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Published in:
Patristica Nordica Annuaria

2008

Meddelanden

från
Collegium Patristicum
Lundense

23

2008

THE *APOPHTHEGMATA PATRUM*: RUSTIC RUMINATION OR RHETORICAL RECITATION *

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Introduction

Traditional renderings have long framed the *Apophthegmata Patrum* as pedagogically and ideologically distinctive.[1] In consonance with Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria's, fourth century portrayal of Antony, the renowned 'father' of desert monasticism as having been 'taught only by god',[2] it is surmised that in their 'purest' form these pithy sayings were transmitted orally. They were recorded as text only after the destruction of the Egyptian desert communities, and the re-establishment of the *anachoritic* enterprise within literate [communities] in fifth-century Palestine.[3] While the contours of the progression from orality to literacy are never fully elucidated, a small cottage industry of scholars has sought to tease out and isolate discernable stages in a relatively tidy, if murky downward progresssion from a pure moment of verbal exchange between an Abba and his (or her) disciple(s) to later, increasingly adulterated phases of written transmission. In this erudite exchange, establishing grounds for discerning the

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* Lecture given at Patristiska dagen, Lund University, Sweden, March 1, 2008.

[1] Wilhelm Bousset, *Studien zur Geschichte des ältesten Mönchtums* (Tübingen, 1923); Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert* (New York: OUP, 1993); Graham Gould, "A Note on the *Apophthegmata Patrum*," *JTS* 37 (1986), 133–138; Jean-Claude Guy, *Les Apophtegmes des Pères: Collection Systematique* (SC 387; Paris: Cerf, 1993); Jean-Claude Guy, "Educational Innovation in the Desert Fathers," *Eastern Churches Review* 6 (1974), 44–51; Jean-Claude Guy, "Note sur l'évolution du genre apophthegmatique", *RAM* 32 (1956), 63–68; Lucien Regnault, *Les Sentences des Pères du désert: Nouveau recueil* (2nd ed.; Solesmes, Éditions des Solesmes, 1977); Benedicta Ward, SLG, tr., *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1975).

[2] Cf. David Brakke's exposition of Athanasius' political and personal investment in framing Antony in a particular light in *Athanasius and Asceticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[3] Samuel Rubenson summarizes this hypothetical discussion in chapter 7 of the *Letters of St. Antony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 145–162.

'authentic' or most 'reliable' articulation of discrete *apophthegmata* has been the focus of sustained interest.

In the early decades of the twentieth-century Wilhelm Bousset linked the 'authenticity' of the pithy sayings and stories that comprise the *Apophthegmata Patrum* to principles having to do with the form of a saying and to some degree its content. Premised in assumptions of widespread monastic rusticity, Bousset envisioned an original tradition comprised of formats compatible with orality. He included *sententiae*, parables, and brief anecdotes in this category.[4] Configuring the process of the development of individual sayings from a simpler to a more elaborate form, and from oral to written form, he deemed the short poignant answer to the request for a word of spiritual guidance "authentic," and argued that narratives, dialogues, and exhortations were later developments.[5]

Half a century later, Jean-Claude Guy concretized Bousset's general principles into three stages: the primitive and authentic *logos*, the generalized saying, and the narrative or sermon.[6] Although these hypothetical boundaries were porous, Guy posited that extant monastic *Apophthegmatic* collections evidenced only the third, and most developed, stage.[7] The generalization of a *logos*, representing stage two in his construct, signified a first step away from the spiritual purpose for which the sayings were intended. Here began the "slippery road" leading toward their 'misuse' in the construction of systematic doctrine or in conducting polemical campaigns against theological enemies.[8] Bringing this conversation full circle, in a relatively recent response, Graham Gould has cautioned against being "led away by a theory that is too simple for the material."[9] Building on the work of Lucien Regnault,[10] he suggests that narratives, Biblical interpretations, and exhortations must also be counted as 'authentic'.[11]

While questions pertaining to 'origins' and 'authenticity' have their place, measures aimed at adducing verifiable kernels of 'truth' at the heart of recorded collections of *apophthegmata* can only be speculative in nature. The search for evidence of an original tradition is premised on the assumption that there is an 'originary' moment to be found; that the genesis

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[4] Bousset, *Studien des ältesten Mönchtums*, 76–93.

[5] Bousset, *Studien des ältesten Mönchtums*, 76–93; Cf. Rubenson, *Letters of St. Antony*, 151.

[6] Jean-Claude Guy, "Remarques sur le texte des *Apophthegmata Patrum*," *RScR* 43 (1959): 252–258; Guy, "Note sur l'evolution du genre apophthegmatique," 63–68.

[7] Guy, "Remarques sur le texte des *Apophthegmata Patrum*," 252–258; Guy, "Note sur l'evolution du genre apophthegmatique," 63–68.

[8] Jean-Claude Guy, "Les *Apophthegmata Patrum*," in *Theologie de la vie monastique* (G. LeMaitre, ed.; Collection Theologie 49; Aubier, 1961), 73–83.

[9] Gould, "A Note on the *Apophthegmata Patrum*," 134.

[10] Regnault, *Les Sentences des Pères du désert*, 10.

[11] Gould, "A Note on the *Apophthegmata Patrum*," 133–138.

of the monastic *apophthegmata* resides solely within the locus of late-antique monasticism and that the collections of sayings attributed to the earliest monks are largely without precedent. This assumption explicitly and implicitly ignores the wider philosophical and rhetorical contexts in which ancient sayings collections found their form.

Ancient Gnomic Anthologies

If the origin of extant collections of monastic *apophthegmata* is widely debated, the genesis of classical and Greco-Roman sayings compilations is relatively well established. Formal collections are first explicitly referenced in the fourth century, BCE.[12] Ostensibly compiled to familiarize students with a spectrum of classical authors, over time these collections were placed in the service of teaching grammar and rhetoric because of their inherent capacity to "arouse and catalyze virtue" and to "strengthen judgment concerning good and evil."[13] Teresa Morgan notes that "more... gnomic sentences survive [in schoolhands] than fragments of any other literature." Displaying a full range of expertise, they "appear to have been used at every stage [of learning]...from elementary reading and writing to [advanced] rhetorical exercises."[14]

Students first encountered maxims and sayings in exercises of penmanship and memorization. At every succeeding educational level they rehearsed the same sentences "chew[ing them] over and over, making collections...and expanding their content...until," they could (at an opportune moment, or in a well-turned phrase) incorporate them into everyday speech and writing.[15] George Kennedy likens the iterative techniques applied to sayings as akin to the "structural features of classical architectture."[16] He suggests that all of Greco-Roman literature must be understood as informed and molded by the pedagogical forms and habits of thinking and writing learned in schools.[17] Copied and recopied, gnomic sentences appear in the guise of rhetoric, philosophy and history, circulating freely across literary genres. The degree to which sayings pepper the compositions of ancient and late-ancient elites, lends further emphasis to the integral role such sentences played in ancient education.

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[12] Plato, *Leg.* 810e–812a.

[13] Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 94.28–29, 32, 34 (Gunmere, LCL).

[14] Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 122.

[15] Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 179.

[16] George Kennedy, ed. and tr., *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), ix.

[17] Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, ix.

The *Apophthegmata Patrum*

Whether the sayings that comprise the collections of *Apophthegmata Patrum* can be read as schooltexts remains a question. However, it is a question that bears serious consideration. Did gnomic sentences serve a pedagogical role in the monastic milieu similar to the traditional rhetorical role accorded sayings in ancient grammatical instruction? Were sayings, such as those attributed to the desert fathers and mothers, employed in teaching both rudimentary grammatical skills, and monastic civic virtue? Furthermore, is it possible that these collections themselves bespeak the results of conventional pedagogies? Do these compilations record the literary/-grammatical prowess of young monks seeking (or being compelled)[18] to progress in both rhetorical and moral virtue? In many respects positing such a frame constitutes 'a missing puzzle piece' in the speculative discourse that frames extant collections as the product of a murky downward progression through increasingly adulterated phases of written transmission.[19] Read in this light, it is not surprising that a given saying appears in a variety of shapes and sizes; nor, that some measure of textual disparity exists between various versions. Such variability is inherent to the genre.

Questions of Genre

In an ancient frame, the merit of a saying was not measured in terms of its 'authenticity', but rather its 'aptness'. Sayings were understood to be infinitely malleable. A saying's attribution to a particular individual, its prompting circumstance or setting, and the structure of the statement itself were each widely recognized as eminently variable.[20] In fact, the same (or

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[18] Texts hailing from the cenobitic context record compulsory training in basic literary skills. The Pachomian literature includes the mandate that each newly entering monk should be compelled to learn the rudiments of grammar, "even if he does not want to." In fact, the *Praecepta* stipulate that any "illiterate" novice: "...shall go at the first, third, and sixth hours to someone who can teach and has been appointed for him. He shall stand before him and learn very studiously with all gratitude. Then the fundamentals of a syllable, the verbs, and nouns shall be written for him, and even if he does not want to, he shall be compelled to read" (Pachomius, *Praecepta* 139–140).

[19] Conversation with Columbia University, Professor of Classical Rhetoric, Kathy Eden (New York, Fall 2001).

[20] Hock and O'Neil offer a provocative range of examples: "Epictetus attributes a chreia to the Stoic Cleanthes (Epictetus 4.1.173) but the *Gnomologium Vaticanum* attributes it to Zeno (*Gnom. Vat.* 295); Machon attributes a chreia to the courtesan Mania (Athenaeus 13.578e), but Lynceus to the courtesan Gnathaena (Athenaeus 13.584c); Diogenes Laertius attributes a chreia to Diogenes (Diogenes Laertius 6.55), but Lynceus to the parasite Philoxenus (Athenaeus 6.246a); Diogenes Laertius attributes the same chreia now to Anaxagoras (Diogenes Laertius 2.13), now to Xenophon (Diogenes Laertius 2.55). [A final example is a chreia with multiple attributions]: Theon to Damon (Theon, 'On the Chreia'

similar) sayings and actions could be attributed to different individuals. They might likewise be framed with varying narrative details.[21]

For example, the phrase "to sleep all night ill suits a counselor"[22] first appears in the 'dreamy' interchange between an apparition of Nestor and the beleaguered Agamemnon in book two of the *Iliad*. In the second century ce, the same literary 'saying' re-surfaces in the philosophical discourses of Epictetus.[23] Here it is Alexander, the Macedonian king who stands over a sleeping Diogenes and recites: "To sleep all night ill-suits a counselor." Diogenes responds, "On whom folks rely, whose cares are many." The saying re-appears in a rhetorical context in the handbooks of Theon and John of Sardis, where it is used to exemplify the form of a 'double chreia' — a 'saying' with two protagonists.[24] In turn, a third century papyrus includes the introductory portion of this well-rehearsed scene in a letter from one Timaios to his master Heroninos. To underscore the urgency of a certain matter needing immediate attention, Timaios carefully inscribes the lines introducing the exchange between Nestor and Agamemnon in the margin: "All the other gods and men, lords of chariots, were sleeping the whole night through, but Zeus could not have sweet sleep."[25]

A commensurate malleability characterizes the sayings that comprise the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.

> They said of Helladius that he lived twenty years in his cell, and did not once raise his eyes to look at the roof.[26]
>
> It was said concerning [Amma Sarah] that for sixty years she lived beside the river and never lifted her eyes to look at it.[27]
>
> They said of Ammoi that though he was ill in a bed for several years, he never relaxed his discipline and never went to the store cupboard at the back of his cell to see what was in it.[28]

As the same words and/or actions are attributed to different individuals,

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154–157), Plutarch to Damonidas (Plutarch, *De aud. Poet.* 18D), Aristodemus to Dorion (Athenaeus 8.338a), and the *Gnomologium Vaticanum* to Eumonidas (*Gnom. Vat.* 284)." *Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 44–45.

[21] Both Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius are explicit. Cf. Plutarch, *Apoph. Lacon.* 218A and Diogenes Laertius 1.33; 2.13, 35, 82, 102; 4.48; 6.26, 36 and 42.

[22] Homer, *Iliad* 2.24–25.

[23] Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.22.92.

[24] Theon, 'On the Chreia' 88–93 (Hock and O'Neil), 86–87; John of Sardis, *Prog.* 41.7–8; See also Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 314–315.

[25] Cf. *P. Flor.* II.259; Cf. Homer, *Iliad* 2.1–2; For further discussion of this text, see Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 179; idem, *Writing, Teachers and Students in Greco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 6–7.

[26] Self-Control 16, *VS* (PL 73: 866, Ward), 22.

[27] Sarah 3, *ApP* (PG 65: 420, Ward), 230.

[28] Self-Control 11, *VS* (PL: 865–866), 21.

varying circumstantial details fit each articulation to a new narrative frame.

These narrative frames, in turn, are themselves constructed from an array of conventional circumstances, 'aptly' applied to a given 'saying'. The formal cues of a saying—for example, 'So and so, on seeing...' and 'So and so, on being asked...' already suggest standard circumstances.[29] However, even circumstances that appear to be specific are more usefully understood as 'apt'.[30] For example, in collections of sayings attributed to philosophers, a standard prompt is formulated as a question about the gains that derive from philosophy.

> Aristippus, on being asked what he had gained from philosophy said: "To be able to converse confidently with everyone."[31]
>
> Antisthenes, on being asked what he had gained from philosophy, said: "To be able to converse with myself."[32]
>
> Diogenes, on being asked what he had gained from philosophy, said: "If nothing else, at least I am prepared for every eventuality."[33]

In collections of monastic *apophthegmata*, a parallel 'prompt' addresses the finer points of learning how to become a monk.

> Abba Poemen said to Abba Joseph, "Tell me how to become a monk." He said, "If you want to find rest here below, and hereafter, in all circumstances say, 'Who am I?' and do not judge anyone."[34]
>
> ...[Abba Macarius asked two naked men he encountered in the desert], "How can I become a monk?" [They] said to him, "If you do not give up all that is in the world, you cannot become a monk...."[35]

In a monastic frame, the general occasions of 'a community meeting', 'a council', 'an assembly', 'the *synaxis*', or per above, 'sitting in one's cell' might be read as similarly 'apt'.[36]

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[29] Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 45. The eminently simple solicitation of 'a word' (λόγον) is a particularly common prompt among the monastic *Apophthegmata*. In traditional interpretations it is semantically read as marking a moment of intimate verbal exchange between an abba and a disciple. In a wider frame it is the same term used in reference to the 'sayings' (λόγοι) of elite philosophers.

[30] Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 45.

[31] Diogenes Laertius 2.68; Cf. *Gnom. Vat.* 36 (Sternbach).

[32] Diogenes Laertius 6.6.

[33] Diogenes Laertius 6.63; Cf. *Gnom. Vat.* 182 (Sternbach).

[34] Joseph of Panephysis 2, *ApP* (PG 65: 228, Ward), 102.

[35] Macarius the Great 2, *ApP* (PG 65: 260, Ward), 126.

[36] Scenic details of mothers seeking a lost 'son,' or town officials bringing news of some change in a monk's financial status are particularly provocative, and might be read as similarly 'apt'.

Elementary Exercises

In ancient educational manuals, variation in the attribution and presenting circumstance of a saying accounts for only a fraction of the fluidity inherent to the genre. In a classroom setting, instruction began with reading sayings aloud, listening to others read, and paraphrasing models.[37] Once students had learned the rudimentary definitions of various types of sayings, their etymology, differentiation from related forms and classifications, they turned to exercises involving textual and narrative manipulation. To the end of gaining greater dexterity with the spoken and written word,[38] students "learned how to recite a saying, to paraphrase it, to elaborate it, to confirm or refute its message, [and] to change its inflection through various cases and numbers."[39] Likened to learning pottery on a simple pot rather than a huge storage jar,[40] gnomic sentences served as literary building blocks for later, more advanced forms. Performed iteratively, these exercises took students to the "threshold of rhetoric."[41]

Even 'recitation', the simplest of the rhetorical exercises, left a given saying subject to considerable variation. Students were encouraged to report an "assigned [saying] very clearly in the same words or in others as well."[42] While simply mimicking the teacher may at times have been the norm, it is clear that more substantive changes were permissible and did occur. As illustrated above, at this basic stage, a student's verbal agility was demonstrated in re-shaping the details of a saying, or reciting it as a different 'type' of saying. More advanced iterations of 'expansion' and 'condensation' imbued the form with still greater fluidity.

For example, a simple saying could be readily re-formulated by changing voice, syntax and/or sentence structure.

> A hermit said, "A tree cannot bear fruit if it is often transplanted. So it is with the monk."[43]

> An old man said, "Just as a tree cannot bring forth fruit if it is always being transplanted, so the monk who is always going from one place to another is not able to bring forth virtue."[44]

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[37] George Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric Under Christian Emperors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 57.

[38] Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 35.

[39] Edward N. O'Neil, "The Chreia in Greco-Roman Literature and Education" in *The Institute for Antiquity and Christianity Report: 1972–1980* (M. Meyer, ed.; Claremont, CA: Claremont Graduate School, 1981), 20.

[40] Theon, *Progymn.* 1; Cf. Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.9.1; Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 21.

[41] Doxaprates, *Hom.* 2.138 (Walz), 16–17.

[42] Theon, 'On the Chreia' 195–198 (Hock and O'Neil), 94–95.

[43] Fortitude 36, *VS* (PL 73: 902, Ward), 72.

A brief response might be variously elaborated to form similar, but nonetheless distinct, alternate narratives:

> A brother who had sinned was turned out of the church by the priest; Abba Bessarion got up and went with him, saying, 'I, too, am a sinner'[45]

> In a community meeting about a brother who had sinned, the Fathers spoke, but Abba Pior kept silence. Later he got up and went out; he took a sack, filled it with sand and carried it on his shoulder. He put a little sand also into a small bag which he carried in front of him. When the Fathers asked him what this meant he said, 'In this sack which contains much sand, are my sins which are many; I have put them behind me so as not to be troubled about them and so as not to weep; and see here are the little sins of my brother which are in front of me and I spend my time judging them. This is not right, I ought rather to carry my sins in front of me and concern myself with them, begging God to forgive me for them.' The Fathers stood up and said, 'Truly, this is the way of salvation.'[46]

> A brother at Scetis committed a fault. A council was called to which Abba Moses was invited, but he refused to go to it. Then the priest sent someone to say to him, 'Come, for everyone is waiting for you.' So he got up and went. He took a leaking jug, filled it with water and carried it with him. The others came out to meet him and said to him, 'What is this, Father?' The old man said to them, 'My sins run out behind me, and I do not see them, and today I am coming to judge the errors of another.' When they heard that they said no more to the brother but forgave him.[47]

A straightforward injunction might be iteratively paraphrased and expanded into a series of increasingly complex narratives.

> [Amma Syncletica] said: "As long as we are in the monastery, obedience is preferable to asceticism. The one teaches pride, the other humility."[48]

> Four monks of Scetis, clothed in skins, came one day to see the great Pambo. Each one revealed the virtue of his neighbor. The first fasted a great deal; the second was poor; the third had acquired great charity; and they said of the fourth that he had lived for twenty-two years in obedience to an old man. Abba Pambo said them, "I tell you, the virtue of this last one is the greatest. Each of the others has obtained the virtue he wished to acquire; but the last one, restraining his own will, does the will of another. Now it is of such men that martyrs are made, if they persevere to the end."[49]

> Abba Rufus said, 'He who remains sitting at the feet of his spiritual father receives a greater reward than he who lives alone in the desert.' He added that one of the Fathers said, 'I have seen four orders in heaven: in the first order is the sick man who gives thanks to God; in the second, the man who observes hospitality and for that reason, gets up to serve; in the third, the man who crosses the desert without

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[44] Nau 204, *ApP* (ROC 14: 369, Ward 72), 24.

[45] Bessarion 7, *ApP* (PG 65: 141, Ward), 42.

[46] Pior 3, *ApP* (PG 65: 373–376, Ward), 199–200.

[47] Moses 1, *ApP* (PG 65: 281, Ward), 138.

[48] Syncletica 16, *ApP* (PG 65: 425–428, Ward), 234.

[49] Pambo 3, *ApP* (PG 65: 369, Ward), 196.

seeing anyone; in the fourth, the man who obeys his Father and remains in submission to him for the Lord's sake. The one who was living in submission was wearing a chain of gold and a shield and had greater glory than the others. I said to him who was guiding me, "Why does the one who is least have more glory than the others?" He answered me, "He who practices hospitality acts according to his own will; but the last one possesses obedience. Having abandoned all his desires, he depends on God and his own Father; it is because of this that he has received more glory than the others." See, my child, how good obedience is when it is undertaken for the Lord. You have partly understood the elements of this virtue, my children. O obedience, salvation of the faithful! O obedience, mother of all the virtues! O obedience, discloser of the kingdom! O obedience, opening the heavens, and making men to ascend there from earth! O obedience, food of all the saints, whose milk they have sucked, through you they have become perfect! O obedience, companion of the angels!'[50]

Each of these, in turn, might be readily condensed to a variation on the brief 'one-liner' with which the exercise began. Consonant with the sayings genre, this core emphasis on the importance of obedience varies little, whether a narrative is expanded or condensed.

Re-reading 'Origins' and 'Authenticity'

In considering the inherent malleability of the form, classicists Edward Hock and Eugene O'Neil premise that in engaging questions of 'origins' and 'authenticity', gnomic literature can be used in reconstructing the life, message or historical circumstance of any given individual only if one exercises considerable caution and sophistication. In a provocative summary, these scholars rehearse the challenges inherent in distilling certainties from *apophthegmatic* texts. They suggest that:

> ...each part of [a saying]—the character, the prompting circumstance (if any), and the [statement] or action—can be manipulated in ways that do little to preserve historical reminiscence. Thus attribution to a character, needing only to be apt, can vary, so that we cannot be sure *who* said or did something. The prompting question or circumstance can also vary according to the freedoms permitted in recitation and expansion or they can simply reflect a conventional setting, so that we cannot be sure of the exact *circumstance or question* that elicited the saying or action. And finally, the saying itself can be recited in different words, so that we cannot be sure of the exact *words* in the saying, only the general sentiment.[51]

They likewise note, however, that if the criterion of 'aptness' mitigates against re-capturing the 'exact' words or circumstances that elicited a saying or an action, the 'apt' circumstances that frame a particular saying afford a rich rubric for re-imagining the general contours of the historical settings from which a given body of *apophthegmata* derives. While the question of whether the verbiage of a particular 'saying' is specifically

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[50] Rufus 2, *ApP* (PG 65: 389–392, Ward), 210–211.

[51] Hock and O'Neil, *Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 46.

'authentic' or 'accurate' can only be entertained as a matter of theoretical debate, the criterion of aptness lends real weight in attaching a degree of 'authenticity' to a saying's descriptive details. Here, the range of 'conventional circumstances' that occur and recur in the narrative settings of a given body of *apophthegmata* may more reliably be construed as representing a normative spectrum of 'authentic' praxis.

Conclusion

In both form and function, the shape and texture of the monastic *apophthegmata* speak to their rootedness in broader applications of the sayings genre. Read in light of the "literary genre to which they belong,"[52] these texts perhaps disclose less about the various figures they portray than about the preoccupations and affairs of the communities in which they served as vehicles of education and civic formation. As a case in point, in the lengthy expansion attributed to Abba Rufus above, the concluding 'ode' to 'obedience' might double as a textbook example (no pun intended) of the rhetorical inflection of a saying into the vocative voice — even as it underscores the civic resonance of the virtue in question. In even a loosely structured monastic frame, these emphases are hardly surprising. Underscoring the relationship between education and social formation, like their Greco-Roman counterparts, monastic sayings couch a distillation of approved communal mores in rhetorically re-iterated frames.

By training students to live well, these sayings were instrumental in forming the type of citizen that this particular society needed.[53] In fact, if one posits an integral conceptual connection between the late-antique monastery and the ideal *polis*, the monastic *apophthegmata* fit rather seamlessly into the literary trajectory of ancient *gnomic* articulations. In redirecting this literary form to molding 'citizens of the desert', the *Apophthegmata Patrum* are pedagogically consonant with wider applications of the genre. 'Aptly' evidencing the distillation of patently civic mores, even stories describing monks in angelic terms, the highest compliment that could be paid a virtuous member of the community, showcase *exempla* modeling behavior conducive to peaceful co-existence in a this-worldly frame. Emblematic of an inherently civic enterprise of *morphosis*,[54] these narrative articulations offer plausible re-inventions of the ideal citizen. The exemplar is no longer a Greco-Roman philosopher or civic leader. He or she is a monk; one whose 'aptly' attributed words and actions provide an 'authentic' template for life in this community – at its best, the 'City of God' on earth.

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[52] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 65.

[53] Morgan, *Literate Education*, 242.

[54] Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), Introduction.