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An Early Glimpse of the  
*De dictis et factis regis*  
*Alphonsi Aragonum?*

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## *Autoritat: An Early Glimpse of the De dictis et factis regis Alphonsi Aragonum?*

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ABSTRACT: The account of the funeral sermon of Alfonso the Magnanimous delivered in Valencia cathedral on 28 July 1458 in the *Dietari del capellà d'Alfons el Magnànim* refers to the king's *actes* and *auctoritats* and therefore may offer a glimpse of his status as a *rex facetus* very soon after the composition of Beccadelli's *De dictis et factis regis Alphonsi Aragonum* in 1455.

KEYWORDS: Alfonso the Magnanimous; sermons; Beccadelli, *De dictis et factis regis Alphonsi Aragonum*; *Dietari del capellà d'Alfons el Magnànim*.

The text known to modern scholarship as the *Dietari del capellà d'Alfons el Magnànim* opens with a universal history, follows it with a history of the Crown of Aragon, and develops into a series of histories (one might almost say micro-histories) of the deeds of Alfonso the Magnanimous in Spain and Naples. The text is famous for its reports of crimes and punishments, often of a sexual nature, in Valencia (Escartí 2001) and descriptions of the splendid culture of display typical of the autumn of the Middle Ages (Narbona Vizcaíno 1993; Ferrer Valls 1994). The author shows first-hand knowledge of the king, and since the first edition (Sanchis i Sivera 1932) has been commonly identified with Melcior Miralles (1419?–1502?), the royal chaplain.

The death of King Alfonso in Naples on 27 June 1458 was marked by splendid ceremonies in Valencia, recorded in the *Dietari* for 28 July:

Divendres, a xxviii. de joliol, feu la ciutat de Valencia la remembrança en la seu de la mort del molt excellent victorios rey e senyor don Alfonso, hon fon fet en la dita seu un papallo molt alt, entre lo cancel e lo cor, e fon fet sobre quatre bares, e les taules heren negres, e de part damunt era en punta, e damunt molts ciris, e de part daval lo papalo era de tella negra ab les armes reals, e en mig, lo rey a caval ab la espasa en la ma, e les bares que tenien lo papalo cubertes de tella negra, ab moltes armes del dit senyor rey, e bars, daval lo papalo, havia hun lit molt alt, e damunt huna tomba, e tot cubert de drap d'or ab molts senyals reals, en manera que estava molt altament [...] E fonc celebrat solempne offici e ab gran devocio; e la missa fon celebrada per lo bisbe Cascant, e foren al ofici tots los preveres de Valencia, sermona lo reverent mestre Jaume Marti de Campanar, del orde dels menos, e pres tema “*Quis est iste Rex glorie, dominus fortis et potens, Dominus potens in prelio*” [Ps 23:8]. Tot lo sermo fonch molt alt de les magnificencies e actes virtuosos del dit senyor rey; concloent en totes ses autoritats. (Sanchis i Sivera 1932: 213–14).

What is the meaning of “*auctoritats*” here? It occurs in proximity with the magnificent and virtuous acts of the king. It also appears in the account of the funeral of Queen Maria on 7 September, described in similar detail:

...sermo lo reverent mestre Pere Queralt, provincial de preicados e confessor; pres tema “*Ego quasi vitis fructificavi suavitatis odoris [et flores mei fructus honoris et honestatis]*” [Ecclus 24:23], fonch tot lo sermo de molta sanctedat de perfeccio, de savia, e de molts grans actes e fets resplandents en l’amor de Deu, per les quals virtuts ell concloya en cascuna sa auctoritat, que la molt illustrissima senyora e reyna era collocada en la subirana gloria de paradís, per sa gran perfeccio de sanctedat de vida (Sanchis i Sivera 1932: 221)

The *Dietari* uses a similar phrase as in the previous entry, associating the *auctoritats* with the queen’s virtuous acts.

The purpose of this brief note is to argue that the *auctoritats* in the *Dietari* entry for 28 July 1458 refers to the *sententiae* for which Alfonso was to become famous all over Europe. These two sermons seem to occupy a liminal area between medieval and renaissance funeral oratory. D’Avray (1990, 1994) shows that sermons around this time, in marked contrast to later developments (McManamon 1989), were not concerned with

evoking, even for the purposes of flattery, the character and individuality of the person commemorated, but rather with meditations on the brevity of life and the vileness of everyman. This impression, as D'Avray himself admits, derives in part from two aspects of the transmission of medieval funeral sermons, which tend to be abbreviated or to be rhetorical models. It might therefore be anachronistic to see in the Valencian sermons evocations of the deeds and words of the two monarchs.

There is however some evidence that these two orations were informed by newer developments. D'Avray points to a few English-Latin sermons on named individuals which mention anecdotal details (Horner 1950 cites such a funeral sermon from 1412). Alfonso was present in effigy in the temporary structure erected in the Cathedral, on horseback and sword in hand (for such figures see Beaune 1975: 129, for whom in France "L'effigie à proprement parler apparaît entre 1403 et 1422"). The *thematata* of the sermons were suitable to the individuals, the king's speaking of kings and battles, and the queen's of the quieter womanly virtues of sanctity, devotion, fragrance and fruitfulness. Thus it is not unhistorical to look for personal references in the Valencia sermons.

Coromines's entry for *autoritat* is brief (1980, 1:476):

*Autoritat* [Llull; *Cost. De Tortosa*; "hòmens molt doctes y de molta autoritat y crèdit", "de *septunx* no's troben auctoritats, en quant són parts del peu ---" OPou, *ThPu.* 146, 760.

Faraudo de Saint-Germain records the following medieval uses of *autoritat*:

[1] AUTORITAT s. Prerrogativa. "E los clergues no demanen ne s retinguen draps / tovallons / ciris / candeles / tortes / ne algunes altres coses per autoritat propria: si donchs alguna de aquestes coses no seran a ells de grat donades." Sentència de Jaume I sobre delmes i primícies (s. XV). València.

[2] AUTORITAT s. Autorització, permís. "... al pobil no fa freytura ne es necessari autoritat del tudor a guanyar ne a fer son prou..." Furs de València (ed. Pastor, València 1547) fur 5, De rerum dom., f. 213, 3.

[3] AUTORITAT, [AUCTORITAT] s. Facultat, poder, força, potència. V. actroritat, octoritat. "... e plega la sua forssa a les .ij. venes que passen a les venes

de la visio ab la sua auctoritat als uyls, e ab la sua auctoritat als uyls, e ab la sua quantitat en la obra de la visio menys de destrie que no y aya.” Joan Jacme Alcoati f. xiiij, a. “E io, per auctoritat e poder a mi dat, te absolch de tots los peccats per tu a mi confessats...” Eiximenis, Francesc (?) Cercapou, 2.765 tercer punt. [4] AUTORITAT, [AUCTORITAT] s. Text o paraules que s’invoquen per a reforçar una opinió. “En los religiosos o preycadós que no hauran estudiat, hauran vergonya de demanar si entenen be les autoritats.” Ferrer, Vicent *Quaresma* 86, XXIX. “... e mostram los la paraula, e levam nos en peus, e començam una auctoritat de la escriptura que diu: Non minor est virtus...” Rei Jaume I *Crònica (Rei Jaume I) (ed. Aguiló, 1873)* § 388. “E si parles per auctoritat, parla a imatge e a semblança de pensa.” *Proverbis de Salamó* MS. n. 216, f. lxxxixij, b. Bib. Univ. València.

Alcover-Moll give five definitions of *autoritat*:

AUTORITAT *f.*: cast. *autoridad*. 1. Dret o poder d’imposar obediència. Lo veguer pot pendre tot hom... per sa propria auctoritat, Cost. Tort. I, i, xi. La hu d’ells lo qual era de major auctoritat, Valter Gris. 3 v.o

2. Facultat d’imposar-se pel propi mèrit a l’opinió dels altres. Haguemhi dels còmits e de les naus d’aquels qui eren de maior auctoritat, Jaume I, Cròn. Les coses de la fe... les deu hom creure per autoritat divina, Egidi Romà, ll. 2, pt. 2a, c. 5.

3. Testimoni o text que se cita per convèncer, en virtut de son mèrit o prestigi. E pus per autoritats no’ns podem auenir, que assajassem si’ns poriem auenir per rahons demostratiues, Lull Gentil 12. Per aquella authoritat dient: “nullum malum...”, Pere IV, Cròn. 292. Vols dir que de auctoritats prou ne has llestes, Metge Somni i.

4. Persona o persones que ocupen els càrrecs de govern. Noy, porta beure per l’Autoritat, Vilanova Obres, xi, 124. Ha obtengut menos protecció per part de ses autoritats, Ignor. 4.

5. Persona que mereix imposar-se pel seu mèrit o superioritat a l’opinió dels altres. Ubrika, que és..., sens dubte, una autoritat en la matèria, Espriu Lab. 32.

Fon.: *æwturitát* (Barc.); *awtoritát* (Val.); *æwtoriðát* (Palma).

Etim.: pres del llatí *auctōritāte*, mat. sign.

Faraudo’s last section and Alcover-Moll’s third meaning are closest to our text. However, *auctoritas* in Medieval Latin can mean specifically a *sententia*, as in the *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, a collection of wise sayings

extracted from Aristotle and other authors (Boethius, et al.) (Hamesse 1974). Goliardic metre *cum auctoritate* consisted of monorhyme strophes in which each line (*auctoritas*) of a sententious text is preceded by three lines of goliardic verse (seven syllables, caesura, six syllables) which amplify its meaning and take their rhyme from it (Raby 1934, 2: 196–98; Norberg 1958: 188–89; Schmidt 1990: 39–55): a notable Hispanic example is attributed to Alonso de Cartagena (Cartagena 2004) .

In the art of preaching, the *auctoritas-sententia* is recommended as an opening. John of Wales writes:

de introitu sermonis. Tripliciter potest fieri: vel accipiendo auctoritatem canonis, vel alicujus sancti, vel aliquod commune proverbium (Charland 1936: 137)

Concerning the introduction of the sermon. This may be done in three ways: by using either an *auctoritas* from the canon, or from some saint, or some common proverb.

The *auctoritas-sententia* also serves to amplify the theme. As Eiximenis says:

De introductione thematis [...] Tertius modus est per auctoritatem, cuius finis tangit materiam thematis, uerbi gracia sit hoc thema, gracia exempli: *Prope est Dominus omnibus timentibus eum*. Ad inducendum hoc thema, potest accipi illud dictum Isaie lv<sup>o</sup>: *Querite Dominum dum inueniri potest; inuocate eum dum prope est*, ut sic adaptetur dicta auctoritas ad propositum (Martí de Barcelona 1936: 34, cf. 34, 38, 39)

The introduction of the theme. The third manner is by quotation of an *auctoritas* which is related to the content of the theme. For example, if the theme is: “God is near to those who fear him” (Ps 144: 18), to introduce the theme one can begin with a verse from Isaiah, “Search for the Lord while he can be found, call him while he is near” (Is 55:6), so that the said authority is adapted to the purpose. (adapted from Renedo 2009: 57)

It was not commonly used in the conclusion of the sermon. Indeed, in another related genre of composition—the art of poetry—the locus of the *auctoritas* is the opening of the discourse.

Geoffrey of Vinsauf writes:

Si pars prima velit majus diffundere lumen,  
Thematis intacta serie, sententia sumpta  
Ad speciale nihil declinet, sed caput edat  
Altius ad quoddam generale; [...]  
Supra thema datum sistat, sed spectet ad illud  
Recta fronte; nihil dicat, sed cogitet inde.

(lines 126–33; Calvo Revilla 2008: 138)

If the first part of the work aims at even greater splendor (the natural sequence of the theme being kept intact), let a well-chosen *sententia* incline in no respect to the particular, but rather raise its head higher, to something universal [...] Let the *sententia* stand above the given theme, but glance at it; let it say nothing outright, but develop its thought therefrom (Murphy 2001: 37)

Alfonso's reputation as a *rex facetus* was spread by Antonio Beccadelli il Panormita's *De dictis et factis regis Alphonsi Aragonum*, written in 1455, that is, in Alfonso's lifetime. It gathers some 227 apophthegms in four books which demonstrate the monarch's wit and wisdom (Taylor 2017). Beccadelli draws on a tradition of writing the lives of great men and following them with a collection of the subject's sayings. One such was Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Sayings of the Philosophers*. He was translated into Latin by Ambrogio Traversari in 1433, and Alfonso had a copy (Ferrer Santanach 2014: 51, 58).

In the light of these sources it may be argued that "auctoritats" in the *Dietari* entry for 28 July 1458 refers to the *sententiae* for which Alfonso was to become famous all over Europe. The preacher eloquently ("alt") praised his deeds ("actes virtuosos") and concluded with "all" (an obvious hyperbole) his sayings. This document is very close in time to the composition of Beccadelli's work in 1455, and therefore constitutes an early glimpse of the circulation of the wise king's sayings.



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