

Truth and Moral Critique in Arrian's *Anabasis*

Lucius Flavius Arrianus (ca. 89-after 145/146 AD)

Born in Nicomedia, in the province of Bithynia

Suffect Consul – ca. 129 AD

Governor of Cappadocia – ca. 131-137 AD

Eponymous Archon of Athens – 145/146 AD

Anabasis – seven-book history of Alexander's deeds from his ascension to his death (336-323 BC)

1) Arrian, *An.* 1.12.1-5 (the "Second Preface")

καὶ εὐδαιμόνισεν ἄρα, ὡς λόγος, Ἀλέξανδρος Ἀχιλλέα, ὅτι Ὀμήρου κήρυκος ἐς τὴν ἔπειτα μνήμην ἔτυχε. 2. καὶ μέντοι καὶ ἦν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ οὐχ ἥκιστα τούτου ἕνεκα εὐδαιμονιστέος Ἀχιλλεύς, ὅτι αὐτῷ γε Ἀλεξάνδρῳ, οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ἐπιτυχίαν, τὸ χωρίον τοῦτο ἐκλιπὲς ξυνέβη οὐδὲ ἐξηγέσθαι ἐς ἀνθρώπους τὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔργα ἐπαξίως, οὐτ' οὖν καταλογάδην, οὔτε τις ἐν μέτρῳ ἐποίησεν· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἐν μέλει ἦσθη Ἀλέξανδρος, ἐν ὅτῳ Ἰέρων τε καὶ Γέλων καὶ Θήρων καὶ πολλοὶ ἄλλοι ἐπεικότες, ὥστε πολὺ μείον γινώσκειται τὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἢ τὰ φαυλότατα τῶν πάλαι ἔργων· 3. ὁπότε καὶ ἡ τῶν μυρίων ζὺν Κύρῳ ἄνοδος ἐπὶ βασιλέα Ἀρτοξέρξην καὶ τὰ Κλεάρχου τε καὶ τῶν ἄμα αὐτῷ ἀλότων παθήματα καὶ ἡ κατάβασις αὐτῶν ἐκείνων, ἦν Ξενοφῶν αὐτοὺς κατήγαγε, πολὺ τι ἐπιφανέστερα ἐς ἀνθρώπους Ξενοφῶντος ἕνεκά ἐστιν ἢ Ἀλεξάνδρος τε καὶ τὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔργα. 4. καίτοι Ἀλέξανδρος οὔτε ζὺν ἄλλῳ ἐστράτευσεν, οὔτε φεύγων μέγαν βασιλέα τοὺς τῆ καθόδῳ τῆ ἐπὶ θάλασσαν ἐμποδῶν γινομένους ἐκράτησεν· ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις ἄλλος εἷς ἀνὴρ τοσαῦτα ἢ τηλικαῦτα ἔργα κατὰ πλῆθος ἢ μέγεθος ἐν Ἑλλήσιν ἢ βαρβάρους ἀπεδείξατο. ἔνθεν καὶ αὐτὸς ὀρμηθῆναί φημι ἐς τήνδε τὴν ζυγγραφήν, οὐκ ἀπαξιώσας ἑμαυτὸν φανερά καταστήσειν ἐς ἀνθρώπους τὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔργα. 5. ὅστις δὲ ὦν ταῦτα ὑπὲρ ἑμαυτοῦ γινώσκω, τὸ μὲν ὄνομα οὐδὲν δέομαι ἀναγράψαι, οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ ἄγνωστον ἐς ἀνθρώπους ἐστίν, οὐδὲ πατρίδα ἤτις μοί ἐστιν οὐδὲ γένος τὸ ἐμόν, οὐδὲ εἰ δὴ τίνα ἀρχὴν ἐν τῇ ἑμαυτοῦ ἦρξα· ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο ἀναγράφω, ὅτι ἐμοὶ πατρίς τε καὶ γένος καὶ ἀρχαὶ οἶδε οἱ λόγοι εἰσὶ τε καὶ ἀπὸ νέου ἔτι ἐγένοντο. καὶ ἐπὶ τῷδε οὐκ ἀπαξιώω ἑμαυτὸν τῶν πρώτων ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῇ Ἑλλάδι, εἴπερ οὖν καὶ Ἀλέξανδρον τῶν ἐν τοῖς ὄπλοις.

Then, as it is said, Alexander pronounced Achilles happy because he had Homer to preserve his memory. 2. And in fact Achilles was to be considered happy by Alexander not least for this reason, that not in keeping with his good fortune otherwise, it befell him to be deficient in this area, and the deeds of Alexander have not been related worthily to people, since neither in prose nor in verse has anyone done so. Not even in lyric poetry is Alexander sung, in which Hieron, Gelon, Theron, and many others are, who were in no way comparable to Alexander, with the result being that Alexander's accomplishments are much less known than the most trivial deeds that were performed long ago. 3. And as for the inland journey of the Ten Thousand with Cyrus to the Great King Artaxerxes, and the misfortunes of Clearchus and those captured with him, and the return march of those that Xenophon led, these things are considerably more evident to men on account of Xenophon than Alexander and his deeds. 4. And yet Alexander neither campaigned under someone else nor was he retreating from the Great King, defeating those who got in his way on his return to the sea. No, indeed, there is no other single man who displayed so many and such great deeds either in number or magnitude among the Greeks or the barbarians. For which reason, I say that I have risen to this work, insofar as I do not consider myself unworthy to render Alexander's deeds conspicuous to men. 5. Whoever I may be, I know this about myself, that I need to record nothing of my name, for it is not unknown among men, nor what country I call my own, nor my family, nor if indeed I have held some office in my country. But I record this, that my country and family and offices are these stories and were even from my youth. And for this reason I do not consider myself unworthy of those who are preeminent in the Greek language, since in fact I also do not consider Alexander unworthy of those preeminent in arms.

2) Arrian, *An.* Preface

1. Πτολεμαῖος ὁ Λάγου καὶ Ἀριστόβουλος ὁ Ἀριστοβούλου ὅσα μὲν ταῦτα ἄμφω περὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Φιλίππου συνέγραψαν, ταῦτα ἐγὼ ὡς πάντῃ ἀληθῆ ἀναγράφω, ὅσα δὲ οὐ ταῦτά, τούτων τὰ πιστότερα ἐμοὶ φαινόμενα καὶ ἅμα ἀξιοφηγότερα ἐπιλεξάμενος. 2. ἄλλοι μὲν δὴ ἄλλα ὑπὲρ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἀνέγραψαν, οὐδ' ἔστιν ὑπὲρ ὅτου πλείονες ἢ ἀξυμφωνότεροι ἐς ἀλλήλους· ἀλλ' ἐμοὶ Πτολεμαῖός τε καὶ Ἀριστόβουλος πιστότεροι ἔδοξαν ἐς τὴν ἀφήγησιν, ὁ μὲν ὅτι συνεστράτευσε βασιλεῖ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ, Ἀριστόβουλος, Πτολεμαῖος δὲ πρὸς τῷ ξυστρατεῦσαι ὅτι καὶ αὐτῷ βασιλεῖ ὄντι αἰσχρότερον ἢ τῷ ἄλλῳ ψεύσασθαι ἦν· ἄμφω δέ, ὅτι τετελευτηκότος ἤδη Ἀλεξάνδρου ξυγγράφουσιν [ἔτε] αὐτοῖς ἢ τε ἀνάγκη καὶ ὁ μισθὸς τοῦ ἄλλως τι ἢ ὡς συνηνέχθη ξυγγράφαι ἀπῆν. 3. ἔστι δὲ ἅ καὶ πρὸς ἄλλων ξυγγεγραμμένα, ὅτι καὶ αὐτὰ ἀξιοφηγῆτά τέ μοι ἔδοξε καὶ οὐ πάντῃ ἄπιστα, ὡς λεγόμενα μόνον ὑπὲρ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἀνέγραψα. ὅστις δὲ θαυμάσεται ἀνθ' ὅτου ἐπὶ τοσοῖσδε συγγραφεῦσι καὶ ἐμοὶ ἐπὶ νοῦν ἦλθεν ἥδε ἡ συγγραφή, τὰ τε ἐκείνων πάντα τις ἀναλεξάμενος καὶ τοῖσδε τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἐντυχῶν οὕτω θαυμαζέτω.

1. Wherever Ptolemy son of Lagos and Aristoboulos son of Aristoboulos both have written the same about Alexander son of Philip, I write these things up as entirely true; wherever they have not written the same, however, I have selected that which seems to me more credible and at the same time more worth telling. 2. Some to be sure have written up some things about Alexander, and others have written up others, and there is no subject about which writers are more numerous or more in disagreement with one another. But in my opinion Ptolemy and Aristoboulos seemed more credible for the narrative, Aristoboulos, because he was on the campaign with Alexander, and Ptolemy because, in addition to being on the campaign, it was more shameful for him, being himself a king, to speak falsely than it was for another. But in respect to both, since they were writing after Alexander had died, there was no necessity or financial motive for recording something differently than how it transpired. 3. There are, in addition, things that have been written by others, and when these seemed to me both worth telling and not entirely incredible, I have written these up only as “things that are said” about Alexander. Whoever will be amazed by the fact that in the face of so many other writers I have resolved to write this work, having read through all of theirs and having read mine let him be thus amazed.

3) Arrian, *An.* 1.11.2

καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἀγγέλλεται τὸ Ὀρφέως τοῦ Οἰάγρου τοῦ Θρακὸς ἄγαλμα τὸ ἐν Πιερίδι ἰδρῶσαι ξυνεχῶς· καὶ ἄλλοι ἄλλα ἐπεθείαζον τῶν μάντεων, Ἀρίστανδρος δέ, ἀνὴρ Τελμισσεύς, μάντις, θαρρεῖν ἐκέλευσεν Ἀλέξανδρον· δηλοῦσθαι γὰρ, ὅτι ποιηταῖς ἐπῶν τε καὶ μελῶν καὶ ὅσοι ἀμφὶ ᾠδὴν ἔχουσι πολὺς πόνος ἔσται ποιεῖν τε καὶ ᾄδειν Ἀλέξανδρον καὶ τὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔργα.

At this time the statue of Orpheus, son of Oiagrus the Thracian, was sweating continually in Pieria. Various seers were making various prophecies about this, but Aristandros, a Telmisseean man and a seer, urged Alexander to take courage: for it is clear that there will be great work for the poets of epic and choral songs and those who are occupied with lyric poetry to compose and sing Alexander and his deeds.

4) Arrian, *An.* 2.12.6-8

6. ταῦτα μὲν Πτολεμαῖος καὶ Ἀριστόβουλος λέγουσι· λόγος δὲ ἔχει καὶ αὐτὸν Ἀλέξανδρον τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ ἐλθεῖν εἰσὼ ζὺν Ἡφαιστίῳ μόνῳ τῶν ἐταίρων· καὶ τὴν μητέρα τὴν Δαρείου ἀμφιγνοήσασαν ὅστις ὁ βασιλεὺς εἶη αὐτοῖν, ἐστάλθαι γὰρ ἄμφω τῷ αὐτῷ κόσμῳ, τὴν δὲ Ἡφαιστίῳ προσελθεῖν καὶ προσκυνῆσαι, ὅτι μείζων ἐφάνη ἐκεῖνος. 7. ὡς δὲ ὁ Ἡφαιστίων τε ὀπίσω ὑπεχώρησε καὶ τις τῶν ἀμφ' αὐτὴν, τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον δεῖξας, ἐκείνον ἔφη εἶναι Ἀλέξανδρον, τὴν μὲν καταιδεσθεῖσαν τῇ διαμαρτία ὑποχωρεῖν, Ἀλέξανδρον δὲ οὐ φάναι αὐτὴν ἀμαρτεῖν· καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνον εἶναι Ἀλέξανδρον. 8. καὶ ταῦτα ἐγὼ οὐθ' ὡς ἀληθῆ οὔτε ὡς πάντα ἄπιστα ἀνέγραψα. ἀλλ' εἴτε οὕτως ἐπράχθη, ἐπαινῶ Ἀλέξανδρον τῆς τε ἐς τὰς γυναῖκας κατοικτίσεως καὶ τῆς ἐς τὸν ἐταῖρον πίστεως καὶ τιμῆς· εἴτε πιθανὸς δοκεῖ τοῖς συγγράμασιν Ἀλέξανδρος ὡς καὶ ταῦτα ἂν πράξας καὶ εἰπὼν, καὶ ἐπὶ τῷδε ἐπαινῶ Ἀλέξανδρον.

6. Ptolemy and Aristoboulos report those things. But there is also a story that Alexander himself on the following day entered with Hephaestion alone of his companions. Darius' mother, not knowing which of the two was the king—for they were dressed in the same manner—approached Hephaestion and did obeisance to him because he seemed taller. 7. As Hephaestion drew back and someone near her pointed to Alexander and said *that* was Alexander, she was ashamed because of her error and drew back. But Alexander said that she did not make a mistake, for he was also Alexander. 8. I have written these things down neither as true nor as entirely untrustworthy. If, on the one hand, Alexander did act in this way, I praise him for his compassion towards the women and for his loyalty and honor toward his companion; if, on the other, it seemed plausible to those who wrote these things that Alexander would do and say these things, I praise Alexander for that reason.

5) Arrian, *An.* 4.10.1-2

ἐκεῖνα δὲ οὐκέτι ἐπιεικῆ δοκῶ τοῦ Καλλισθένους, εἴπερ ἀληθῆ ξυγγέγραπται, ὅφ' αὐτῷ εἶναι ἀπέφανε καὶ τῇ αὐτοῦ ξυγγραφῇ Ἀλέξανδρον τε καὶ τὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔργα, οὐκ οὐκ οὐκ ἀφίχθαι ἐξ Ἀλεξάνδρου δόξαν κτησόμενος, ἀλλὰ ἐκείνον εὐκλεᾶ ἐς ἀνθρώπους ποιήσω.

But I do not think that the following remark of Callisthenes' was reasonable, if it has been recorded truthfully: he declared that Alexander and his deeds are dependent on him and his history, and that he has come not to acquire his reputation from Alexander, but so that he will make Alexander famous among men.

6) Herodotus, Preface

Ἡροδότου Ἀλικαρνησσεὸς ἱστορίας ἀπόδεξις ἦδε, ὡς μήτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται, μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα, ἀκλεᾶ γένηται, τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ δι' ἣν αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν ἀλλήλοισι.

This is the presentation of the investigation of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, so that neither the things done by humans fade on account of time, nor that the great and wondrous deeds displayed by both the Greeks and the barbarians become unsung, among other things for what reason they fought one another.

7) Thucydides 1.1

Θουκυδίδης Ἀθηναῖος ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Ἀθηναίων, ὡς ἐπολέμησαν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἀρξάμενος εὐθύς καθισταμένου καὶ ἐλπίσας μέγαν τε ἔσεσθαι καὶ ἀξιολογώτατον τῶν προγεγενημένων, τεκμαιρόμενος ὅτι ἀκμάζοντές τε ἦσαν ἐς αὐτὸν ἀμφοτέρω παρασκευῇ τῇ πάσῃ καὶ τὸ ἄλλο Ἕλληνικὸν ὄρων ξυνιστάμενον πρὸς ἑκατέρους, τὸ μὲν εὐθύς, τὸ δὲ καὶ διανοούμενον.

Thucydides the Athenian has written of the war of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians and how they fought against one another, having begun immediately as the war happened and expecting that it would be great and the most noteworthy of past events, judging that both sides were abounding with every preparation for it, and observing that every Greek state was allying with one or the other, either immediately or with deliberation.

8) Thucydides 1.22.4

καὶ ἐς μὲν ἀκρόασιν ἴσως τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν ἀτερπέστερον φανεῖται· ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὐθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι, ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἔξει. κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν ζύγκεται.

And for the act of listening perhaps the non-legendary quality of my work will appear less pleasing. But it will be sufficient for those to judge my work useful who will wish to see the clear nature of things that have happened and will happen at some point again on account of human nature, either as such or in a similar way. It is composed as a possession for all time rather than as a contest entry for a momentary hearing.

9) Arrian, *An.* 7.30.3

ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐμεμψάμην ἔστιν ἃ ἐν τῇ ζυγγραφῇ τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔργων, ἀλλὰ αὐτόν γε Ἀλέξανδρον οὐκ αἰσχύνομαι θαυμάζων· τὰ δὲ ἔργα ἐκεῖνα ἐκάκισα ἀληθείας τε ἔνεκα τῆς ἐμῆς καὶ ἅμα ὠφελείας τῆς ἐς ἀνθρώπους· ἐφ' ὅτῳ ὠρμήθην οὐδὲ αὐτὸς ἄνευ θεοῦ ἐς τήνδε τὴν ζυγγραφὴν.

And while there are acts of Alexander that I myself have criticized in the course of the work, I am nevertheless not ashamed to admire Alexander himself. I censured those deeds both for the sake of my regard for the truth and at the same time as a service to mankind. And it is for that reason that I was moved not without god's assistance to this work.

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