²⁹ Kondoleon's approach relies on his firm intention to emphasize Agamemnon's supreme authority, and thereby to highlight the *Iliad* (and partly the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus is the only legitimate king) as positive paradigms of autocratic power put into practice.

Now to the physical features: the perfect general must have a very developed eyesight, sense of smell, and sense of touch, a rounded head with flowing black hair (§ 19):

Περὶ μὲν χρώματος, εἰ καὶ μηδὲν ὑπογράφων εἶρηκε τὸν βασιλέα, μελαινοκόμαν δ' ὅμως ὑποφαίνει· οὕτω γὰρ ὁ Ζεὺς, ᾧ περ αὐτὸν ἀπέικασεν, ὑπὸ τῶν ζωγράφων φαίνεται τὴν κόμην ἔχων γραφόμενος. Διὸ καὶ τὸν Ἑκτορα μελαινοκόμαν εἰσήγαγε λέγων· [x 395–403] Ἐξ ᾧν ἔστι συμβάλλεσθαι ὅτι τῷ στρατηγῷ καὶ βασιλεῖ ἢ ὑπομελανίζουσα προσήκει κόμη· μετέχειν γὰρ δηλοῖ τῆς μελαίνης χολῆς σύννουον αὐτὸν ποιοῦσα καὶ μὴ πρὸς τὰ τυχόντα ἀξυλλογίστως κινούμενον τε καὶ ὀργιζόμενον.

As for the colour of the hair, even if the poet did not say anything when outlining the king, still he indicates that he has black hair: for this is the way in which Zeus—to whom he compares him—appears to be represented by the painters. This is why Homer presents Hector as black-haired: [*Iliad* 22.395–403]. Hence one can understand that blackish hair is appropriate for a general and king, for it shows that he partakes of black bile, making him thoughtful and not prone to irrational emotion and rage in the face of the events.

Incidentally, that Hector should have black hair is in keeping with Byzantine physiognomic tradition, but that black hair should bear a positive connotation is at odds with ancient doctrine on the issue.³⁰ At any rate, the head is

ing]). However, theoretical and speculative elements can in fact also be found through a close reading of the *Iliad*, from which most of the passages in the *Ekloge* are drawn.

29 See e.g. Heraclit. *All.* 17–20, Ps.-Plu. *Vit. Hom.* 129, schol. bT *Il.* 1.193 etc.

30 On Hector's hair, see Isaac Porphyrogenitus, *Physiogn.* p. 87.16 Hinck; on black hair as announcing 'cowardice and great craftiness', see Adamant. *Soph. Physiogn.* 2.37, p. 393.4 Foerster (see Swain [2007] 537).

man's most important *Merkmal*, as in the pivotal line describing Agamemnon, namely *Iliad* 2.478 κεφαλὴν ἵκελος Διὶ τερπικεραύνῳ, 'and similar in his head to Zeus delighting-in-thunder' (§ 14):

Διὸ τῆ τοῦ παντοκράτορος Διὸς—ταῦτόν δ' εἰπεῖν Χριστοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν—
εὐσχηματίστω καὶ εὐδιαθέτῳ τὴν τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος κεφαλὴν παρείκασεν.

This is why he compared the ruler's head to the well-shaped and well-built one of almighty Zeus—i.e. of Christ our saviour.

Blond hair, a muscled body, a slim waist, a strong voice, and a speedy pace all befit simple soldiers (not necessarily always inspired by *logos*), such as Menelaus and Achilles, who are characteristically presented here (§§ 20–23), for the sake of the argument, as mere ὑπηρέται ('servants') to their lord Agamemnon.³¹ The importance of Zeus as a paradigm for the good ruler, beyond its peculiar resonance with Jesus Christ (this reading is not applied more widely in Kondoleon's allegorical strategy, although it belongs to a well-attested medieval practice),³² stresses the pivotal role of the top part of the body, where rationality and *logos* are located, as opposed to the lower part below the waist (§§ 17–18), and it turns the exegesis of *Iliad* 2.478–479 into a full-fledged *imitatio Iovis* on the moral level.³³ In §§ 24–26 the virtues of wisdom, self-restraint, patience, justice, courage, loyalty, sincerity, and magnanimity are praised as essential. In §§ 27–35 a series of *loci*, especially from *Iliad* 1–6, are adduced to prove that a victorious general (be it Agamemnon, Menelaus or Diomedes, but even the Trojans Helenus and Chryses) should be pious and confident in his invocations to the gods,³⁴ who will reward him as they did—yet another allusion to Judeo-Christian history—with the Biblical leaders of the Jewish people (§ 32):

Ὅτι δὲ οὐ μάτην αἱ εὐχαὶ καὶ ἡ εὐσέβεια τοῖς ἀνθρώποις θεόθεν ἐπινενόηται, ἀλλὰ σαφῶς πανταχοῦ βοηθείας καὶ νίκης αἴτιαι γίνονται, παρὲς τοὺς τῶν Ἑβραίων στρατηγούς, ὧν οἱ εὐσεβεῖς καὶ δίκαιοι μετ' ὀλίγων αἰεὶ ἀναριθμήτους ἐνίκησαν καὶ μεγίστας δυνάμεις καὶ βασιλείας κατεπολέμησαν, τοὺς ἥρωας ἐκτίθημι.

31 Blond hair as a sign of irascibility is already found in schol. A *Il.* 1.197 and Eust. *in Il.* 82.25.

32 See e.g. Dante, *Purgatorio* 6.118–119: 'o sommo Giove / che fosti in terra per noi crocifisso'.

33 See schol. A bT *Il.* 2.478–479b and especially Eust. *in Il.* 258.16–23.

34 On Homeric piety, see Ps.-Plu. *Vit. Hom.* 116–118.

Prayers and piety have not been invented in vain for the mortals by the gods, but they clearly become sources of aid and victory in all circumstances: leaving aside the generals of the Jews, amongst whom the pious and righteous ones always won, even when confronted with fewer troops against innumerable and impressive armies, and thus conquered kingdoms, I shall concentrate here on the heroes.

After all, according to *Iliad* 2.197 it is the gods who award honours to leaders (§§ 39–40), and yield some of them even a prophetic faculty (§ 36–39 deal with Hector's and Agamemnon's early knowledge of Troy's fall, and with Achilles' dialogue with his horses in *Iliad* 20).

Now, the good ruler must keep clear from a series of dangers: first and foremost greed, the worst of evils, which mars the Jewish race (§ 41; this is, alas, not the only anti-Semitic stance in Kondoleon's writings, although others are more strictly theological):³⁵

Οἱ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι καὶ φίλους καὶ πατρίδα καὶ ἔπαινον πωλοῦσι χρημάτων ἔνεκα·
τοῦνεκα ὡς αἰσχροτάτη κακία καὶ φθοροποιὸς τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις θεία προνοία
μάλιστα δέδωται [*sic*], ἵνα παρὰ πάντων τὸ τοιοῦτον γένος εἴη κατὰπτυστον.

Such men [sc. the greedy] are ready to sell for money their friends, their fatherland, and their fame: therefore this corruption and this basest of evils has been assigned by divine providence to the Jews, so that their race might be despised by all.

There ensues a discussion of vices that typically threaten the general: excessive ambition (§§ 42–45 on *anaideia* vs. justified *philotimia*, and the importance of *aidos* and honour, especially with respect to courage: see Agamemnon in *Iliad* 1.346–356), falsehood and deceitfulness (§§ 46–51), injustice, laziness, and irresponsibility (§§ 57–60), cruelty, cowardice, and drunkenness (the latter all exemplified by *Iliad* 1.225 and by the Thersites episode in *Iliad* 2.224–242: §§ 52–56, here 52):³⁶

35 See A. Pontani (1988) 158 (l. 274 of the *de unitate ecclesiarum*) and 163 (l. 112 of the *in Lutheranos*). Nonetheless, we have seen in the preceding quote that for the sake of his argument Kondoleon does not hesitate to praise the generals of the Jews as they are described in the Old Testament.

36 See on this topic schol. bT *Il.* 1.225b and Eust. *in Il.* 89.43, particularly on the political purport of the line. On firmness and temper in reacting to insults (with special reference

Φησὶ δὲ καὶ ‘οἴνοβαρῆ’ τὸν στρατηγὸν λοιδορῶν· νήφοντα τοῖνον ἀναγκαῖον αὐτὸν εἶναι, ἵνα πρὸς πάντα τὰ τῷ πολέμῳ ξυμπύπτοντα παραυτίκα νοοῖτο καὶ κρίνειν ἀκωλύτως καὶ ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἐξίκοιτο. Ὑπὲρ μέτρον γάρ ποτε πιῶν ὁ τοῦ Φιλίππου Ἀλέξανδρος τὸν αὐτοῦ φίλον ἀπέκτεινε, καὶ νήψας τοσοῦτον αὐτῷ τοῦ ἔργου μετὰμελος γέγονεν ὥστε μονονουχί ἑαυτὸν διεχρήσατο. Ὁ γὰρ μεθύων καὶ τὰ δέοντα παρορᾷ, ἀνακαλύπτει τε τὰ μυστήρια καὶ ὑβριστῆς καὶ λοιδορὸς γίνεται, ἔν τε φυλακῇ τῷ ὕπνῳ κατέχεται, ὃ τῷ στρατῷ ξυμβαίνει κινδυνωδέστατον.

He [sc. Achilles] insults the general by calling him ‘heavy with wine’ [*Iliad* 1.225]: it would be necessary for him to be sober in order to arrange immediately for all occurrences of the war, and to be able to judge without hindrance through deeds and words. Alexander the son of Philip once drank beyond the limit and killed one of his friends: once he got sober he felt such a violent repentance for this crime that he almost committed suicide [cf. Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 51–52]. For the drunken man overlooks even his duties, reveals secrets, becomes violent and offensive, and is seized by sleep while on guard, which happens to be most dangerous for the army.

It should be stressed that the remarks about *Iliad* 1.225 do not imply that Achilles’ insults to Agamemnon are in fact justified: Kondoleon takes them as mere authoritative indicators of the kinds of reproach that can possibly be addressed to a general.

Furthermore, the good ruler must be a good orator, as is shown by Agamemnon in the *peira* (*Iliad* 2.110–141), a masterpiece of *captatio benevolentiae* and rhetorical skill, which is commented extensively in §§ 61–70;³⁷ he must also be well versed in philosophy, history, and other disciplines—this is the rationale of Diomedes’ long *rheseis* in *Iliad* 4.370–400 and 6.119–211, but also of the geographical data scattered in the *Catalogue of ships* (§§ 71–74, here 73):

to *Iliad* 4.223–225), see Plu. *Præcepta* 815D. On the interpretation of Achilles’ insults of Agamemnon in the *scholia vetera*, see Bouchard in this volume (esp. 112–114).

37 Some observations are already found in the scholia to these lines (see also Ps.-Plu. *Vit. Hom.* 166), and of course the *peira* is a *locus classicus* of rhetorical criticism (see e.g. Dentice di Accadia [2010], F. Pontani [2012] 84–85 with further bibliography); but the combination is genuinely Kondoleon’s. For the good ruler as orator, see also the papers by Klooster and Van den Berg in this volume.

Πολλοὶ πρὸς τὰς τοῦ ποιητοῦ ἀστραπὰς τὸν νοῦν ἀμβλυώττοντες ἐν ταῖς αὐτοῦ ἱστορίαις ὁμηρομάστιγες ἀφρόνως γεγόνασι· φασι γὰρ τοὺς περὶ τοῦ βίου κινδυνεύοντας ἤδη πολυστίχους διηγήσεις τοῖς ἔργοις παρεντιθέναι πάνυ ἄτοπον, οὐκ εἰδότες ὡς οὐ {πρὸς} τὸ κλαύσειν ἢ γελάσειν τὸν ἀκροατὴν, ὥσπερ οἱ δραματοποιοὶ ποιεῖν ἀναγκάζονται, ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ πραγματεία σκοπὸν προτίθεται, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἄριστον πολίτην κατὰ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα ἡμᾶς διδάξειν ἀφορῶν, ἐν τοῖς παρεμπύπτουσι τῶν προσώπων τὰς ἐκάστω προσηκούσας ἱστορίας συνείρει, ὅπως τοῖς ἔργοις ἐκάστου καὶ οἱ λόγοι ξυνάδοιεν. Δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἄριστον στρατηγὸν καὶ πολίτην πάσης ἀρετῆς θεωρικῆς τε καὶ πρακτικῆς μεμνημένον εἶναι καὶ ἔμπειρον, ἵνα καὶ τὰ τῶν πράξεων τέλη καὶ τὰ πρὸς τὸ τέλος ξυντείνοντα προγινώσκειε.

Many people, dazzled in their minds by the poet's thunderbolts in his stories, have stupidly become 'whippers of Homer': they say that it is very unnatural that characters who are risking their lives should still insert long digressions in their actions, but they ignore that in this work the poet does not set himself the goal of making listeners laugh or weep (as dramatists are forced to do), but rather aims at teaching us what the best citizen should look like in moral and physical terms, and thus attributes to the intervening characters the stories appropriate to each of them, so that the words of each might correspond to his deeds. The best general and citizen should thus be initiated to and experienced in every theoretical and practical virtue, in order to foresee the outcome of the actions and what can lead to the wished result.

The perfect ruler should be temperate (like Alexander the Great resisting the temptation to rape Darius' daughters in Plutarch's account, *Alex. fort.* 333A11), respected and authoritative (*Iliad* 2.204 'let there be one lord, one king' is an absolute political *memento*), an expert in military science,³⁸ decisionist, unafraid of toil, friendly and persuasive rather than arrogant (§§ 75–82).

Finally, the 'outer' features of the general are numerous: he must belong to nobility (Pindaric lines such as *Olympian* 2.86 and 9.100 are invoked for this purpose, together with Agamemnon's divine genealogy in *Iliad* 2.100–108), he must be rich (as Agamemnon is described in *Iliad* 9) and have friends among his peers, for friendship is an important ingredient of the ruler's habit (§§ 83–86). A long *excursus* is devoted to the quality of the ruler's garments, which should

38 Kondoleon refers to *Iliad* 4.297–300, a reference which also occurs, in a similar context, in Ps.-Plu. *Vit. Hom.* 192.

be appropriate to his status (in §§ 87–93 examples are given from various descriptions in the *Iliad*, chiefly from book 10;³⁹ here § 90):

Ἦτι δὲ τοὺς ἥρωας καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἐνδύει ὁ ποιητὴς ὡς ἔτυχεν ἕκαστος ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας, διὰ τῆς ἐσθῆτος τὸ ἦθος καὶ τὴν φύσιν ἑκάστου δηλών· διό, τὴν ἀνδρείαν δηλών τοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος, ταῦτά φησιν ἐν ἄλλοις· ὀρθωθεὶς δ' ἔνδυνε περὶ στήθεσσι χιτῶνα, | ποσσὶ δ' ὑπαὶ λιπαροῖσιν ἐδήσατο καλὰ πέδιλα, | ἀμφὶ δ' ἔπειτα δαφοινὸν ἐέσσατο δέρμα λέοντος | αἰθωνος μέγαλοιο ποδηνεκές, εἴλετο δ' ἔγχος.

The poet then clothes each of the heroes and of the other characters according to his virtue or wickedness, showing through the garments his ethos and nature: this is why, indicating Agamemnon's courage, he says amongst other things: 'He stood upright, and slipped the tunic upon his body and beneath his shining feet bound his fair sandals, and thereafter slung across him the tawny hide of a lion glowing and huge, that swung to his feet, and took up a spear' [*Iliad* 10.21–24].

The same is said about the ruler's weapons in §§ 94–95, where an *excursus* refers to the allegory of Agamemnon's panoply in *Iliad* 11 as the various parts of man's rational soul (its development along the years, its practical virtues), an interpretation which Kondoleon had developed more fully in a special treatise.⁴⁰

After a short hint to the moral qualities of simple soldiers, among which obedience and loyalty have the lion's share (§§ 97–100, again with a reference to Thersites), Kondoleon rounds off his work by suggesting a comparison between the ethical features of the Homeric heroes and those of his own contemporaries: the latter are totally oblivious of religion and fall prey to impiety, irrationality, and impulse—they are thus ready to be defeated even by a boy or a woman, like Goliath and Holofernes in the Old Testament (§§ 101–104). They are greedy, cowardly, and disrespectful to merits and honours, deceitful, prone to drunkenness, hypersensitive, and unaware of generosity (§§ 105–109):

Περὶ δὲ ἐλευθεριότητος λέγειν οὐ δύναμαι, ὧν οἱ πλείους οὐχ ὑπὲρ πατρίδος καὶ δόξης, ἀλλ' ἔνεκα τοῦ κλέπτειν καὶ ληστεύειν καὶ ταῦτ' ἐν τοῖς ζυμμάχοις καὶ

39 See already Eust. *in Il.* 794.38–45.

40 Also to be edited in Piasentin & Pontani (forthcoming), and to be read in the meantime in Matrangola (1850) 510–520.

τοῖς δημόταις στρατεύονται. [...] Τί δ' ἂν εἴποιμι περὶ τῆς αἰδοῦς, ὧν οἱ μᾶλλον ἀσελγούντες καὶ αἰσχρολογούντες στρατιωτικότεροι λέγονται; Διὸ καὶ λειποτάκται, μὴ αἰσχυνόμενοι, καὶ ῥιψάσπιδες γίνονται. [...] Ἴταλοὶ καὶ Ἰσπάνιοι μὲν νήφουσιν, αἰσχυρὸν τὴν μέθην νομίζοντες· τᾶλλα δὲ τῶν γενῶν, ἀνδρείαν τὴν μέθην ἡγούμενοι, ὡς τὰ πολλὰ πταίουσιν ἐν λόγοις τε καὶ ἔργοις, ὅπερ ἄτοπον.

I cannot speak of liberality, since most of them do not fight for their fatherland or for their reputation, but in order to steal and loot, even from their allies and fellow-citizens. [...] What should I say about the *aidos* of those who are considered all the more warlike the more unreliable and coarse they appear? This is why they shamelessly become deserters and abandon their shield. [...] Italians and Spaniards are sober, for they regard drunkenness as something shameful: but the other populations, considering alcoholism to be a sign of manliness, often make false steps in words and deeds, which is regrettable.

Concluding Remarks

The *Ekloge* is an unfinished work, and one may wonder if a further revision would have improved its style and perhaps broadened the network of references to the *Iliad*—in its present form, the majority of the passages quoted in the treatise belong to Books 1–6 of the poem, although other books are also represented. Nevertheless, this essay stands out for a number of reasons.

First of all, it shares several features with Philodemus' *On the Good King*, as it has been reconstructed by scholars:

- Both works are structured around a critical collection of Homeric *loci*, even if Philodemus displays a greater degree of reworking;⁴¹ it should be noted that the degree of overlap between the two selections is very limited (though of course we only have fragments of Philodemus' essay).
- Both works serve a positive moralistic goal, i.e. by taking their cue from Homer's lines they function as an exhortation for rulers to moderation in sex and wine,⁴² to rational behaviour,⁴³ to justice and balance in deci-

41 Cairns (1989) 10.

42 On the sympotic topic in Philodemus, see De Sanctis (2007) 55–58 (esp. on *Phld. bon. reg.* cols. xvi–xxiv).

43 Achilles is frequently the villain in Kondoleon's works, just as anger plays an important

sions,⁴⁴ to nobility of offspring and clemence,⁴⁵ to hostility towards strife and useless warfare,⁴⁶ to the imitation of the gods.⁴⁷

- Both works show a consistent debt to earlier exegesis (more controversial for Philodemus, due to the loss of many ancient exegetical works,⁴⁸ more evident for Kondoleon), but their originality is beyond doubt, especially as far as the selection of relevant lines is concerned: even if Kondoleon—here as in the *Tractatio*—clearly draws some ideas and hints from Eustathios' commentaries, the way in which he shapes his discourse is definitely original and proceeds from an intimate knowledge of the Homeric poems as well as from a personal persuasion about their paideutic excellence, in the well-known perspective that the poet deliberately chose to represent his characters, their deeds, and their speeches with a didactic goal in mind.
- Both works do not state explicitly their ultimate goal: since it appears unlikely that either of them should be intended as a mere rhetorical show-off, as an exercise of erudition, one may assume that both were written as a sort of paraenesis to the authors' patrons (Piso in the case of Philodemus; no named addressee in the case of Kondoleon), but even more compellingly as a wider reflection on the archaeology and premises of power—εἰς ἐπανόρθωσιν δυνασσειῶν, 'for the correction of empires', as Philodemus puts it.⁴⁹ If this is so, one may wonder why the authors insisted on writing in Greek rather than Latin—perhaps a more understandable choice for Philodemus in Republican Rome,⁵⁰ less so for Kondoleon in the largely monolingual Latin culture of Renaissance Italy, where the knowledge of Greek was entering a slow decline.

Politically speaking, Philodemus was definitely a supporter of (enlightened) monarchy, as opposed to tyranny.⁵¹ Kondoleon's case is more complex, but

role in Philodemus' *On the Good King*: see Fish (2004). See also the disparaging words on Thersites (with quotation of *Il.* 2.215–220) in Phld. *bon. reg.* col. xxi.31–37 and Kondoleon's *Ekloge* § 11.

44 See Murray (1965).

45 Phld. *bon. reg.* cols. xxiv–xxv.

46 Phld. *bon. reg.* cols. xxvii–xxx1 (the good δυνάστης, 'leader', must be φιλόνικος, 'lover of victory', not φιλοπόλεμος or φιλόμαχος, 'lover of war or battle').

47 Phld. *bon. reg.* cols. xxxvii–xxxviii; *Il.* 2.483 is evoked both in col. xxxviii.3–4 and in Kondoleon's *Ekloge* § 10.

48 See Murray (1965) 173–176 and especially the discussion in Dorandi (1982) 33–39.

49 Col. xxv.15. See Dorandi (1982) 47 and Schulte (2001) 170–172.

50 See e.g. Rochette (2010) 281–290.

51 Dorandi (1982) 22–32.

in order to understand it the *Ekloge* (whose discreet and implicit praise of autocratic rule we have hinted at above) should not be considered on its own, since it finds its place in a wider network of essays on political issues. The dialogue *Περὶ ἀρχῆς* ('On Government')⁵² is a rather conventional essay devoted to an examination of the science of good government, and of the features pertaining to the ideal *archon* (justice, activity, foresight, *aidos*). The essay *Περὶ νόμων* ('On Laws')⁵³ deals with the rise of human law and describes the *polis* as a body whose various parts must cooperate with each other towards the common good, running each its own business (the ideal example is Florence, to whose duke Alessandro de' Medici [1531–1537] the work is dedicated). The *Ἀριστοκρατία* ('Aristocracy')⁵⁴ takes its cue from the *Περὶ νόμων*, and from its conclusion in favour of aristocracy as the best regime, tackling the thorny issue of how to identify the *aristoi* and assigning this delicate task to a court of *pateres*, through a sophisticated system created on a meritocratic basis.

More interestingly, Kondoleon's dialogue *Περὶ αἰρέσεως ἀρίστης πολιτείας* ('On the Choice of the Best Constitution')⁵⁵ examines the advantages and disadvantages of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, whereby all three interlocutors occasionally resort to Homeric examples:

- Joannes supports monarchy by extolling the lapidary *gnome* of *Iliad* 2.204, which also appears in *Ekloge* § 76 (*Vat. Gr.* 1352, f. 195^v).
- Philippos argues for aristocracy by referring to *Iliad* 2.371–372, where Agamemnon wishes he had at his disposal ten counsellors as wise as Nestor (*Vat. Gr.* 1352, f. 199^{r-v}), and to *Iliad* 15.203 and 9.497,⁵⁶ which imply that even monarchs can be wrong and change their mind (*ibid.*, f. 201^r).
- Finally, Nikolaos, the champion of aristocracy and *de facto* spokesman of the author, resorts to *Odyssey* 2.276⁵⁷ in order to question the idea that if a king is good, his descendants will be good too; a few words later, he adds an

52 Ed. Meschini (1977).

53 Still unpublished; preserved in ff. 145^r–164^v of *Vaticanus Graecus* 1352: see Meschini (1973) 30–31.

54 Still unpublished; preserved in ff. 210^r–217^v of *Vaticanus Graecus* 1352 and ff. 817–858 of *Vaticanus Graecus* 2141: see Meschini (1973) 17 and 31.

55 Still unpublished; preserved in ff. 194^r–208^r of *Vaticanus Graecus* 1352.

56 The line rings as a hybrid of the two: *στρεπτοὶ γὰρ θεῶν φρένες [sic]* ('for the mind of the gods can bend').

57 In the form *παῦροι γὰρ τοὶ πατρὶ παῖδες ὅμοιοι τελέθουσι* ('few children are equal to their father'), once again an inaccurate quotation.

allusion to the following line (*Odyssey* 2.277: οἱ πλείους κακίους, ‘most of them are worse’) in order to argue that democracy, the rule of the many, cannot bring any good (*Vat. Gr.* 1352, ff. 205^r and 206^r).

More studies (and above all more editions) will be necessary in order to appreciate more fully the originality of Kondoleon’s contribution to Renaissance political theory and to the history of Homeric criticism: neither will probably appear as substantial, despite the efforts of this Peloponnesian intellectual as a writer and a scholar. However, the *Ekloge*—and, to a lesser extent, the *Tractatio*—represent perhaps the most evident intersections of these two *Richtlinien* of his thought—intersections which takes their cue from the gigantic exegetical work of Eustathios of Thessalonike, and will still resonate in the paradigmatic moral value assigned to Homer by commentators of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from Madame Dacier down to Alexander Pope.⁵⁸ Kondoleon’s essays probably had no impact on such a complicated political situation as that of post-Reformation Italy (the 1527 sack of Rome; the constant threat of the Ottoman empire; the opening of the Council of Trento in 1545), nor is there any evidence that their author was familiar with such masterpieces of political theory as were being produced during his lifetime (I am thinking particularly of Niccolò Machiavelli’s *Prince* [1513], of Thomas More’s *Utopia* [1516], and of Francesco Guicciardini’s *Ricordi* [1525–1530]). Still, while distancing themselves from the meagre philological results of earlier humanists (the so-called ‘early humanist failure with Homer’),⁵⁹ Kondoleon’s works will be among the last monographs on Homer not intended as mere scholarly products, but rather as genuine cultural attempts to keep alive—in Greek—the teachings of Classical antiquity in contemporary Europe.

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58 See Simonsuuri (1979) and F. Pontani (2017).

59 See Sowerby (1997) and F. Pontani (2007), and—for later developments—Ferreri (2007) and Ford (2007).

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