KING MEETS DOG:
THE ORIGIN OF THE MEETING BETWEEN ALEXANDER
AND DIOGENES

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ABSTRACT

The article questions some scholarly assumptions about the famous anecdote on the
meeting between Alexander and Diogenes the Cynic. While scholars have rightly
placed the story within the topos of the opposition between wise man and king, its
interest in the two figures amounts to more than generic exempla and its depiction of
Alexander is not necessarily hostile. It seems probable that the original form was not
a chreia, rather, later versions were extracted from an extended literary version of such
an encounter. An early work satisfying these criteria is the Education of Alexander
by Onesicritus, the pupil of Diogenes who accompanied Alexander on his Asian
campaign.

Introduction

This article questions some assumptions regarding the nature and origin of
the group of ancient anecdotes, sayings and dialogues dealing with an
encounter between Alexander and Diogenes. Such assumptions include that
the material about the encounter breathes hostility towards Alexander and
that more extended treatments of the encounter elaborate on an initial chreia.
Focussing on the most widely quoted anecdote, I will argue that the
perceived hostility derives from an obsolete reconstruction of early Cynic
history and that the chreia need not have been the starting point for sub­
sequent growth in the tradition, but could itself have been extracted from a
literary account. Furthermore, it can be shown that the anecdote does not
merely concern generic contrasting types, but displays knowledge of and
interest in the specific figures of Alexander and Diogenes. While consider­
able time passed between the historical figures and the anecdote’s first
attestation in Cicero, it is conceivable that an original literary account of the
meeting goes back to Onesicritus, whose *Education of Alexander* (Πῶς Ἀλέξανδρος ἤχθη) dates from the end of the 4th century BC.\(^1\)

**The textual evidence: a review**

The purported meeting between Alexander and Diogenes is one of the most famous in antiquity, vividly portraying the stark opposition in the world view and values of the two figures. In consequence, it has had a lively reception in literature and art during ancient times as well as to the present day.\(^2\) The ancient material featuring some connection (not necessarily a meeting) between Diogenes and Alexander displays rich diversity and is found in various authors spanning many centuries.\(^3\) Both the diversity and the enormous time lapse between purported event and attestation disqualify its serious consideration as portraying history. Scholars question the possibility of an actual meeting ever taking place, due to the difficulty of fitting in such an encounter before Alexander left on his Asian campaign.\(^4\) Of course, an historical basis cannot be ruled out completely, as Fisch argues: the two had opportunity to meet before Alexander left on his expedition in 334 BC, either in Athens, in Thebes, or — most popularly — Corinth.\(^5\) But since the contrast between these two diametrically opposed, but paradoxically parallel personalities would have been so appealing to explore, a literary origin seems more plausible. The stark contrast between two contemporary legends begged for

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\(^4\) Already Peter Baylens (1740), quoted by Niehues-Pröbsting (note 2) 114-15; also E. Schwartz, *Charakterköpfe aus der antiken Literatur* (Leipzig 1910) 4.

literary exploitation: the king with unrestrained power and ambition and the philosopher content with only the barest in shelter and sustenance.\textsuperscript{6}

One anecdote in particular captured the imagination from early times and was quoted widely. Its earliest attestation is in Cicero in a context dealing with the freedom and self-sufficiency of philosophers:

But Diogenes, certainly, was more outspoken in his quality of Cynic, \textit{when Alexander asked him to name anything he wanted: 'Just now' said he, 'stand a bit away from the sun.'} Alexander apparently had interfered with his basking in the heat. And in fact Diogenes, to show how far superior he was to the King of Persia in the conditions of his life, used to argue that while he had no needs, nothing would ever be enough for the king; he did not miss the pleasures with which the king could never be sated, the king could in no way enjoy the pleasures of the philosopher.\textsuperscript{7}

Striking testimony to the scene's renown is borne by Seneca's reliance on his recipients' familiarity with the story, when he turns an oblique reference into a small rhetorical gem:

Oh! in very truth, how rightly did he seem then, both to himself and to all others who had not been rendered blind to the perception of truth, to tower above the man beneath whose feet lay the whole world! Far more powerful, far richer was he than Alexander, who then was master of the whole world; for what Diogenes refused to receive was even more than Alexander was able to give.\textsuperscript{8}

The majority of ancient references to the scene are in the \textit{chreia}-format, usually with somewhat more context than Cicero's ultra-compact rendition.\textsuperscript{9} Diogenes Laertius' version, for instance, sets the encounter in the Cranium outside of Corinth, where Diogenes according to tradition spent the latter part of his life.\textsuperscript{10} Plutarch, who is quite fond of the parallel-contrast between

\textsuperscript{6} K. von Fritz, \textit{Quellenuntersuchungen zu Leben und Philosophie des Diogenes von Sinope} (Leipzig 1926) 27. The tradition that both died on the same day expresses their paradoxical similarity; cf. Diog. Laert. 6.2, 79; Plut. \textit{Quaest. conv.} 8.1.717C.


\textsuperscript{9} Other relatively early occurrences are Diog. Laert. 6.38; Val. Max. \textit{Fact. et dict. mem.} 4.3; Arrian, \textit{Anab.} 7.2.1-2. Simplic. \textit{Comm in Epictet. enchir.} 15 is similar to Cicero in brevity.

\textsuperscript{10} Also Plut. \textit{Vit. Alex.} 14.2.671; Arrian, \textit{Anab.} 7.2.1-2: ἐν 'Ἰοθάπο.
the two figures, twice adds a response by the king to the Cynic’s dismissive
display of autonomy, in what has become an almost equally famous remark:

εἰ μὴ Ἀλέξανδρος ἦμιν, Διογένης ἦμιν
If I were not Alexander, I would have been Diogenes.¹¹

The line occurs as a separate saying twice elsewhere in Plutarch, but also
independently in Diogenes Laertius and in the Gnomologium Vaticanum.¹² Its
purpose is evidently, from a structural point of view, to allow Alexander
some means of responding to Diogenes’ remark. But it also serves to render
explicit the admiration for the philosopher implied by the basic anecdote.
The line reminds one a little of the clever identity-swapping anecdote about
Alexander and Parmenion, spread widely across various Alexander sources.¹³
Plutarch eventually exploits its double entendre to the full in order to present
Alexander as the philosopher-king:¹⁴ while Alexander still prefers to be
himself, the Cynic’s way comes a close second and – additionally – requires
none of the unique features of the Macedonian: fortune, royalty, glory and
the like. If one cannot be Alexander, which no one but Alexander can be,
then the Cynic way is to be preferred. As far as layering the tradition is
concerned, it should no doubt be regarded as a later concatenation of two
independent sayings, probably by Plutarch himself.

Finally, the exchange appears in two full-blown dialogues between the
two figures, namely in the 33rd Pseudo-Diogenic letter, and in Dio Chrysos-
tom’s 4th discourse on kingship. In both, the relationship between the two
figures can be termed teacher/counsellor-pupil, a subset of the opposition
between philosopher and king. In the Diogenic letter, Diogenes is gluing
together the pages of a book when the shadow of the king bothers him. The
setting removes the sting from the Cynic’s reply, at the same time depicting
him as a man of letters and not the idle loafer sunning himself. Evidently this
setting was designed to soften Diogenes’ brusque response, in order to cast
him in a more favourable light. One may assume that the book-gluing
Diogenes constitutes an interpretation of the chreia rather than the original
version.

Dio’s discourse, probably delivered to Trajan on his birthday, makes for
fascinating reading in how his Cynic hero accepts the necessity of the

¹¹ Plut. Vit. Alex. 14.2-3.671D-E; De exil. 15.605D-E.
¹² Plut. De Alex. fort. 1.10.331F-332A; Ad princ. inerud. 5.782A-B; Diog. Laert. 6.32;
Gnom. Vit. 743.91.
¹³ Plut. Vit. Alex. 29.4-9.681; Arrian, Anab. 2.25.2.
¹⁴ Plut. De Alex. fort. 1.10.331D-332C.
monarch, but stringently criticises Alexander as the paradigm not to be imitated.\(^{15}\) He begins his discourse with the indefinite ‘they say’ (φασί ποτε Α­
λέχανδρον Διογένει συμβαλείν), after which a lengthy introduction to the two figures follows in which Dio sets up a delicate balance between power and wisdom. Alexander is overly ambitious and the greatest lover of glory the world has ever seen, but shares Diogenes’ contempt for other men’s corruption by luxury and idleness. Alexander’s feelings towards Diogenes are ambiguous: on the one hand, he despises his poverty and shabbiness; on the other, he admires his courage and endurance and his freedom to do as he pleases and to speak the truth unflinchingly.\(^{16}\) In Dio’s account, Alexander, while in Corinth, excuses himself from his attendants to visit Diogenes who also happens to be alone in the Cranium. The king greets the seated philosopher in response to which Diogenes looks up (not recognising his visitor) ‘fiercely, like a lion, and ordered him to step aside a little, as he was warming himself in the sun.’\(^{17}\) The version deviates from the anecdote by the absence of an offer by Alexander and by adding that Diogenes fails to recognise his visitor. Again, as was the case with the Pseudo-Diogenetic letter, the story is adapted in order to soften its causticity: Alexander does not display crass ignorance of the philosopher’s self-sufficiency, while Diogenes’ reply seems less impertinent.

Scholars prefer to reconstruct the story’s reception by way of a linear pattern of growth, from simple towards more elaborate accounts. Along these lines, Niehues-Pröbsting proposes four layers in the transmitted material:

- The oldest of these is the ‘basic’ anecdote found in Cicero, Diogenes Laertius and others.
- The second layer, found mainly in Plutarch, displays an attempt at rehabilitating Alexander by having him respond to Diogenes’ retort. Elaborations on the topic in Plutarch’s De fortuna Alexandri, which depicts Alexander as the practical philosopher-king, also belong to this layer.

\(^{15}\) J.L. Moles, ‘The date and purpose of the fourth kingship oration of Dio Chrysostom’, CAnt2 2 (1983) 251-78.
\(^{16}\) Dio Chrys. 4.1-8. Dio adds that Alexander was motivated to visit the Cynic by his envy of the latter’s unrivalled reputation and esteem among the Greeks, simultaneously playing on the psychology of the ambitious youngster and idealising Diogenes for the purposes of his oratory to follow.
\(^{17}\) Dio Chrys. 4.14.
• A third layer is represented by the pseudo-Diogenes letter and Dio Chrysostom’s fourth oration where Diogenes has become the counsellor of Alexander and the latter his pupil.
• In a final layer, the original anecdote is parodied.18

Reconstruction in terms of linear growth seems obvious, since the *chreia* is both the shortest and the oldest version in the extant material. Furthermore, Pseudo-Diogenes as well as Dio Chrysostom evidently interpret the anecdote, while Plutarch adds to it for purposes of his own. Even so, a single contextless anecdote does not necessarily equate the story’s original form. Significantly, many extended treatments of the story were in circulation, as mentioned by Dio in the opening lines of his discourse. While Dio’s remark applies to the 1st century AD, we should assume that the anecdote’s literary history predates Cicero, whose version appears to be terse to the point of obscuring its meaning. Compared to the Diogenes Laertius version, Cicero adds the notion of παρρησία to interpret the exchange, but omits any reference to locality. Cicero also seems to infer from Diogenes’ remark that he was sunning himself, suggesting that this element of the anecdote was absent from the version at his disposal.19 Furthermore, Cicero feels obliged to clarify the significance of the scene by quoting another, only indirectly related saying of Diogenes. It confirms that the anecdote was transmitted in varying lengths and with varying amounts of context provided. His abbreviated version required some filling out in order to make sense. Since an ‘original’ version unable to properly convey its message seems inconceivable, we may assume versions in circulation prior to Cicero containing more contextual information.

The concise form in both Cicero and Diogenes Laertius betrays an already advanced level of literary refinement, obtained through the processes the *chreiai* were subjected to in order to attain maximum rhetorical effect. These small literary units were collected not only for the purpose of remembering famous and entertaining incidents and sayings: they were also used in rhetorical training where students were required to expand on a

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18 Niehues-Pröbsting (note 2) 111-23; O. Overwein, *Die Sprüche des Kynikers Diogenes in der griechischen und arabischen Überlieferung* (Stuttgart 2005) 365 n. 398 sees the fourth layer as anti-Cynic. The six groups of Giannantoni (note 3) 445 are rather a systematic organization than an attempt at layering.

19 Presented in Diog. Laer. by the phrase ἥλιοι ομήρου αὐτῶν; in Plut. De exil. 15.605E by ἐν ἥλιῳ καθήμενον; in Arrian, *Anab. 7.2.1* by κατακειμένω ἐν ἥλιῳ, etc.
tersely formulated anecdote as demanded by the situation. This is precisely what Cicero is doing, quoting the very basic skeleton of the story and adding to it according to contextual requirements.

Typically, the 

chreiai

which ended up in collections were initially passed on through oral transmission, or were extracted from various other works such as βοι, διαδοχαί and ἀπομνημονεύματα. It seems probable that this particular chreia was originally embedded in an extended literary account of a meeting between Alexander and Diogenes. If this may be accepted, it makes sense to enquire whether one of the other identified layers in the tradition could not in fact bear closer resemblance to an original literary setting. Plutarch’s double-anecdote version, as argued above, appears less probable than the dialogical settings of Pseudo-Diogenes and Dio, which employ a venerable and ever-recurring literary topos: that of the wise man meeting the tyrant.

The philosopher and the king: Diogenes and Alexander as exempla

In recent studies the Diogenes-Alexander stories are set in the topos of the philosopher/wise man meeting the tyrant/king. The topos was well known in Greek literature, featuring figures such as Solon and Aesop in relation to Croesus. Its general purpose is to have the wise man display his superior wisdom to the king, or to expose the ignorance of the king. Within the Socratic tradition itself, such encounters obtained the more specific purposes of conveying antimonarchical sentiments and of depicting the self-sufficiency and freedom of the philosopher over against the tyrant’s enslavement to opinion, power and riches.

The Diogenes-Alexander meeting is undoubtedly at home in this general topos. Within the Diogenic material, the Alexander anecdotes form part of a bigger group that pits the Cynic against political figures such as Dionysius of Syracuse, Philip of Macedon, Perdiccas and Craterus. Illumination through contrast was a convenient strategy for a philosophy relying on symbolic

22 Von Fritz (note 6) 27-29; Buork (note 2) 244-45, 251-52; Giannantoni (note 3) 2:446; Niehues-Pröbsting (note 2) 109-10; cf. Diog. Laert. 2.25. Pat Wheatley drew my attention to a similar meeting between Demetrius and Stilpo in Plut. *Demetr.* 9.9-10.
action rather than theory; the technique was also used with other 'types' encountered by the Cynic, such as philosophers, rhetoricians and athletes.24

The meeting soon found application wider than in Cynic literature, where Diogenes and Alexander became exempla of the philosopher-king opposition. Cicero couples the ταρσοία of the true Cynic with the more general notion of self-sufficiency, shared with Diogenes by a whole gallery of famous philosophers.25 Seneca also appropriates the Cynic to illustrate the philosopher's paradoxical wealth. For both these authors, the two figures represent the battle between contrasting value systems. Neither Cicero nor Seneca would fully endorse Cynicism, but they are not deterred from appreciating and exalting the particularly vivid emblematic value of an idealised Diogenes embodying broad philosophical ideals.26

Still, even in philosophical appropriations, Alexander and Diogenes cannot be reduced to mere exempla or abstractions of contrasting categories.27 The story is very much dependant on specific characteristics of the main figures. It alludes, among others, to Diogenes' famous wit and bold speech (ταρσοία), his extreme independence and lack of need, his complete disregard for worldly status and even the typical Cynic shamelessness (ἀναλογία). The Alexander in the anecdote recalls various features of the historical/legendary figure mentioned in other sources: the brash youthful king who is at the same time inquisitive, appreciative of wisdom and philosophy (even though not fully comprehending or agreeing with it), whose generosity is well known, 'not seeking wealth and pleasure, but excellence and fame' (οὐ γὰρ ἡδονήν ζηλῶν οὐδὲ πλοῦτον, ἀλλ' ἄρετήν καὶ δόξαν).28 This rather impressive list of features for such a brief anecdote should restrain us from reducing the two figures to generic types. It could not have featured any other pair of names.

24 Juxtaposing Cynics with figures from all walks of life is basic to the Cynic method; cf. P.R. Bosman, 'Meat, muscle, and mind: Diogenes and the athletes', Scriptura 90.3 (2005) 660-69. Overwein's claim (note 18) 361 that the opponents of Diogenes are reduced to functions can only be partly supported.
25 Others specifically named by Cicero are Epicurus, the Scythian Anacharsis and Xenocrates, the peripatetic contemporary of Diogenes.
26 F.G. Downing, Cynics and Christian origins (Edinburgh 1992) 29-30 refers to the 'exogamous' aspect of Greco-Roman philosophers.
27 Stoneman (note 2) 336-38.
28 Plut. Vit. Alex.: 5.5667; 7.3-5.668; De Alex. fort. 1.10.331E; Arrian, Anab. 7.28.
An origin within the Cynic tradition

Given its very Cynic features, the story in all probability originated, if not within, then close to Cynic circles. Would it be possible to be more precise on such a literary account? While early layers of the Cynic tradition constitute murky terrain, two areas of scholarship may provide clues: reconstructions of both early Cynicism and the early layers of the Alexander tradition. The two areas converge in one figure, namely that of Onesicritus, a pupil of Diogenes who joined Alexander in the East somewhere before the Indian conquest and who later became chief pilot in the fleet with Nearchus. Only 38 fragments have survived of his book entitled Πῶς Ἀλέχανδρος ἤχθη, which was modelled on Xenophon’s Cyropaedia. In the most significant fragment Onesicritus depicts himself in conversation with the Indian ascetic philosophers on behalf of Alexander and has their leader, one Mandanis, put Diogenes on a par with Pythagoras and Socrates.

In a seminal study dating from the middle of the previous century, Ragnar Höistad relies on this episode to counter an opinio communis among scholars on the nature of early Cynicism. Gerhard, Von Fritz and others proposed that the historical Diogenes was a rigorous ascetic, but that the Diogenes legend was later reworked in a more hedonistic direction. The two incompatible strands, according to these scholars, are still observable in the tradition. Höistad retains the same categories but argues that the rigorous tradition was invented to counter Onesicritus’ report that the Indian gymnosophistai criticised the Cynic for not being radical enough. The historical Diogenes, as emerges from Onesicritus’ account, promoted a eudaimonistic asceticism in the Socratic vein. Onesicritus, in the same account, also attempted to present Alexander as a Cynic-type philosopher-king. Both views, in Höistad’s reconstruction, met with stiff resistance among early Cynics. Under the influx of Eastern religious elements into Greece after Alexander’s conquests, the Cynics needed to present Diogenes as a true saint in the Eastern sense, while the depiction of Alexander as a Cynic philosopher-king was felt to be irreconcilable with true Cynicism. The resistance

29 T.S. Brown, Onesicritus. A Study in Hellenistic Historiography (Berkeley 1949) 1-23.
30 F. Jacoby, Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker 2 B (Leiden 1929) 723-36; Diog. Laert. 6.84.
31 Strabo 15.1.65.
32 R. Höistad, Cynic Hero and Cynic King (Uppsala 1948) 135-38.
gave rise to a tradition hostile to Alexander, in which the Cynic became a thoroughgoing ascetic similar to the Indian philosophers. Within this hostility the anecdotes pitting Diogenes against the king were born. Obviously, in Höistad’s estimate, the Diogenes-Alexander anecdotes are fundamentally hostile towards the Macedonian.

Höistad’s analysis highlights the probable influence of Onesicritus on early traditions regarding Diogenes and Alexander, but his reconstruction of the tradition’s growth has become obsolete. In the first instance, the perceived incompatibility between the ascetic and the hedonistic Diogenes has been dealt with convincingly. Goulet-Cazé argues for their simultaneous coexistence in early Cynicism, emerging from two separate sources of inspiration for the philosophy: on the one hand, a return to a life according to nature (the life of a dog with its accompanying instant gratification of natural needs); on the other, the ideal of autarkeia (requiring discipline of body and mind). The need for a postulated Cynic reaction against Onesicritus thus falls away. Secondly, on closer analysis, it appears that hostility is too strong a word to describe the attitude towards Alexander in the anecdote.

The anecdote’s depiction of Alexander

Following Höistad, other scholars reiterate the hostile sentiment emerging from the opposition. Niehues-Pröbsting dwells on the way the king is humiliated. First, it is Alexander who needs to go to Diogenes and not the other way around. Secondly, his presence is reduced to the mere nuisance value of a shadow. Thirdly, Diogenes’s request entails so little that he cannot possibly be indebted by its granting. In the fourth place, the needs of the philosopher are of a kind categorically different from what the king could offer. The final coup de grâce derives from the fact that the anecdote ends with the words of the Cynic: Alexander is not even granted the opportunity to respond.

But the final point should warn us against interpreting the story as aiming to humiliate Alexander. In any longer account, the scene could impossibly have ended this abruptly. This granted, it appears that the role of Alexander can be interpreted more sympathetically, without sacrificing the intended

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35 Brown (note 29) 47-48; Giannantoni (note 3); Buora (note 2).
36 Niehues-Pröbsting (note 2) 112.
The anecdote’s success depends on the fact that it is Alexander and no other political figure to whom Diogenes displays his freedom and lack of need. As already noted, it calls upon various features of the Macedonian that were widely circulated. The mere fact of the great king’s visit to the Cynic favours him, not only because of the characteristic Alexandrian curiosity it conveys, but also because it shows the king’s yearning for wisdom and his ability to disregard the Cynic’s outward appearance. Positive aspects go even further: despite the Cynic’s shameless basking in the sun, presumably in the usual coarse outfit, Alexander is able to comprehend something of the profound philosophy underlying the behaviour. His offer does speak of ignorance about Cynic self-sufficiency, but that does not detract fully from his eagerness to express his admiration.

One may conclude that even the basic version of the anecdote leaves Alexander with some redeeming qualities. A setting can be imagined which retains the stark opposition between the figures without Alexander being painted in black colours. A basically non-hostile attitude to the person of Alexander finds support in the fact that the anecdote could so easily be elaborated in favour of the Macedonian, as the testimony of Dio and Plutarch’s version prove. Elaborations of the story to depict Alexander as the philosopher-king pick up the notion of Alexander’s ability to compass the Cynic’s behaviour and to show at least some sympathy towards the Cynic endeavour.

37 Overwein (note 18) 362 observes that the majority of stories are almost exclusively concerned with the person and character of the man Alexander. Overwein’s contrast aims at the person versus his deeds, but the personal character of most anecdotes is undeniable.

38 In most versions, Alexander inquires whether Diogenes needed anything; Seneca apparently understood the king’s offer as ‘ask me whatever you want’.

39 From the point of view of a literary analysis of the scene, a number of possibilities why Alexander makes his offer present themselves: (1) he is struck by the poverty of the Cynic and offers material help; (2) he wishes to set the Cynic a trap, thus testing his allegiance to his own theory; (3) he wishes to put Diogenes under some form of obligation towards him by putting him in his debt; (4) an expression of admiration. The trap theory finds no support in the transmitted tradition, even if Diogenes’ response strengthens the Cynic claim to integrity between theory and praxis. The obligation theory indeed sets the Cynic apart from the parasitic relationship of other philosophers to powerful figures criticised by the Cynic (e.g. Plato and Aristippus); it is certainly an effect of the anecdote, but perhaps not the intent behind Alexander’s offer. A combination of (1), (3) and (4), with priority to (4), seems the most justifiable interpretation.
Onesicritus’ *Education of Alexander*

I have argued that current assumptions regarding the Diogenes-Alexander meeting can be contested, opening the possibility that the anecdote first appearing in Cicero could have been part of an extensive literary account of a meeting between the two figures. Such an account made use of the established opposition of the philosopher versus the king and may have been concerned with the ‘education’ of Alexander. I have also shown that the story displays interest in specific characteristics of the two main figures and does not simply employ them as generic contrasting types. Finally, it has been argued that hostility towards Alexander is not the correct description of how the Macedonian is depicted, however stark the contrast.

With these conclusions in mind and venturing into more conjectural terrain, it appears not implausible that the meeting originated with Onesicritus. Hoistad’s reconstruction, in which the encounter originated in reaction to Onesicritus’ *encomium*, was based on two false assumptions: that the ascetic-hedonist traits in the Diogenic material are irreconcilable and that the stories are basically anti-Alexander. With these assumptions removed, one might reconsider as original source the *Ποσ’ Ἀλέχανδρος ἠχήθη*, the only work known to us from the late 4th/early 3rd century that had an interest in both Cynicism and the education of Alexander.

We cannot be sure of the extent to which Onesicritus modelled his *encomium* on Xenophon, especially since the extant fragments deal mostly with India and very little with Alexander personally. That, however, should be attributed to the preferences of the authors referring to it and not to what it actually encompassed. It had at least four books, if an anecdote preserved in Plutarch can be taken as reliable, so that treatment of a greater part of Alexander’s life than suggested by the fragments is probable. If this was in fact the case, as Brown hesitantly argues, the *Education of Alexander* would in all probability have followed the ‘orthodox practice’ of *encomium* writing, to include discussions of Alexander’s high birth, character and training before proceeding to his deeds. It also in all probability contained speeches and dialogues on moral issues, a feature of the *Cyropaedia*. Finally, like the *Cyropaedia*, Onesicritus would have been selective in his inclusion of episodes from Alexander’s life on the basis of their value in illustrating the formation and nature of his character. Brown considers it ‘not unlikely that many of the anecdotes [in Plutarch’s treatments of Alexander] may derive from Onesicritus, even when Plutarch does not say so’ and that Onesicritus

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40 Brown (note 29) 7-23.
41 Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 46.2.691.
worked with the same distinction between history and biography endorsed by Xenophon and Plutarch 'so that he probably told many other anecdotes like the ones for which Plutarch gives him credit.'

If it is true, as Brown contends, that the mainspring of Onesicritus' book was 'his attempt to harmonize the deeds of Alexander with the principles of Diogenes', it would hardly be conceivable that Onesicritus, considering his leanings towards the 'paradoxical' and the generic parameters of the ancient *encomium*, would have been able to resist the temptation of depicting his two heroes in a tête-à-tête. We cannot know for sure, but this would have been the obvious context of origin for an encounter between an admiring royal inquirer and his Cynic counsellor, from which extracts in the form of *chreiai* and elaborations into extended dialogues ensued.

42 Brown (note 29) 142 n. 146.
43 Brown (note 29) vii.
44 Punning on the title Onesicritus claimed for himself, Strabo 15.1.65 calls him the ἀρχικυβερνήτης.
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