

The Shadow Under the Sun: A Look at the Early Life of

Philippe, Duke of Orleans, brother to Louis XIV

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October 13, 2017

HIST 110-05

Professor Geraghty

Philippe I, born Duke of Anjou, later Duke of Orleans, was the younger brother of King Louis XIV of France. Monsieur, the title for the king's younger brother, was second in line to the throne at birth and upon Louis XIII's death, he became the immediate heir until Louis XIV's son was born. Philippe is known for founding the Orleans line and for being a blatant homosexual with an infamously luxurious lifestyle.

Philippe grew to be a flamboyant character, carefree in his lifestyle and choice of lovers. Due to the previous circumstances surrounding the brothers to the king his mother, Anne of Austria, formed his character herself to make him submissive. His personality would ultimately be shaped by the treatment of his mother and brother and how his budding characteristics were addressed for their gain.

To understand why Philippe was raised the way he was, one must first look at France's history with second sons: Historically, kings of France had to be wary in regards to their younger brothers as it was common for them to rebel against the crown<sup>1</sup>. Gaston, Duke of Orleans prior to Philippe, and younger brother of Louis XIII, was by not an exception to this. He was a constant conspirator against his brother and he conspired against his chief minister, Mazarin, to try to sabotage the regent Queen's power following Louis XIII's death. He never directly attacked the regime, refusing to take the throne when he had the chance, claiming that he did not want it. He'd rather undermine their power by refusing to support the Crown during the Fronde, resulting in him being sent into exile and calling for the meeting of the Estates General, which was an

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Nichols Barker, *Brother to the Sun King* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press), 14.

opposition to the throne<sup>2</sup>. Louis XIII was constantly on guard against his brother, even accusing Gaston and Anne of plotting to make Gaston king early in their marriage<sup>3</sup>.

Louis XIII, already paranoid on account of Gaston, was wary of Philippe for fear that he may act similarly towards Louis XIV. One incident saw him accusing Anne of turning a one year old Philippe against him when Philippe cried seeing his father wearing a nightcap<sup>4</sup>. Though this was an extreme reaction, everything the young prince did was examined for signs of rebellion. When Louis XIV became king and the three year old Philippe became heir, Anne of Austria and Mazarin made a series of deliberate decisions regarding how Philippe would be raised to ensure that he would not plot against his brother.

Philippe showed from an early age many similarities to his problematic uncle. The French crown was alarmed by their twin, infectious personalities<sup>5</sup>: Gaston was well liked by the people and envied by his brother for he was “lighthearted, debonair, successful with the ladies, was everything the king was not”<sup>6</sup>. Philippe demonstrated similar traits to his uncle, but he also showed an outspokenness that made him everything *his* quiet, observant, and overall restrained brother Louis XIV was not<sup>7</sup>. A popular, intelligent brother to the king, and immediate heir to the French throne, Philippe was a dead ringer for his uncle and therefore posed a threat to Louis XIV, a threat that was clear to Anne of Austria and Mazarin.

They decided the best way to quell Philippe’s budding personality would be to teach him to submit completely to his brother. As noted, the young Philippe outshone the king, which was

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 36-37

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>4</sup> Olivier Bernier, *Louis XIV: A Royal Life* (New York: Doubleday), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 36

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 14-15

completely unacceptable. Anne swiftly decided that Monsieur would be left behind while she and Louis went on official travels to ensure that the king would not be eclipsed by Philippe<sup>8</sup>. Philippe quickly learned that only by obeying his brother and staying in the background could he receive his mother's love. Anne also knew that Philippe had a soft heart so she took advantage to ensure that he loved his brother above all. If Philippe knew his place and obeyed king and loved his king, then he would surely not want to rebel against him<sup>9</sup>.

Anne of Austria made clear to Philippe that he was not nearly as important as the king. After all, it was Louis who made Anne worthwhile, who took her out of the humiliating position she had occupied before: a foreign queen, publicly disliked by her own husband<sup>10</sup>. Philippe was never mistreated since he was the king's brother and the heir. Yet, he was not the king and would be treated as such and his mother would not treasure him as she did Louis. In 1647, Philippe became very ill, however, Anne did not seem overly frightened. Any real fear of hers was that if Philippe passed, Gaston would become heir instead<sup>11</sup>. As Philippe worsened, Anne left the capital with Louis. Eventually, she showed concern for her younger son when he came close to dying, but left him quickly "on hearing that Louis was lonely for her"<sup>12</sup>. She returned to Philippe a month later, finding him frighteningly thin and pale<sup>13</sup>. Surely adding insult to injury, Anne acted contrastingly when Louis fell ill shortly after. She refused to leave his side and sobbed incessantly. Philippe was also overwrought over his brother's illness, but his presence made

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<sup>8</sup> Barker, *Brother*, 15

<sup>9</sup> Bernier, *Louis XIV*, 57

<sup>10</sup> Barker, *Brother*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Bernier, *Louis XIV*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Barker, *Brother*, 13

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 13

Anne feel worse. A fact which was surely related to Philippe, he must have wanted even more to earn his mother's love somehow<sup>14</sup>.

Anne's favoritism is present in sources from the time. It is clearly seen in a painting of the young royals and the regent queen. Anne is pictured with Louis close by her side with her arm wrapped around the young king. Philippe stands on her other side, appearing as an afterthought with his mother placing a reluctant hand on his forearm (fig. 1). Publically, Anne of Austria appears affectionate towards both her sons but subliminally, she sends a message that she disregards Philippe<sup>15</sup>. The only way for Philippe to receive what he could of his mother's love was to do as she wanted and accept his place.



Fig. 1. Anne of Austria, Louis XIV and Philippe de France, Duc d'Anjou (Reproduction courtesy of Versailles 3D.)

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<sup>14</sup> Bernier, *Louis XIV*, 27

<sup>15</sup> Anonymous, *Anne of Austria, Regent, Louis XIV and Philippe de France, Duc d'Anjou*, unknown, unknown, on *Discover the 3D scale models*, Versailles 3D. <http://www.versailles3d.com/en/discover-the-3d-scale-models/1624.html>

As the younger son, the “spare”, Philippe was always lesser than Louis. However, Louis’ accession of the throne when Philippe was only three years old cemented the idea that Philippe may have been Louis’ brother, but Louis was to be Philippe’s king. Louis’ early accession made it so that Philippe grew up with the constant reminder that he was not the king, but simply his brother. Upon Louis’ recovery from his illness in 1647, Anne ordered for there to be extravagant celebration for his restoration of health when Philippe had himself been deathly sick with no such occasion for his good health<sup>16</sup>, one of constant reminders of his lesser status. This affected him by showing that he was destined to be left in the background.

As a part of his substandard upbringing, Philippe was made to always address his brother as king and to obey his king. Louis was taught to recognize Philippe less like a brother and more like a citizen. This was a very deliberate choice as a result of Gaston. By ensuring that Philippe knew his place and that Louis knew his power over his brother, it was believed that there would not be a power struggle later<sup>17</sup>. This power dynamic went as far as to Louis addressing Philippe as his son in letter when he was nine years old, saying, “Believe me always your affectionate and good little papa. L O U I S.”<sup>18</sup> By calling himself Philippe’s father, Louis is assuming the place of the father to all his citizens under him, including and especially his own brother. Philippe loved his brother above all, as did Louis, but Monsieur also knew that his brother was his king before anything.

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<sup>16</sup> Barker, *Brother to King*, 13

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 14

<sup>18</sup> Louis to Philippe, Amiens, July 1, 1647, quoted in Carré, *Enfance*, 117

Regardless of the emphasis attempted by Anne to distinguish the boys, they were still brothers, young boys, only two years apart and thus they would act as such occasionally. One such occasion occurred when Louis and Philippe were 13 and 11 years old, respectively:

“The King had Monsieur sleep in his bedroom... In the morning, when they woke up, the King, without thinking, spat on Monsieur’s bed, who immediately and on purpose spat on the King’s. The King, a little angry now, spat in Monsieur’s face. Monsieur then leapt on the King’s bed and pissed on it; the King did the same on Monsieur’s bed... and soon after they grappled and started to fight... Monsieur had become angry much faster than the King, but the King was much harder to appease than Monsieur.”<sup>19</sup>

Their scuffle was one that would normally be expected of brothers, but for the King and the Duke of Anjou, it was unallowable. It demonstrated the infamous temperament of Monsieur but it also showed how during the scuffle, they were brothers, but after Louis was King. Following this altercation, Monsieur took the blame for the whole affair, not because he began it, but because he retaliated against his King; it showed both boys that Louis could treat Philippe as he pleased but Philippe was not to treat Louis as anything other than his king<sup>20</sup>.

Along with manipulating Philippe emotionally, his education was similarly exploited so he would not have the capacity nor the interest to plot against his brother. While Philippe retained his cleverness and wit, he received an inferior formal education; it was thought that he should have a much lesser education than his brother so that he would not have the ability to concern himself with political matters, thus he would always have to submit to Louis. As the

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<sup>19</sup> La Porte, 418 quoted in Olivier Bernier, *Louis XIV: A Royal Life* (New York: Doubleday), 48-49.

<sup>20</sup> Bernier, *Louis XIV*, 49

immediate heir to the throne, giving Philippe a second rate education was a legitimate gamble on the chance that he would have to assume a throne before other heirs were produced, but it was one that French ministers were willing to take as a precautionary measure. Instead of learning languages and mathematics, war strategies and politics, Philippe played all day and his lessons were purposefully cut short when he did have them to let him amuse himself rather than study. Many were surprised to find the prince acting like a child while the King, only two years his senior, was concerning himself with the ins and outs of politics. Philippe was left with minimum literacy and with the impression that his duty was to be idle and concern himself with frivolities instead of matters of state<sup>21</sup>.

One such frivolity that was certainly not Mazarin and Anne's intention but something used to their advantage was Philippe's evident effeminate and homosexual nature. This is usually what people see as Anne's principle manipulation of Philippe as she allowed him to pursue his effeminate and homosexual urges even though it was highly controversial in Catholic France. By allowing this, she thought that Philippe would not want to concern himself with "masculine" affairs like war. She also knew that Philippe would have to depend on his brother because it was only by the King's grace that Philippe was allowed to carry out his endeavours including lavish spending on finery for himself and his male companions<sup>22</sup>. Philippe did grow up not wanting to partake in physical activities outside of dancing and according to his second wife, the only time

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<sup>21</sup> Barker, *Brother*, 17-29

<sup>22</sup> Bernier, *Louis XIV*, 106-107



when he willingly rode a horse was during war<sup>23</sup>. Philippe knew that he must act as he should as a sort of penance for his feminine nature.

As for Monsieur's infamous homosexuality, Anne allowed for it to play to her advantage: Philippe knew that he had to count on his brother to pay for his affairs; Louis was aware that he must provide for Philippe, whatever he wanted, or else Philippe may decide to concern himself with political matters instead of frivolities<sup>24</sup>. It would be the King's policy throughout his reign to keep Monsieur satisfied to prevent resentment. Philippe's second wife, Elisabeth Charlotte, noted this occurrence in her letters. For example, "Whenever the King fears Monsieur might be angry with him, as for instance when... the King keeps Monsieur sitting at home without entrusting him with a single command, then the King flatters Lorraine<sup>25</sup> and all Monsieur's other favourites, and he... is content and asks for nothing more."<sup>26</sup> By allowing him to be gay at a young age, Anne instilled the foundation for Philippe and Louis' power dynamic that would play out as adults.

Philippe may have never rebelled against Louis even without the measures taken by his mother as he did always love his brother and have a soft heart. However, that was a risk Anne was unwilling to take. The course of action implemented in Philippe's early life stunted his scholarly abilities and broke him emotionally to the point where he was forced to submit completely in order to be loved by his mother. He also had to submit to allow for his homosexuality, another form of emotional manipulation. The way in which he was raised

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<sup>23</sup> Elisabeth Charlotte to Countess Louise, [Paris], July 21, 1716, *Correspondence*, 257 quoted in Nancy Nichols Barker, *Brother to the Sun King* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press), 30.

<sup>24</sup> Bernier, *Louis XIV*, 154-155

<sup>25</sup> Monsieur's favorite companion and longtime lover

<sup>26</sup> Elisabeth Charlotte, *Letters from Liselotte* (New York: The McCall Publishing Company), 52

ensured without a shadow of a doubt that Philippe would be unable to mount a rebellion against the King.

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