

EUHEMERICS IN EARLY PTOLEMAIC ALEXANDRIA

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ABSTRACT

The article presents a new view on the circumstances and features of the origin of euhemerism in all its genre diversity – from mythographic utopias, chorographies and mirabilia to pseudoperiples and paradoxography. An in-depth analysis of the sources that have come down to us gives grounds to assume with a fairly high degree of probability that early Ptolemaic Alexandria was its main launch pad and epicenter, and to link it with the activities of Demetrius Phalereus, the founder of the famous Mouseion and the Library in antiquity.

Keywords: Demetrius Phalereus, Euhemerus, Palephatos, Dionysius Scytobrachion, Iambulus, Leon of Pella

1. INTRODUCTION

Until now, the question of the existence of a certain circle of writers in Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy I Soter—whether at the Library or otherwise — (hereinafter we will refer to them as euhemerics¹) has apparently never been considered or even seriously raised, especially in connection with Demetrius of Phalerum. But this is not surprising—the details of his Alexandrian (and Egyptian) existence, for reasons difficult to explain, remain outside researchers' attention.

In its pure form, this topic, an attempt to reconstruct euhemerism in a socio-historical context as applied to Alexandria during the time of Demetrius of Phalerum, is our own author's fantasy. However, it appears to be logically justified. Not only by its belonging to the aforementioned chronotope, but also by the almost complete—with rare exceptions—sharing of other essential features.

These include:

- a) clear features of a literary utopia, often, by outward appearances, more or less solar;
- b) the reinterpretation of myths, including those related to nature and the origins of gods;
- c) the genres of travel novels to remote islands, as well as “amazing stories” and “tales of the extraordinary” as either a component or a separate element (the invention of outlandish details about the animal and plant life of the “newly discovered” locales, and the appearance and customs of the tribes inhabiting them);
- d) the literary “secrecy” of most authors; they hid behind pseudonyms, sometimes even several at once.

However, isolated attempts (but without reaching any generalizations) to find common ground for the various members of the “circle” cannot go unnoticed.²

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¹ "Euhemerists" took root in literature—in particular, in the work of D. O. Torshilov, whom we quote extensively below. But we prefer the "euhemerics". We don't quite understand what, say, the “Socratics” did wrong to the “Pythagoreans” or “Pythagorists”.

² See, for example, (Brown, 1946, pp. 259–274).

2. MAIN TEXT

2.1. Demetrius of Phalerum, Cassander and the Euhemeristic Horizon

Demetrius of Phalerum could have been linked to the theme of Hellenistic utopia even earlier—if we see in Alexarchus's Ouranopolis not only Cassander's uncharacteristic Kulturträger adventure, but also the intellectual side project of the Athenian ruler, a Peripatetic philosopher, who was faced with the problem of somehow arranging the fate of his fellow citizens, exiled from their hometown by Antipater's census, in the Thracian lands.

This undertaking, completely uncharacteristic for its time and Cassander, is combined in the latter's activity only with the expedition to southern Arabia, on which he allegedly dispatched Euhemerus of Messene (as the Massaliotes had previously sent Pytheas beyond the Pillars of Heracles). A legendary, enigmatic figure occupied a larger place in our understanding of the history of the Diadochi than Alexarchus only because of the mention of him and his treatise “Sacred Inscription” (“Ἱερὰ Ἀναγραφή”) about the “island of the blessed” Panchaia in Diodorus Siculus (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica* 5.42.4–46.7; 6.1.1–11).

We know little about Euhemerus. Even Messene in Sicily is disputed as his birthplace.³ Euhemerus was considered close to the circle of Cyrenaic philosophers and, like Theodore, an atheist. At least, he is presented in a list of atheists that appeared in the late second century, attributed to Clitomachus of Carthage. Attempts to rationalize myths also link him to Palaephatus. However, there are also areas in which Euhemerus was undoubtedly original. He marked one of the first attempts in the Hellenistic period for Greek philosophy, Greek thought in general, to transcend traditional geography and expand the oecumene within its own consciousness.

This voyage has quite a few superficially plausible reasons to be considered factual. Firstly, Euhemerus himself, as reported by Diodorus Siculus, spoke of being in the service of Cassander. Secondly, had Euhemerus been fortunate, Cassander could have been known as an enlightened monarch and patron of science and research. And by expanding his field of vision and practical interests to the borders of Arabia, he could have hoped, if not to surpass Alexander, who had reached India, then at least to equal him in the audacity of his plans. And perhaps even surpass him, since **“no man has been able to sail through these parts”**, as Arrian writes in his “Indica” (Arrian, *Indica* 43.3).

“Paradoxically, in ancient times, not a single attempt to completely circumnavigate Arabia, i.e., along the shores of the Erythraean Sea, was successful, and not a single 'individual' periplus of its aquatoria ever existed. The attempts of seafarers - from Scylax to Alexander's companions - were unsuccessful due to a lack of shipbuilding and navigation skills, and when all the necessary components appeared in the Roman era, this was no longer an “economic” necessity: merchants delivered all the necessary goods using the most direct routes, and gaps in geographical knowledge were quickly filled without such risky undertakings as sailing around Arabia” (Bukharin, 2007, pp. 10–11).

But did this voyage, the antithesis of Alexander's expedition to the Erythraean Sea under Nearchus, actually take place, or was it merely a plot device, the fruit of a rich literary imagination, pure fiction, like so much else in Euhemerus? A kind of literary-political utopia, like Plato's description of Atlantis in “Critias”,⁵ Theopompus's digression on Meropia, and Hecataeus of Abdera's “On the Hyperboreans”?

³ Also called Tegea and Kos.

⁴ We base this on the dates of the appearance of the stories - of Theopompus about Meropia and of Hecataeus of Abdera about Hyperborea- which most likely predate Euhemerus's literary voyage.

⁵ This comparison is interesting in itself, but it lies outside our chosen perspective. We will limit ourselves to citing an example of works whose authors impute a view of things that is contrary to ours: (Honigman, 2009, pp. 1–35).

And what, in a more material sense, was the city at the base of the third “finger” of the Chalcidice? Where Xerxes dug a canal to avoid the loss of his fleet in a storm—a fate that befell Mardonius a decade earlier. It's impossible to say with certainty.

2.2. Isocrates, Egypt and the Prehistory of Euhemerism Writing

The list could, if desired, be extended with Isocrates's “Busiris”. Atlantis, Meropia and Hyperborea were unfamiliar to the Greeks of their authors' time, from a practical standpoint, and in their minds remained a kind of literary fiction, a simple attempt to invent a “new mythology”. Egypt, despite its remoteness from the Balkans, was a real, albeit difficult to access and largely mysterious, land. It seems that it was Isocrates who outlined the components of the “cliché” used by Alexandrian mythographers of the first half of the third century BC. The Egypt whose description the author, the head of the rhetorical school in Athens, conceived of as a mere example of epideictic technique and in no way related to actual history, differed little from the lands conjured up by the imaginations of Plato, Theopompus and Hecataeus. Busiris existed as a character in ancient Greek mythology, a symbol of Egyptian hostility toward foreigners, and a possible eponym for an ancient Egyptian city of a similar name. A city known, like Abydos, if the Palaephatus we mentioned was related to it, as the most ancient center of worship of the fertility god Osiris, is another possible coincidence. But Busiris was unknown in ancient Egyptian mythology! The cities to which the Greeks attributed his name were called differently by the indigenous peoples. For example, the one that stood on the left bank of the Damiet (Sebennyt) branch of the Nile was called Djedu, or Djed, that is, Per User Neb Djedu (Pr-Wsr-nb-Ddw), “the house of Osiris, lord of Djedu”, from the name of the column with four crossbars at the top, symbolizing the spine of Osiris! Among the students of Isocrates were Theopompus (with his “Amazing Stories” and especially Meropia) and Ephorus (with a collection of various curiosities in 15 books), whom we will mention below, albeit briefly.

Thus, Isocrates set the following guidelines for Euhemerism and writers of his school:

- a) Egypt as a geography in which the action unfolds, or the prototypes of social institutions are located, adapted by euhemerism to suit their needs, and ultimately, as the starting point for the development of the plot or the guiding concept of the work;
- b) the civilizing mission of a historical deity – a cultural hero, elevated by merit to the upper tier, where sacred figures dwell;
- c) a rationalistic interpretation of established mythologemes;
- d) the extreme remoteness of the setting, or better yet, the fictional and literary nature of the “new geography” or “new mythology”.

The development of these outlined lines in the spirit of euhemerism occurred in the late 4th – early 3rd centuries BC. The connecting link was Hecataeus of Abdera with his “Aegyptiaca”—a work so revered in antiquity that it became, and this is a virtually established scholarly view, the primary source of inspiration for Diodorus Siculus in compiling the first book of his “Bibliotheca Historica”. Diodorus even cites Hecataeus (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica* 1.46.8) when discussing the Theban dynasty (of course, its Egyptian origin). This isn't the only mention of the Abderite historian in the “Bibliotheca Historica”; there's another—II, 47.1—but that one specifically deals with Hyperborea.

It is in Hecataeus, as well as earlier in his older Milesian counterpart, that we encounter elements of rational explanatory interpretation of mythological stories. Should we unconditionally classify him as part of the euhemerism mainstream? He was a genuine and, it seems, a more than serious historian, with his own name and biography. The eastward expansion of the Hellenic oecumene had no time to find its consequences in his works, which were free of entertainment (sometimes self-contained and often fantastical) and an emphasis on descriptions of exotica from abroad. Unlike Euhemerism and his colleagues, the idea of deducing the origin of the gods from the lifetime or posthumous apotheosis of earthly men, primarily kings or heroes, is not new. “Men as gods” predates Hecataeus of Abdera. And sometimes even Isocrates. One could begin with the sophist Prodicus of Keos—a full century ago. Or even earlier—with

Xenophanes the Colophonian. Similar ideas were nurtured after Isocrates by his student, the venerable historian Ephorus of Cyme.

2.3. Euhemerus and the Naming of a Tradition

The phenomenon that so clearly emerged at the turn of the fourth and third centuries BC—namely, a rationalist view of the origin and nature of the gods—came to be named after Euhemerus, although he appears to have been neither a pioneer in his genre nor superior to others in any respect. Besides Hecataeus, Euhemerus was chronologically preceded by Leon of Pella, who may have even “outstripped” Hecataeus himself. In terms of the vividness of his imagination, Euhemerus was inferior to Palaephatus. The most talented members of this imaginary community of interests, as one can judge, were Dionysius Scythobrachion, who mastered various styles and a sophisticated writing technique, and Iambulus. The latter was highly regarded by Lucian,⁶ whose taste and aesthetic sense can be trusted. Thomas More and Tommaso Campanella, following Aristonicus (but, of course, in a different way), if the latter’s Heliopolitans are no coincidence, were influenced by Iambulus. His narrative of the “Islands of the Sun” alone bore the outward signs of a purely solar utopia. Euhemerus might well have remained unknown, buried beneath the layers of time, even despite Quintus Ennius’s Roman translation in the second century BC.⁷ However, his current status is not inconsistent with ours. It’s a simple euphony. “Euhemerism” sounds better than “Prodicism,” “Hecatism,” “Leonism,” and even more so than “Palaephatism” or “Scytobrachionism.” The conflict between Christianity and paganism, which intensified in the fourth century AD, also played a role. The works of Euhemerus, Leon, and other Euhemerics were most welcome to Christians. They provided compelling grounds for criticizing and devaluing pagan polytheism in favor of preaching the one God existing in Christ. It’s telling that of the 15 fragments from Leon of Pella’s writings that have survived to this day, including what would seem to be a surefire bestseller—a fictitious letter from Alexander the Great to his mother Olympias—11 are excerpts from Christian authors. Lactantius, even copying the list of atheists (in relation to the pagan gods, of course) from Cicero’s “De natura deorum” (Cicero, *De natura deorum* 1.42) in his “De ira Dei” (Lactantius, *De ira Dei* 9.1–7), deleted Euhemerus.

Euhemerus was also fortunate in that Diodorus Siculus held similar views, viewing mythology as a kind of historical past, and promoted them in his “Biblioteca Historica”. In fact, it is from Diodorus’s surviving references to the works of Euhemerus, as well as Iambulus (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica* 2.55–60) and Dionysius Scythobrachion, that we can judge ancient euhemerism. This is based on the fact that Diodorus didn’t actually quote, but rather paraphrased. We are forced to perceive them through the personality of the narrator, through his delivery or interpretation.

2.4. Leon, Palaephatus and the Problem of Pseudonymous Authors

In fact, it’s difficult to ignore the figure of Leon of Pella, Euhemerus’s predecessor, and also a remarkable figure who treated the human origins of the Egyptian gods. He can be added to the three authors mentioned above, who—either voluntarily or involuntarily—lost their authentic biographies. The same applies, incidentally, to Palaephatus with his pseudo-rationalistic explanations of myths and his treatise “Egyptian Theology”. Unlike the aforementioned authors, neither of these authors resorted to the genre of travelogues, accounts of heroes, or eyewitness accounts of distant travels.

⁶ “Iambulus also wrote many strange miracles of the great sea, which all men knew to be lies and fictions, yet so composed that they want not their delight” – (Lucian, *A True Story* 1.3), translated by Francis Hickes.

⁷ Franco de Angelis and Benjamin Garstad find Ennius’s southern Italian origins and his warm feelings for his fellow countrymen significant – De Angelis, F.; Garstad, B. (2006), 214. Besides Euhemerus, Ennius translated Arcestratus of Gela and Epicharmus, whose “Sicilianity” is unquestionable. True, the latter was born on Cos, but this did not prevent him from spending his entire adult life in Sicily.

It's precisely Leon and Palaephatus, their names, and excerpts from their pseudo-periplus or fictitious periageses—coincidentally or not—that we do not find in the fragments of the “Historical Library” we have⁸. The fact that, for example, the first book was entirely devoted to Egypt, while the others were supposed to recount a different geography, should not disturb us. Diodorus was readily interrupting and returning to seemingly well-covered themes and plots. Crete and Sicily wander from his book to book without any established or prearranged order. Plots are repeated and duplicated—the same Euhemerus appears in both the fifth and sixth books (a description of Panchaia itself and a reference to the author of the “Sacred Inscription”, respectively). And so on—any scholar could add dozens more examples of inconsistencies in the structure and composition of Diodorus's work.

A detailed analysis and comparison of the works—primarily “state romances”, as R. von Pöhlmann called them—by these authors lies far beyond the scope of our present task. We cannot help but note certain oddities. Oddities that, when viewed from a different perspective, could prompt reflection and reinterpretation.

We know nothing concrete about any of them. The indications of their birthplaces and any possible dating are easily questioned and can be challenged. Even Euhemerus' presence at Cassander's court, for example, seems pure fiction to us. But it does seem so at the level of sensations—for Euhemerus's mention of his service to Cassander seems too much like an auxiliary device, creating a deliberate circumstantial context.⁹

There are serious objections to this assumption. Euhemerus's work, if it were commissioned or written with Cassander in mind, would have to be more “monarchical” than it actually is. The inhabitants of Panara are “the only inhabitants of Panchaia who live by laws they make for themselves”—for the simple reason that they “have no king over them”. The rest “do”, but his prerogatives are limited to merely selecting the best plots of land and receiving a tenth of the produce. And perhaps some nominal representative functions. However, let's not forget that we have only received small fragments—not even of Euhemerus' text, but of Diodorus' exposition of it. We are, of course, unable to corroborate our impressions with documents. Unfortunately, neither is likely to be anyone else. In any case, an outside testimony would carry more weight than the author's own autobiography, pared down to its bare essentials. All of them, it seems, were not averse to pseudonyms or even splitting them into several. Euhemerus is most definitely a pseudonym.¹⁰

Palephates appears to be a composite figure and, according to the Suda, consisted of four hypostases. Dionysius Scythobrachion had no fewer, and even the priest of the Temple of Helios, the “Cyclogographer” Dionysius of Samos, was one of them.

Perhaps Iambulus was not the real name of the author of “Islands of the Sun”.

⁸ This, however, does not mean they were absent altogether—for example, in the sixth book, which has only partially survived. The sixth book concluded the mythological section of Diodorus' work and paved the way for a review of the historical tradition.

⁹ We are not alone in our doubts. With them, we join the authoritative company of Euhemerus specialists—for example, (Holzberg, 1996, p. 626; Winiarczyk, 2002, pp. 1–2).

¹⁰ “And if we recall both the obscurity of Euhemerus' origins and the extreme unusualness of his name in onomastic terms, one cannot resist the temptation to see in this name a significant pseudonym (whether of Scythobrachion or another mystifier), derived from the key word of the theory. Taken as an adjective, the word εὖη μερος perfectly characterizes life on Panchaea—the pure, ideal result of divine action” – (Torshilov, 1999, p. 101). The translation of Euhemerus's name is “happy”, “flourishing”, “prosperous”.

2.5. Iambulus, Solar Utopia and Chronological Problems

There are suggestions that his name, unusual to Greek ears (most likely Semitic), is explained by his Nabatean origins. However, Iambulus himself is referred to by Diodorus as a Greek and, at the end, seeks to return to Greece. For Iambulus, as stated in the opening of his narrative, initially set out to obtain aromaphores—incense and spices. It was the Nabateans who controlled the caravan routes to Arabia. But then his description of the Erythraean Sea must have included more specific details. The Nabataeans traveled the “incense road” to Arabia through the Negev Desert, where their “stations”—Mamshit, Avdat, Haluzza, Nizzana and others—have survived to this day. Moreover, the road led through Hegra, if it already existed, to the very south of the Arabian Peninsula—to what is now the port of Aden, opposite which lies Socotra, considered one of the most likely locations of Panchaia. Cana, at the western end of the peninsula, apparently did not yet exist as a port. However, Strabo's description of the Nabataean social system in Book XVI of his Geography seems archetypal for Iambulus's account of the Helionesites—a possible analogue of Alexarchus's “sun rams”:

“The king is so democratic that, in addition to serving himself, he sometimes even serves the rest of himself in his turn”. He often renders an account of his kingship in the popular assembly, and sometimes his mode of life is examined. Their homes, through the use of stone, are costly; but, on account of peace, the cities are not walled. Most of the country is well supplied with fruits except the olive; they use sesame oil instead. The sheep are white-fleeced, and the oxen are large, but the country produces no horses. Camels afford the service they require instead of horses. They go out without tunics, with girdles about their loins, and with slippers on their feet—even the kings, though in their case the color is purple. Some things are imported wholly from other countries, but others not at all so, especially in the case of those that are native products, as, for example, gold and silver and most of the aromatics, whereas brass and iron, as also purple garb, styrax, crocus, costaria, embossed works, paintings, and molded works are not produced in their country” (english translation by H. L. Jones; Strabo, Geographica 16.4.26).

But Leon of Pella (as Arnobius, for example, called him), also known as Leon of Egypt (Tertullian's version), according to Augustine, belonged to the highest-ranking Egyptian priesthood. Naturally, he, like the others, was connected to Egypt in one way or another. We exclude Euhemerus from this list only formally—in Diodorus and Eusebius' renditions of excerpts from the “Sacred Inscription”, the name of Egypt is absent, although the social structure of Panchaia described by Euhemerus—a caste system with a dominant priestly class and a collective economy—is very reminiscent of ancient Egyptian (as suggested by M. Rostovtsev, M. Finley and others). The golden column in the Panchaian temple of Zeus Triphylios resembles an Egyptian obelisk-stele: *“In the middle of the bed rises a huge golden column, inscribed with characters called sacred by the Egyptians, which recount the deeds of Uranus and Zeus, and then the narrative of Artemis and Apollo, added by Hermes”* (Diodorus Siculus, Bibliotheca historica 5.46.5). Zeus is apparently identified with Amun. After all, the deification of the pharaohs in Ancient Egypt is the first and foremost archetype, an analogy for Euhemerus' constructions.

Iambulus's relationship to Egypt is less clearly traced. An even more complex question concerns the dates of the author's life and the publication of his novel. Scholars have even established a terminus ante quem for “The Islands of the Sun”, based on the dating of the revolt of Aristonicus (133–129 BC) in Pergamon. The connection between the Helionesites of Iambulus and the Heliopolitans of Aristonicus (or rather, Gaius Blossius) does not seem improbable. And, for example, as well as André Bonnard and others, are tempted to speculate further: *“In this case, we encounter Heliopolis and the Heliopolitans in a concrete form in one of the most widespread novels of this period. Are these phenomena in utopian literature not somehow connected with the ideal of a solar state preached to the masses by the descendant of the Pergamene kings? In any case, it is well known that the attempt to establish a social order on new foundations aroused keen interest in certain literary circles sympathetic to social reform. The Stoic Blossius of Cyme,¹¹ who played no small part in the socio-political aspirations of Tiberius Gracchus, went to Aristonicus after his death. Apparently, he did this not only to find a safe haven from*

his plutocratic enemies in Rome, but also for internal reasons, interested in the idea of social reform sought by the poor" (Pöhlmann, 1910, p. 492).

Pöhlmann and Bonnard are not alone in their view. It has been and continues to be shared by other leading scholars, including J. Ferguson in his book "Utopias of the Classical World" (Ferguson, 1975, p. 144). But this connection is equally ambiguous. The reign of Eumenes III – Aristonicus – offers no substantive analogies with Iambulus's romance, other than the borrowing of "The Sun" for his slogans. Or perhaps we don't know them. Moreover, the social structure of Iambulus' island – which is more of a synoetic type – effectively rejects monarchy, which would hardly have pleased Aristonicus, given his claims to be the successor to the Pergamene royal dynasty. Residents live in communities of 400 people and are subordinate to their elder, whose authority is not hereditary. Whether Aristonicus conceived of the hypothetical Heliopolis as the embodiment of Iambulus's solar utopia is a serious question, the answer to which is not obvious. But even if Pöhlmann is right, this proves nothing. Iambulus could have lived and written his "Islands" much earlier; Aristonicus (or Gaius Blossius) simply happened to come across them at that time. Even the stoicism of Gaius Blossius, "the Hellenic prototype of Marx", as Arnold Toynbee called him (Toynbee, 1939, Vol. 4, p. 180), is an extremely indirect and clearly insufficient argument.

Another argument in favor of placing the date of Iambulus' "periplus" in the mid-second century emerges from an analysis of the concluding part of Diodorus' account of Iambulus' voyage: *"Iambulus came to a certain village, whose inhabitants brought him to the king at Palibothra, a city several days' journey from the sea. And this king, a lover of Greeks and learning, gave him a warm welcome. Then, finally receiving permission for safe passage, he passed first into Persia, and then arrived safely in Greece"* (Diodorus Siculus, Bibliotheca historica 2.60.2). This point provokes the critics' objection: *"It should be noted that before the middle of the second century, the Greeks traveling from India to their homeland didn't need to 'escape' from Persis, which was part of the Seleucid Empire and conquered by the Parthian king Mithridates between 170 and 138/37 BC"* (Gutorov, 1989, p. 235).

A glance at a map of India reveals that Palibothra (also known as Pataliputra), today's Patna in the Indian state of Bihar, of which it is the administrative center, is approximately seven hundred kilometers from the Bay of Bengal. In this stretch, the Ganges receives several fairly large, full-flowing rivers from the right, which are not easy to cross—the Punpan, Folg, Jhena Nadi, Mohane, Harohar and Kiul. And according to Iambulus, this is "a city located several days' journey from the sea"? Can we accept Iambulus' story of how, within a few days, well-wishing residents of a coastal village "brought him to the king in Palibothra" with complete and unconditional faith?

But what if the events described took place (if, indeed, they took place at all) at the end of the 4th century, when Seleucus was only expanding his domains and didn't control the territory as far as Palibothra—in whole or in part? Even after Seleucus's treaty with Sandrocottus (Chandragupta) and the exchange of lands beyond the Indus for 500 elephants, a foreigner's safe passage from Palibothra by land would have been unlikely. Megasthenes, who visited Sandrocottus, had ambassadorial status from Seleucus (and, incidentally, resided in Palibothra), protecting him from unfavorable circumstances. Nabataea, meanwhile, was controlled by Ptolemy, and relations between Seleucus and Ptolemy had experienced periods of cooling and even an alliance against each other (for example, after Seleucus' marriage to Stratonice, the daughter of Demetrius Poliorcetes, in 300 and his rapprochement with her father in defiance of Lysimachus' alliance with Ptolemy). It's difficult to answer affirmatively whether a person from Ptolemaic-controlled territories could have traveled from Palibothra to his own lands, unhindered and unaccompanied, or even escorted, across the entire Indian subcontinent and then the dominions of Seleucus.

¹¹ An error – apparently, Cumae should be here; its cause, one might assume, lies in the confusion of Cumae with the Aeolian Cyme (the birthplace of Hesiod and Ephorus) opposite the island of Lesbos (now an abandoned and half-submerged settlement in a bay not far from the city of Aliagi), where, at the very beginning of the revolt, Aristonicus was defeated in a naval battle.

Furthermore, in the mid-second century BC, the coasts of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf did not represent the terra incognita for the Greeks that they had been during the time of the Diadochi and the first Epigoni. We won't claim that the development of the outlying lands had advanced very far by then, but it's unlikely that tales of people with forked tongues and membrane-like valves in their ears, and four-eyed, two-mouthed, but single-stomached turtles, could have provided the necessary narrative entertainment. Alexander's campaigns sparked the need and fashion for tall tales. The peak of colorful inventions of unseen wonders in exotic lands occurred not even in the time of Scylax (or his namesake, with the prefix "Pseudo-"), Ctesias or Nearchus, who were, after all, isolated excesses each, but rather in the time of Megasthenes, Demetrius, Duris, Palaephatus, Euhemerus, Dionysius Scythobrachion and others. Placing Iambulus within this chronology makes more sense.

And, in general, how justified is it to demand scholarly integrity and factual impeccability from this, in R. von Pöhlmann's words, "socioeconomic Jules Verne" (Pöhlmann, 1910, p. 321)¹² —a work of fiction full of arbitrary details?

2.6. Dionysius Scythobrachion and Palaephatus in the Alexandrian Context

Researchers also disagree regarding Dionysius Scythobrachion: *"The traditional dating of Scythobrachion's life was based on the testimony of Suetonius,¹³ which means Scythobrachion lived in the second half of the second century. Thanks to papyrus 2 (Papyrus Hibeh 2.186, col. 1, ll. 8 ff.), still unknown at the time of Jacobi's work, dated by archaeological and paleographic data to 250–220 BC and containing an interpretation, referring back to Scythobrachion, of the fire-breathing bulls of Aëtes as guardians from the Taurian tribe, as well as a mention of Heracles' stay with the Argonauts in Colchis (which was also mentioned by Scythobrachion), J. Rusten determines the terminus ante quem for the works of Dionysius. He seeks the terminus post quem by comparing the marriage of Basilia and her brother Hyperion in Dionysius's book with the establishment of the cult of the Adelphi Gods in Ptolemaic Egypt around 270. This places Scythobrachion's life in the first half of the 3rd century, and Suetonius was more correct when he doubted Gniphon's acquaintance with him than when he nevertheless accepted his possibility"* (Torshilov, 1999, pp. 103–104).¹⁴

Thus, it appears that excluding Iambulus and Dionysius Scythobrachion from the Alexandrian nominees for the Euhemerics would be premature and incorrect. We have no serious grounds for doing so.

And what about the semi-legendary Palaephates, author of histories of Cyprus, Delos, Attica (!), Arabia, and possibly Troy? As well as of "Egyptian Theology" and the famous treatise "On the Extraordinary" ("περὶ ἀπιστῶν"), in which he interpreted many mythological stories in a rationalistic, sometimes allegorical manner? A mythical figure, a pseudonym behind which hid an aesthete and erudite, a man prone to mystification and practical jokes?

We have already mentioned that the Suda contains information about four Palaephates (Suda, π 69–72), who were placed in both the fourth and third centuries. Such a diversity of Palaephates is in itself astonishing due to the unusualness and extreme rarity of such a name,¹⁵ which more closely resembles a pseudonym.

¹² Pöhlmann goes further and calls Iambulus's account "a description of a voyage in the style of Simbad the Navigator".

¹³ M. Antonius Gniphon institutusque Alexandriae quidem, ut aliqui tradunt, incontubernio Dionysii Scythobrachionis; quod equidem non temere crediderim, cum temporum ratio vix congruat; («M. Antonius Gniphon who also studied in Alexandria, as they say, where he was a friend of Dionysius Scythobrachion, which, upon reflection, I would believe, although the timing barely adds up») — De Gramm. 7 — the author's reference.

¹⁴ The cited author most likely relied on Chapter VI: Dionysius' Date from Rusten, Jeffrey S. (1982), 85–92.

¹⁵ Πάλαι was usually applied to geographical names, denoting the "old age" of the bearer.

One of them claimed to be an Athenian and was an epic poet, another an Egyptian (or Athenian) and a grammarian, and the remaining two were attributed to Hellespontine (Abydos) or near-Hellespontine (Priene) origins. Each of these Palaephates claimed to be the author of a book on extraordinary rarities,¹⁶ suggesting a hypostasis of our own Palaephate consisted of four. According to the *Suda*, Palaephates from Abydos was considered a friend of Aristotle. The Alexandrian rhetorician Aelius Theon, in his “*Progymnasmata*”, called him a Peripatetic, which seems logical. Therefore, if we assume that the Stagirite's friendship with Palaephates began in Atarneus, not far from Abydos, albeit via the Hellespont, then the latter could theoretically have followed the former to Athens and thus become an “Athenian.” He could have reclassified himself as an “Egyptian” if he had become very close friends with Demetrius of Phalerum at the Lyceum and accompanied him to Alexandria.

In fact, this collective Palaephates could have been Egyptian simply by their birthplace. Abydos in Asia Minor, at the narrowest point of the Hellespont, where Xerxes crossed to Europe over a bridge of ships in 480 CE, had a full namesake in Middle Egypt—a long-standing religious center, a place of worship for Osiris, whose head, according to local legend, was buried there. Osiris was one half of Serapis, the syncretic Hellenistic deity in whose invention Demetrius of Phalerum played a very active role (or, to put it simply, was its initiator).

However, the Egyptian origin of our Palaephates is still extremely dubious. We do not know of an old Greek colony (apoikia? katoikia?) or even a merchant trading post until the mid-4th century, when Palaephatus, according to our unverified assumption, should have come into being, so far south from the coast and the main trade routes.

The next unifying feature? Dionysius and Palaephatus also included the Trojan cycle (we simply have no similar information about Leon). Whether Euhemerus had Homer's Scheria and Syra in mind when writing his “Sacred Inscription” or whether this is a coincidence, we are unable to determine for certain. *“Diodorus recounts two of Scythobrachion's books: ‘The Campaign of Dionysus and Athena’ (the title is provided by the ‘Suda’) and ‘Argonautica’. The existence of a third, about the Trojan War, known from the ‘Suda,’ is confirmed by the scholia to the ‘Iliad’, from which it follows that Scythobrachion not only commented on but also interpolated Homer.”* The author declared “*The Campaign of Dionysus and Athena*” to be a retelling of the “*Phrygian Poem*” by Thymetes, son of Thymetes, son of Laomedon, a contemporary of the Trojan War (Torshilov, 1999, pp. 104–105). “Contemporary” isn't quite the right word. More like a character, for according to Vergilius, it was he who, out of hatred for his brother Priam, proposed introducing the horse into Troy (Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.32–34). And Palaephates also distinguished himself with “*Arabica*”, joining Euhemerus and Iambulus, whose characters sailed to certain islands in the Erythraean Sea.

2.7. Common Generic Features: Islands, Mirabilia, and Exotic Geography

The island setting was embodied (following Homer and the same Hecataeus) by Euhemerus, Dionysius, and Iambulus.

And almost all of them invented and described the unusual flora and fauna of exotic locales, appealing to the widespread popular interest in previously unknown geography that sharply increased after the Macedonian army's campaigns in Asia. This need for, in the words of R. von Pöhlmann, “ethnographic romanticism” was first responded to by Ctesias of Cnidus, Megasthenes, Onesicritus, Clearchus of Soli and even Duris of Samos, who, unlike the preceding historians, had never actually visited anywhere.

¹⁶ The only difference is the number of volumes. There were either five or just one, which can be assumed to contain an epitome.

Were the works of Euhemerus, Scythobrachion and Iambulus, excerpts of which have been handed down to us by Diodorus Siculus, utopias—utopias from which the bearer of an idea for the reconstruction and improvement of the state and social machinery could glean something useful?

2.8. Utopia, Theology and Historiosophy

Formally speaking, they were certainly utopias. They were literary utopias. *“Utopias are deeply inherent in human nature; it cannot even exist without them. Man, wounded by the evil of the surrounding world, has a need to imagine, to evoke the image of a perfect, harmonious order of social life. <...> Far from being unrealizable, the vision of a future harmony is the main, indisputable characteristic of utopia. Man lives in a fragmented world and dreams of a whole world. Wholeness is the main characteristic of utopia. Utopia must overcome fragmentation and achieve wholeness”* (Berdyayev, 1951, p. 158).

But the utopian nature of the narratives of Euhemerus, Scythobrachion, and Iambulus is only the third or fourth layer. This is the opinion, for example, of D. O. Torshilov:

“Neither the social order of Panchaea nor the deification of the monarch are the essence of euhemerism in itself: royal power for the euhemeristic deity is merely a means to help it fulfill its mission—to bring civilization and order to the universe... The change wrought by the euhemeristic deity is a transition from savagery to culture, from haphazard gathering to agriculture, from impiety and lawlessness to law and piety, that is, ultimately, from social chaos to a social cosmos (of which the utopian order of Panchaea is an example), just as natural chaos is ordered by a traditional god in the cosmogonic process. <...>

Having divided the gods into cosmic and social, euhemerism in fact abandoned the former altogether... Uranus becomes the god of the sky for the euhemerists because he created and spread good and true knowledge about it; The deity, therefore, is no longer the sky itself, but society's knowledge of the sky; not the object, but the social subject's knowledge of it—such is the deity of euhemerism. <...>

The essence of the “Sacred Inscription,” therefore, is theology and historiosophy, and only then utopia. The mythographic significance of euhemerism is that, in Euhemerus, mythology becomes theology and historiosophy, or rather, attempts to reclaim these long-lost functions. Logographers rendered mythology a dull sum of information, and poets - a collection of empty fantasies; euhemerism attempts to restore both its fascination and sacred significance, transforming it into a “novel” and “sacred history” (Torshilov, 1999, pp. 99–102).

2.9. Euhemerism as Political Satire and Apotheosis

On the other hand, one can also see in Euhemerus' “Sacred Inscription” a kind of satirical pamphlet.

We take as our starting point a passage in Aristophanes' “Birds” (144-145): *“But there is... a happy city on the Erythraean Sea”*. In a comedy that caustically mocks the common clichés of contemporary utopian thought, not excluding, incidentally, Hippodamus of Miletus, who deserved it least. The reading public, of course, quickly guessed the address.

However, this may not have been the most significant for the Greeks of that time. Euhemerus' “Sacred history” (as the “Sacred Inscription” was sometimes translated) also had a “double bottom”. Let us note such passages in Euhemerus as *“when Uranus was king of the inhabited earth, he loved to spend time in this place...”* (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica* 5.44.5) and about Zeus—*“when he was among men and reigned over the entire oecumene.”* (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica* 5.46.3) Euhemerus' cultural hero, honored for his merits with ascension to Triphylian Olympus, is the king.

The lifetime or posthumous apotheosis of Euhemerus' time was not yet the first Ptolemies, but already Alexander, said to have been hated by Cassander with every fiber of his being, and Demetrius Poliorcetes

with Antigonus Monophthalmus, the Macedonian king's main immediate adversaries during that period. And, indeed, Philip, who placed his statue next to the twelve Olympian gods at the wedding feast in Aegae. The Antipatrids became the reigning dynasty between 306 and 304—history has left us no less vague a landmark. Naturally, the main target of Euhemerus' pamphlet could hardly have been Nicagoras of Zelea, who imagined himself to be Hermes and dressed in his robes—an episode from the fourth chapter of Clement of Alexandria's "Exhortations to the Pagans". Nor was it Plutarch's character—Menecrates of Syracuse, a physician during the time of Philip, who signed his prescriptions with the name Menecrates-Zeus. Euhemerus' orderer, if we are to believe him (as reported by Diodorus), could have been the Macedonian autocrat. Even more freedom could be given to the imagination—as with Leon of Pella, who composed Alexander's correspondence with Olympias.

It seems Euhemerus did allow himself a caustic allusion to Alexarchus—the detail about a hill rising on the island called the Throne of Uranus. In Alexarchus's Ouranopolis, both Uranus and the elevated landscape were present. However, this could have been a simple coincidence—Mount Uranias towered not far from Carthage. But the deification of man, which for Euhemerus and others was merely the subject of an amusing rhetorical exercise or even, to some extent, a philosophical speculative construct, became imperative for Alexarchus in Ouranopolis.

2.10. Alexandria, Mouseion and the Possible Euhemerian Circle

Philosophers, writers, and other intellectuals rarely emerge from a vacuum. Being solitary isn't the most natural or desirable state for them. They need occasions, topics, and a forum to express their views, ideas, and concepts, to exchange opinions and, ultimately, debate. In the days before the internet and mass-produced books, communication between professionals and their peers was difficult. Separated by distance and the impossibility of communication, they were forced to simmer within a limited range of topics. Unless, of course, they were united under one umbrella by certain schools, or brought together by the same or roughly the same geography. This is why it's not difficult for us to concede—not to assume, for we lack even the bare minimum of evidence, only implicit associations—that Euhemerus, Leon of Pella, Palaephatus, Dionysius Scythobranchion and Iambulus were not separated by miles and years.

And even Hecataeus. Let's also not forget that he authored a work, "On the Poetry of Homer and Hesiod." It has not survived, and we can only guess whether it emphasized identifying what we would now call utopian motifs, or whether Hecataeus was interested in something entirely different in the work of the pillars of ancient epic poetry. Suda also called him a grammarian. If it is true that he took part in Alexander's campaign to the borders of Syria, he could have discussed Homer with his fellow countryman Anaxicrates, who was credited with mentoring Hecataeus' teacher Pyrrho, and Callisthenes, who are also known to have studied the work of the "great blind man".¹⁷

It is supposed that Hecataeus spent the rest of his days, approximately until 290 (when Demetrius of Phalerum had already settled in Egypt), in Alexandria with Ptolemy. Euhemerus' work appeared around 280—at least, this is what Jacobi and other researchers believe, based on Callimachus's mention of his name (Callim F 191, 10–11 Pfeiffer). Moreover, it appeared in Alexandria.¹⁸ Scythobranchion, it seems, worked in Alexandria. It's possible that Palaephatus also visited Alexandria. As for Leon of Pella, there's much less doubt about that.

But that's not all. Callimachus also mentioned a certain Amometus, also called a grammarian, like Hecataeus, and also an Alexandrian. Amometus' name also appears in Pliny the Elder, also in association with Hecataeus:

¹⁷ Although the latter two seem to have been irreconcilably at odds with each other.

¹⁸ An inventory of all proposed dates for the composition of the *Hiera Anagraphe* can be found in Winiarczyk (2013, p. 15). It is also possible that Euhemerus spent a considerable period in Alexandria (Brill's New Jacoby, n.d., "063 Euhemerus of Messene", p. 7).

“Their first river of record is the Psitaras, the next is the Kambari, the third is the Lanos, then the Chryse Peninsula, the Gulf of Kirnaba, the Atianos River, the Gulf of Attacorus, and their people, protected from all harmful winds by mountain peaks exposed to the sun—they live in the same climate as the Hyperboreans; Amometus wrote a separate book about them, just as Hecataeus wrote about the Hyperboreans”. An inventory of all proposed dates for the composition of the Hiera Anagraphe can be found in Winiarczyk (2013, p. 15). It is also possible that Euhemerus spent a considerable period in Alexandria (Brill's New Jacoby, n.d., "063 Euhemerus of Messene", p. 7). In Pliny, the Attacori also appear in the vicinity of the Hyperboreans!¹⁹

We know virtually nothing else about Amometus, although F. Altheim, for example—unlike K. Müller, who limited Amometus' contribution to the Attacori—considered him Pliny's primary source (though via Varro) for the northeastern part of the Oecumene. He was also credited with a certain Nile “periplus.” But, of course, our attention is drawn to the fact that Pliny compares Amometus and his Attacori's writings, in terms of genre, to Hecataeus and the Hyperboreans. “Ethnographic romanticism” again? Amometus is a mystery. And his name is atypical. Perhaps Cyrenaic. Or perhaps it is a pseudonym, like Dionysius Skitobrachion, Euhemerus, Palaephates, and, quite possibly, Iambulus.

Even less is known about Timocles, who settled his Ophiocanes, or Ophiophagi (Ophiocane / Ophiophagi)—“snake-eaters.” Regarding Timocles, as well as Amometus, Euhemerus, and Iambulus, see Rohde (1960, pp. 219–220)—in roughly the same region of the Oecumene as Amometus. Suda knows of two Timocles, both of whom were comic poets; only one also wrote tragedies (Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* 9.407b), while the other contented himself with comedies and belonged, according to most scholars, to Middle Comedy—contrary to Pollux, who classified him as an author of New Comedy. The general consensus now is that these are not two different poets. There is also an epigrammatist with the same name, presumably from the third century, who is attributed, with varying justification, to the Palatine Anthology (§ 12.32), but that is all we have on him.

We omit from this list Theopompus and his Meropia, which clearly suit our topic. Theopompus even died in Egypt – and apparently by a natural death, although there were rumors that ***“Ptolemy, the king of that country, not only did not want to receive the writer, but also almost took his life as a man who constantly interfered in most affairs, if his friends had not interceded on his behalf”.*** (Photius, *Bibliotheca* 176).

In all honesty, let's also recall Theodore the Atheist. He apparently made no mark in the “new mythology” field. However, according to Diogenes Laërtius, he wrote: “On the Gods.” It's difficult to say to what extent his atheism, the completeness of which is questioned by many, overlapped with the ideas of Euhemerus and his associates. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out some significant parallels—for Theodore considered the gods to be the products of human settings. Moreover, Theodore was also an Alexandrian during the period we are interested in!

3. CONCLUSION

Was the Alexandrian epicenter of early Euhemerism an accidental and inexplicable coincidence? Could the diversely learned philosophers, historians, and gifted writers just mentioned, all with similar interests, have developed separately and independently, even while living side by side? And could Demetrius of Phalerum have been somehow connected to this hypothetical community, if it actually existed? An unofficial minister of culture at the Ptolemaic court in Alexandria, who, in addition to collecting books for the Library, also gathered brilliant representatives of the Greek scientific and artistic elite around him? A keen connoisseur of Homer and an admirer of extraordinary personalities—regardless of their school or geography?

¹⁹ “Some authors place the Hyperboreans not in Europe, but on the nearer shores of Asia...” (Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 4.90).

We have no definitive, proven answer to this question. And given the current silence on sources, there can be no such thing. But it suggests itself. The intellectuals of such a “circle”, if it did indeed form in Alexandria during the years we’re reviewing, were certainly not members of the underground. They could not have managed without access to and affiliation with the Library and the Mouseion, without Ptolemaic “research grants” in one form or another, administered by Demetrius of Phalerum.

It’s unlikely that Demetrius couldn’t have been personally acquainted with Hecataeus of Abdera, who enjoyed the affections of Ptolemy Soter and who frequented the same corridors of Alexandria at the same time, though likely more rarely. One could, for example, even try to discern in one of the passages of Plutarch’s “Table Talk” about Hecataeus a connection to the sumptuary laws of the Phalerean in Athens (Plutarch, *Table Talk* 4.3.1), but this isn’t entirely clear as indisputable confirmation of the nature of their relationship. Neither is the above-mentioned hypothesis about Demetrius of Phalerum’s close acquaintance with Palaephatus.

The surge of literary “romanticism” in Alexandria at the time—ethnographic (according to Pöhlmann), or any other—botanical, zoological, mineralogical, etc.—all these imaginary chorographies of unknown lands, existing only in the imagination of their authors—can also easily be explained logically, even beyond the expansion of the Hellenic oecumene as a result of Alexander’s campaigns. Description, systematization, and cataloging, even if pertaining to mysterious natural phenomena, the customs and social structures of the inhabitants of distant lands, unusual constructions, and the deeds of mythological and legendary figures, is a thoroughly Peripatetic practice, inherent to this philosophical school from its inception. And it was diligently reproduced in the Alexandrian Mouseion by Demetrius of Phalerum and Strato. This line, in its “respectable,” unimaginative execution, soon acquired the highly respected name of paradoxography.²⁰ It included the works of the same Aristotle (“History of Animals”, “On the Customs of the Barbarians”), albeit sometimes with the prefix “Pseudo-” (“Stories of Curiosities”, “On the Cosmos”), Theophrastus (“Research on Plants”, “On Metals”, “On Stones”, “On Smells”, “On Salt, Milk and Alum”, “On Water”, “On Fossils”, “On Darkening”, “On the Morals and Intelligence of Animals”, “On Biting and Attacking (Animals)”, “On Color-Changing [Animals]”, “On the Differences in Animals by Habitat”, “On Animals Living on Land”, “On the So-Called Envious Animals” etc.) and even partly Dicaearchus (“Life of Greece”).

The Euhemeristic paradoxographers of Alexandria, deliberately and consciously upending traditional, everyday notions in the minds of their readers, simply diluted the Lyceum’s descriptive standard with fictional effects, a penchant for entertainment, and sometimes even almost shocking sensationalism.

Our Euhemeristic writers weren’t the only ones guilty of expositions of various “mirabilia”. The craze for inventing unprecedented, exotic curiosities and composing blatant fables about distant and unattainable corners of the world didn’t focus on the Ptolemaic capital. It didn’t bypass Cnidus (Ctesias), Samos (Douris), Cyprus (Clearchus of Soli), Sigeum (Damastus), Plataea (Deimachus), Chios (Theopompus), Cyme (Ephorus), and other islands and mainland cities in Greece.

And, incidentally, not only in Greece, but also in Thrace. For example, Berga, across the Strymon from Amphipolis, was the birthplace of Antiphanes, the author of the book “Ἀπίστα” (“On the Improbable”)—a collection of colorful fictions about unknown lands and peoples, considered one of the founders of the genre.

Demetrius of Phalerum also has “On Antiphanes” in the list of works cited by Diogenes Laërtius. From what we know (or rather, don’t know), this Antiphanes could have been either an Athenian (actually a metic, most likely from Rhodes), a renowned author of Middle Comedy, or the aforementioned Bisaltian from Berga. The probabilities are equal, but in the latter case, the version under consideration about the Euhemeristic community in Alexandria would take on a more coherent outline.

²⁰ From the Greek *παρὰ δόξαν* – against the ordinary.

And perhaps it would have deserved more of a place in the history of the Mouseion and the Library, despite the “anti-monarchism” of their works. If things are different, then Alexandrian “regular” paradoxography must have begun a little later – with the Cyrenians Callimachus and Philostephanus, Bolos of Mendes and the Egyptian Archelaus.²¹ But certainly not out of nowhere.

²¹ The biography of this epigrammatic poet is full of obscurities. At least regarding his birthplace – a certain Egyptian town named either Chersonissus or Chersonessita. Archelaus has sometimes been placed in the time of both Alexander and the first Ptolemy. But we avoid the temptation to add him to our list of euhemerics, for we find it more reasonable to rely on the point of view and argumentation of Antonius Westermann – Westermann (1839) *Παραδοξογράφοι: Scriptores Rerum Mirabilium Graeci, Insunt: (Aristotelis) Mirabiles Auscultationes. Antigoni, Apollonii, Phlegontis Historiae Mirabiles, Michaelis Pselli Lectiones Mirabiles, Reliquorum Eiusdem Generis Scriptorum Deperditorum Fragmenta ; Accedunt Phlegontis Macrobiani Et Olympiadum Reliquiae Et Anonymi Tractatus De Mulieribus Etc.*, Londini., XXII – XXIV. However, Archelaus has even been dated to the time of Ptolemy Euergetes II.

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