

ANECDOTE, APOPTHEGM AND THE 'REAL' ALEXANDER

1. 'No other single man performed such remarkable deeds, whether in number or magnitude, among either Greeks or barbarians. That, I declare, is why I myself have embarked on this history, not judging myself unworthy to make Alexander's deeds known to men.' (Arrian 1.12.4)

'For it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives; and in the most illustrious deeds there is sometimes a manifestation of virtue and vice; a slight thing like a phrase or a joke often makes a greater revelation of character than battles where thousands fall.'

{Plutarch *Alexander* 1}

2. 'There Alexander spoke to him first and urged him to say what he desired to be one with him. Porus is said to have replied: 'Treat me, Alexander, like a king' (basilikw' ~), and Alexander, pleased with the reply, answered: 'That you shall have, Porus, for my own sake; now demand what you should wish for yours.' He replied that everything was comprised in this one request. Alexander was all the more pleased with his reply, and gave Porus the government of his Indians.'
- (Arrian 5.19.2)

3. 'When he was hit in the leg by an arrow, and many of those who were accustomed to hail him as a god hurried up to him, he, with a radiant face, said: 'This is blood, as you see, and not: *Ichor, like that which flows from the blessed immortals.*' (Plutarch *Moralia* 180 e)

'Aristobulus of Cassandreia says that the Athenian pancratiast, Dioxippus when Alexander was wounded and his blood was flowing, quoted the line: 'Ichor, such as flows from the blessed gods.' (Aristobulus F 47)

'No, my child, not for you are the works of warfare. Rather concern yourself with the lovely secrets of marriage, while all this shall be left to Athene and sudden Ares.' (*Iliad* 5.428-30)

4. 'In the drinking a strange event took place, well worth recording. A Macedonian named Corrhagus had been taken into the Companions, a man outstanding in bodily strength, who had repeatedly distinguished himself in battle. His temper exacerbated by the drinking, he challenged Dioxippus of Athens to single combat, an athlete who had been crowned for the most spectacular victories.....Both men were admired for their bodily strength and the ardour for combat. Everyone looked forward, as it were to a battle of gods. By his carriage and the brilliance of his arms the Macedonian inspired terror as if he were Ares, while Dioxippus excelled in sheer strength and athletic training; still more because of his club he bore a resemblance to Heracles (Diodorus 17.100.2-4)

5. 'Then the Macedonians attempted many assaults upon the mountain. At first they were driven back by volleys from the barbarians, and a great many were wounded; notably Alexander himself was shot right through the leg with an arrow, and a part of his fibula was broken. But even so he captured the position.' (On the Syr Darya, near Chodzhent: summer 329 Arrian 3.30.11)

'Alexander brought up his phalanx to the wall, and was then wounded in his ankle by an arrow from the wall, but not seriously.' (Massaga: winter 327/6: Arrian 4.26.4).'

6. 'The kings of Cyprus were the *choregoi* (presenters of performances).....and they competed against each other with amazing ambition. There was most rivalry between Nicocreon of Salamis and Pasicrates of Soli. By virtue of the lot they were allocated the most celebrated actors: Pasicrates was assigned Athenodorus and Nicocreon Thessalus, in whose success Alexander himself had an interest'. (Plutarch *Alexander* 29)

Anaxarchus *On Kingship*

'Great erudition certainly benefits the man who has it, but it also causes damage. It helps the person who is skilful. but damages the person who readily utters every word before every audience. One must know the appropriate occasion, for this is the defining mark of wisdom. Those who sing out their message inappropriately, even if their message is prudent, suffer the charge of stupidity for not rooting their opinion in wisdom.'

7. '(Anaxarchus) had an enemy in Nicocreon, the tyrant of Cyprus. Once at a symposium Alexander asked him what he thought of the meal, and they say that he replied, 'Everything is excellent, O king, but one thing is missing—the head of a certain satrap set before us at the table.', and he directed the comment at Nicocreon.' (Diogenes Laertes 9.58)

'Once there was a violent clap of thunder and they were all alarmed, Anaxarchus the sophist, who was present, said to Alexander: "Could you, the son of Zeus, do something similar?" Alexander laughed, and said: "No, for I do not wish to inspire fear in my friends, as you urge me to do, you who disparage my banquet because you see fish set out on the tables, not satraps' heads." (Plutarch *Alexander* 28)

'Satyrus in his *Lives* says that Anaxarchus, the philosopher of eudaimonism was one of Alexander's flatterers....Alexander laughed and said "No, for I do not wish to inspire fear, as you would school me to do, urging me to have the heads of satraps and kings offered to me at table.'" Athenaeus 6.250e)

'So Alexander did not just permit but actually ordered the title 'Jupiter's son' to be accorded to himself, and while he wanted such a title to add lustre to his

achievements he really detracted from them. Furthermore, although it is true that the Macedonians were accustomed to monarchy, they lived in the shadow of liberty more than other races, and so they rejected his pretensions to immortality with greater obstinacy than was good either for themselves or their king.’
Curtius 4.7.30-1)

8. ‘He shifted his lance to his left hand, and with his right he invoked the gods, as Callisthenes tells us, praying that, if he was really sprung from Zeus, they should protect and strengthen the Greeks, while the seer Aristander, wearing a white mantle with a gold crown on his head, rode along the ranks, pointing out to them an eagle, which soared over Alexander’s head and directed its flight straight against the enemy. At that sight the observers were inspired with the utmost bravery.’ (Plutarch *Alexander* 33 = Callisthenes F 36: cf. Curtius 4.15.26-7)

9. ‘Ephippus says that Alexander actually wore the sacred vestments at his banquets, sometimes the purple robe of Ammon together with slipper and rams’ horns just like the god, sometimes he wore the costume of Artemis, which he often displayed in his chariot, wearing Persian dress and showing the bow and hunting spear of the goddess over his shoulder, and occasionally he assumed the costume of Hermes too.....On formal occasions he wore the winged sandals and *petasos* on his head, and carried the herald’s staff in his hand. Often again he wore the lion’s skin and club, just like Heracles...Alexander sprinkled the very floor with costly perfume and scented wine. In his honour myrrh and other types of incense were burned; a religious silence born of fear held all those present in thrall; for he was intolerable and murderous, and was thought to be violently depressive (*melagcolikov~*).

At Ecbatana he arranged a festival in honour of Dionysus, with everything supplied at the feast at lavish expense; and Atropates the satrap feasted all the troops. Many gathered to see the sight, says Ephippus; proclamations were made which were exceedingly boastful and were more insolent than Persian arrogance; for among the various proclamations made at the crowning of Alexander one man in particular, a guardian of the arsenal (*oJploffulvax*), overstepped all the bounds of flattery and in collusion with Alexander ordered the herald to proclaim: ‘Gorgus the guardian of the arsenal, presents Alexander, son of Ammon, with 3000 gold staters and, when he lays siege to Athens, promises to equip him with 10,000 panoplies and the same number of catapults...’
(Athenaeus 12.537e-538b = Ephippus F 5)

‘Since Gorgus and Minnion of Iasos the sons of Theodotus, have been fine and admirable with respect to the Samians in exile; and Gorgus, spending his time at Alexander’s court, showed much devotion and zeal concerning the *demos* of Samos, being concerned that the Samians might quickly recover their native land; and when Alexander announced in the camp that he was giving back Samos to the Samians, and with the Greeks crowning him because of this, Gorgus also crowned him and sent word to Iasos that whenever those of the

Samians might return to their native land, they would carry away their goods
untaxed. (Samian inscription: SIG³ 312)

10. 'And in general, they say that Cassander;'s spirit was deeply penetrated and imbued with a dreadful fear of Alexander, so that many years afterwards, when he was now king of Macedon and master of Greece, as he was walking about and surveying the statues at Delphi, the sight of an image of Alexander smote him suddenly with a shuddering and trembling from which he could scarcely recover, and made his head swim.' Plutarch *Alexander* 74)