

The Religiosity of Alexander

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BETWEEN THE TIME when Alexander crosses the Hellespont with his army (334 B.C.) and the time of the invasion of India (327 B.C.), the nature of his enterprise obviously changes. To the extent that this change is not merely the result of external circumstances, it is a change in Alexander himself. The attempt to connect such an inner change with one event is intriguing but futile. It is better to look for a period in which various events all indicate that Alexander has formed a new plan or is embarking on a plan already formed but as yet unrevealed. "An acknowledged turning-point" in the reign of Alexander is the execution of Alexander's friend, Philotas, which was soon followed by the assassination of Philotas' father, Parmenio.¹ This turning-point in fact suggests a period, the year 330 B.C., in which a general alteration in the campaign becomes apparent. The Graeco-Macedonian phase of the campaign ends, and what I should like to call the heroic phase begins. The heroism of Alexander, his belief in and emulation of mythical heroes, is an aspect of his religiosity, a matter that has been overlooked or underestimated in much recent scholarship on Alexander.

I. The Year 330 B.C.

Until 330 B.C., Alexander's own aims and the stated aims of the campaign in Asia had not come into open conflict. Alexander was his father's successor as ἡγεμῶν of the Greek (or Corinthian) League (Arr. 2.14.4). Alexander renewed the treaty that Philip had made with the Greeks,² which had been intended to be valid for Philip's successors,³

¹ E. Badian, "The Death of Parmenio," *TAPA* 91 (1960) 324. Professor Badian, with generosity proportionable to his unrivalled knowledge of this field, made detailed criticisms of my paper, saving me from as many errors and mistaken judgements as he could. Needless to say, one cannot be saved completely. Professors Glen Bowersock and Zeph Stewart of Harvard University read an earlier version of this paper; they will see that their criticisms have been taken to heart.

² M. N. Tod, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* II (Oxford 1948) 183.

³ Tod, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 177.11.

and resumed what many Greeks were willing to consider the pan-Hellenic campaign against the Persians. This Greek view of the campaign emerges clearly in a dedicatory inscription from Thespieae, set up by a contingent of Thessalian cavalry which returned to Greece in 330 B.C. (*AP* 6.344):

Θεσπιαὶ εὐρύχοροι πέμψαν ποτὲ τούδε σὺν ὄπλοις
 τιμωροὺς προγόνων βάρβαρον εἰς Ἀσίην
 οὐ μετ' Ἀλεξάνδρου Περσῶν ἄστη καθελόντες
 στήσαν Ἐριβρεμέτη δαιδάλεον τρίποδα.

Until the death of Darius, Alexander did nothing to upset this Greek view of the campaign. After the victory at the Granicus (334 B.C.), stressing his position as ἡγεμῶν of the Greek League,⁴ he sent 300 captured panoplies to be dedicated at Athens with the inscription: “Alexander the son of Philip and the Greeks, except for the Lacedaimonians, from the barbarians inhabiting Asia” (Plut. *Alex.* 16.17; Arr. 1.16.7). Alexander’s treatment of the off-shore islands is in keeping with this pan-Hellenic motif of the campaign. He brings them into the League,⁵ to which as a legislative body he makes a show of deference—in the case of Chios, by requiring that pro-Persian Chians outside Chios be liable to seizure “according to the decree of the Greeks,” while those at Chios are to be brought to trial before the Council of the League.⁶ As for the cities on the mainland, the pan-Hellenic motif committed Alexander to a policy of ‘liberation’⁷ and probably of inclusion in the League.⁸ In 331 B.C., from Susa Alexander sent back to Athens the bronze statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton stolen by Xerxes (Arr. 3.16.8). Finally, the sack of Persepolis showed that Alexander was “still the leader of the Hellenic crusade.”⁹

⁴ So J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch, Alexander: A Commentary* (Oxford 1969) p.42 [hereafter cited as HAMILTON, *Commentary*].

⁵ E. Badian, “Alexander the Great and the Greeks of Asia,” *Ancient Society and Institutions* [Ehrenberg Studies] (Oxford 1966) 50, should be the final word [hereafter cited as “AGA”].

⁶ Tod 192 on the restoration of the Chian exiles. In fact, Alexander did as he pleased with the pro-Persian aristocrats of Chios: see Badian, “AGA” 53 and n.66.

⁷ Badian, “AGA” 43, though again the realities differed from the official policy, as Badian shows.

⁸ So Badian, “AGA,” esp. 50–53.

⁹ E. Badian, “Agis III,” *Hermes* 95 (1967) 188; see pp.186–90 for a plausible explanation of the historical puzzle of the burning of the palace. For a survey of other opinions, see Hamilton, *Commentary* 100–01.

From the Macedonian point of view, the campaign was fought “for the sovereignty of Asia” (Arr. 2.12.5; cf. 4.11.7). A letter from Alexander to Darius, in reply to Darius’ offer of peace after the battle of Issus, shows, besides the motif of Hellenic vengeance, the specific Macedonian grievances which might have served as the official cause of the campaign for the Macedonians: “You assisted Perinthus, which wronged my father; and Ochus sent a force into Thrace, which is under our sovereignty. My father was murdered by conspirators, whom you instructed . . . You sent improper letters to the Greeks about me, urging them to declare war upon me. You despatched sums of money to the Lacedaimonians and certain other Greeks, and when no other city received these, save the Lacedaimonians, and when your envoys corrupted my friends and sought to destroy the peace I had made in Greece, I took up arms against you; but it was you who started the quarrel.”¹⁰

Considering the official Greek and the official Macedonian versions of the campaign, one would expect the army to see in the death of Darius the object they had fought for and to look homeward. An episode in Hyrcania shortly after the death of Darius confirms this expectation. Plutarch tells how Alexander, fearing lest the Macedonians renounce the rest of the campaign, took only the best with him to Hyrcania, where he addressed them, saying that Asia was not yet subdued and calling them to witness that, while he was subduing the *οἰκουμένη* for the Macedonians, he was left behind with his friends and those willing to campaign (Plut. *Alex.* 47.1–2). For Alexander’s statement, Plutarch cites a letter of Alexander to Antipater. Since this letter is probably genuine,¹¹ the language can bear scrutiny. The last phrase points to the structure of the new, personal army—officers and men will be “friends and volunteers” (*μετὰ τῶν φίλων καὶ τῶν ἐθελόντων στρατεύειν*).¹² The deaths of Parmenio and Philotas are augured in this phrase.

One cannot find a motive for Alexander’s speech in Plutarch’s account. The vulgate tradition supplies the motive. Curtius tells how a current of excitement passed through the army at this time in

¹⁰ Arr. 2.14.4–6, in the Loeb transl. of E. I. Robson (London and New York 1929). I cite the letter only as showing what Macedonians might have argued. On the authenticity of the letter, see Griffith, *PCPS* (1968) 33.

¹¹ According to Hamilton, “The Letters in Plutarch’s *Alexander*,” *PACA* 4 (1961) 15.

¹² On the text, see Hamilton, *Commentary* 128. I take *ἐθελόντων στρατεύειν* as a periphrasis for *ἐθελοντῶν*. Thus I translate the phrase ‘volunteers’.

Hyrkania: the soldiers, believing a rumor that Alexander had decided to return home, began to break camp. The rumor had sprung from Alexander's dismissal of the Greeks. To restore order, Alexander first made sure of the co-operation of the officers and then addressed the troops, as in Plutarch, and won them over to further campaigning.¹³ Later that summer, in pursuit of Bessus, Alexander set fire to his own baggage wagons, setting an example that his men followed with spontaneous obedience. In doing so, they bound themselves all the more closely to Alexander, since now, with nothing to show for their previous victories, they would have to fight again to win back the plunder they had burned up.¹⁴

Thus Alexander continues eastward with an army already following him out of personal devotion rather than for any cause, ostensibly in pursuit of Bessus, but, in Alexander's mind, to the ends of the earth. He feels no attraction to the luxurious cities of Mesopotamia, no great concern to exercise the prerogatives of the King of Asia or of the Egyptian Pharaoh, no longing for his homeland, but the thrust toward dangers and the unknown, the heroic transcendence of the ordinary limits. All Alexander needs is the loyalty of his army. If the heroic *βίος* is the formal cause of Alexander's achievement, his army is the material cause, and there is nothing unheroic in this—even the Homeric hero needs an army (*cf. Il. 2.675, 769*). At this time, those officers who cling to Macedonian conventions and who are strong enough to pose a threat must be eliminated.

Before the executions of Parmenio, the greatest of Alexander's generals, and of Parmenio's son, Philotas, Alexander had already begun to isolate Parmenio from his troops.¹⁵ At Arrian 3.19.7 we learn that Alexander ordered Parmenio to convey the Persian treasure to Ecbatana and thereafter to march to Hyrcania with the mercenaries (*τοὺς ξένους*), the Thracians and the rest of the cavalry except the companion cavalry (*ὄσοι ἄλλοι ἵππεῖς ἔξω τῆς ἵππου τῆς ἑταιρικῆς*).

¹³ Curt. 6.2.15–4.1. Diod. 17.74.3 speaks of the agitation of the troops (*μετεώρους ὄντας*). He places the dismissal of the Greek troops after the speech but agrees with Curtius on the figure of their pay (Curt. 6.2.17). *Cf.* Justin 12.3.2–4. Arrian does not report the incident.

¹⁴ Polyæn. 4.3.10, who, however, like Plutarch (57.1), places the incident just before the invasion of India, *i.e.* in 327 B.C. I have followed Curtius, believing his date to be more probable, *i.e.* before the difficult fighting in the rough terrain of Bactria. Hamilton, *Commentary* 157, considers Polyænus' and Plutarch's date more probable but does not say why. In fact, there is no way of deciding which date is right.

¹⁵ *Cf.* Badian, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1).

We never hear of these contingents again, but at 3.25.4 Arrian says that as Alexander was advancing toward Bactria in pursuit of Bessus he was met by Philip son of Menelaus with Philip's own men (*τοὺς μισθοφόρους ἰππέας ὧν ἤγειτο αὐτός*), the Thessalian volunteers who had re-enlisted after the mustering out of the Thessalians at Ecbatana,¹⁶ and the mercenaries of Andromachus. One cannot simply equate the forces brought up by Philip with those under Parmenio at Arrian 3.19.7, and yet Philip had been associated with Parmenio,¹⁷ and the forces with Philip are all associated with Parmenio, too. The Thessalians fought on the left wing, which was commanded by Parmenio,¹⁸ and they are often seen with Parmenio,¹⁹ even as recently as in the pursuit of Darius (Arr. 3.18.1). Andromachus and his men also served on the left wing under Parmenio.²⁰ In sum, Philip has brought up a force that owes its immediate loyalty to Parmenio. Therefore it is probably not insignificant that we never hear of Philip again, as the cavalry command may have passed to Erigyus,²¹ one of the friends of Alexander who were to form the new officer class; that Andromachus' contingent is never mentioned again;²² and that the volunteer Thessalians were soon dismissed, perhaps as the result of mutiny.²³ The structure of the army reflects the requirements of the new phase of the campaign.

The death of Parmenio epitomizes the end of the Macedonian phase of Alexander's career. Parmenio was a royalist. No matter what his own hopes for Macedon might have been,²⁴ he immediately showed his loyalty to the new king when he countenanced the murder of his son-in-law, Attalus. Parmenio's military advice to Alexander will have been more important than our tradition shows, since it takes Alexander's side in the events of 330 B.C.²⁵ The parting of the ways

¹⁶ Arr. 3.19.5. For discrepancies in the sources, see Hamilton, *Commentary* 112.

¹⁷ In the campaign against Damascus: Plut. *Alex.* 24.

¹⁸ Helmut Berve, *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopographischer Grundlage* I (Munich 1926) 140 [hereafter cited as BERVE].

¹⁹ Arr. 1.24.3, 2.5.1, 3.18.1.

²⁰ Berve, II.38.

²¹ Berve, II.151.

²² Perhaps Alexander settled them in one of his colonies: Berve, II.38.

²³ Arr. 3.29.5; cf. 5.27.5. This was pointed out by C. A. Robinson, "The Extraordinary Ideas of Alexander the Great," *AHR* 62 (1957) 335 n.59 = G. T. Griffith, ed. *Alexander the Great: the Main Problems* (New York 1966) 63 [hereafter GRIFFITH, *Main Problems*].

²⁴ Cf. Badian, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.1) and "The Death of Philip II," *Phoenix* 17 (1963) 245.

²⁵ Berve, II.300.

between Parmenio and Alexander might have been Parmenio's advice to accept Darius' offer of peace after the battle of Issus.²⁶ Here for the first time the vaster aspirations of Alexander would have met resistance in the saner, Macedonian view of things. In any case, Parmenio remained "only the assistant of the world-convulsing genius who used him for his idea and destroyed him for his idea."²⁷

Plutarch's appropriate 'eidological'²⁸ grouping of other events in the year 330 B.C. underscores the change in the campaign from the pan-Hellenic and the Macedonian to the personal and heroic. Alexander's adoption of oriental customs and dress, his marriage to Roxane, and his enrollment of 30,000 Iranian youths for military training—all this shows Alexander turning his back on the restrictions of Macedonian kingship. The youths were to be trained in the Greek language and in the use of Macedonian weapons. One recalls that Alexander also slept with the Greek language and a Macedonian weapon under his pillow—a copy of the *Iliad* and a dagger (Plut. *Alex.* 8.2). The Greek language was only a means or an inspiration to the use of Macedonian weapons, and these in turn were at the service of an heroic goal far beyond what any contemporary Greek or Macedonian could dream of. The contrast between Alexander's archaic Hellenism and fourth-century Hellenism is epitomized in the contrast between the official historian Callisthenes' account of Alexander's march along the coast of Pamphylia and Menander's parody. When Callisthenes said that the sea withdrew before Alexander, he was praising Alexander as Alexander undoubtedly wanted to be praised; but to Menander's audience the notion of the sea's obeisance was only laughable.²⁹

II. Τοῦ θείου ἐπιμελέστατος

In the list of superlatives in which he sums up the character of Alexander, Arrian calls him τοῦ θείου ἐπιμελέστατος (7.28.1). Alexander in fact believed whole-heartedly in divinity. This belief is the pre-supposition of belief in the possibility of heroic ἀρετή, through which

²⁶ Arr. 2.25.2.

²⁷ Berve, II.306.

²⁸ Plut. *Alex.* 47. On Plutarch's 'eidology' see Hamilton, *Commentary* 129.

²⁹ L. Pearson, *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great* (APA Monograph 20, 1960) 36–37, has raised the question whether Callisthenes used the word προκύνησις or whether it is Eustathius'. In any case, it is clear that Callisthenes did say that the sea withdrew before Alexander (schol. *Il.* 13.26–30); and Menander did parody this or another report (Plut. *Alex.* 17.7 = *CAF* 3.240).

the hero attained a certain divinity of his own.³⁰ Without this belief, Alexander's ambition to surpass the deeds of Achilles, Heracles and Dionysus must be fundamentally meaningless, or understood as a fabrication by the sources. But it can be shown to be neither of these.

In the past two decades we have been made more aware of how much we are in the grip of the prejudices, literary and other, of our sources and of the sources of our sources. But this *reductio ad fontem* can go too far. For example, Tarn complained that Clitarchus and certain poetasters "made" Alexander an "imitative character."³¹ Still in the fourth century, however, to praise a man is, just as it was for Pindar, to compare him with the great heroes of the past. Aristotle's *Hymn to Arete*, with its praise of Hermeias, is sufficient evidence for this point (fr.5 Diehl³). To see Alexander in such a way was hardly original with Clitarchus. Furthermore, in Alexander's case, the encomiastic convention perfectly suited the psychological and factual realities of the man who was to be praised. Alexander deliberately imitated heroes. It is not a poetaster or a novelist but the sober Arrian himself who says (7.14.4) that Alexander imitated Achilles from boyhood.

This imitation of heroes should be seen as religious in origin; but the religiosity of Alexander is now usually reduced to a problem of his divinity, the problem of whether or not Alexander really believed himself to be divine. The problem of his divinity is in turn reduced to the interpretation of two or three isolated events, e.g., to the question of whether he really sent a proclamation to the Greek cities in 324 B.C. demanding divine honors. Another way in which the fundamental and consistent religiosity of Alexander has been lost to view is in the treatment of all his religious acts as really political in intent, as propaganda.³² Again, Alexander's emulation of heroes has been associated with his seizures by *πῶθος* and thus reduced to an irrational, romantic quirk.³³

In order to grasp the religiosity of Alexander one must first realize that the spiritual ambience of his youth was not the philosophic

³⁰ This point is amplified in sec.iii of this paper.

³¹ W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great* II (Cambridge 1948) 60.

³² Tarn, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.31) I.114.

³³ Tarn, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.31) I.124. U. Wilcken, *Alexander the Great*, transl. G. C. Richards, ed. E. N. Borza (New York 1967) 239ff, sees the importance of the revelations and of heroes to Alexander but regards this trait as in contradiction to his realism, scientific curiosity and Hellenism.

schools, the oratory and the comedy of Athens, but a Macedon that had more affinities with sixth-century or even Homeric than with fourth-century Greece.³⁴ If Alexander gained anything from his study with Aristotle besides an admiration of Pindar and Homer, not a trace of it is reflected in his life.³⁵ The aristocratic and heroic ideals of these poets did not have to be inculcated by argument. Homeric kingship lived on in Macedon. The king was preeminent amongst the aristocratic chiefs on account of his own wealth and power. His power consisted in his own *ἀρετή*. The same Philip who demonstrated such cunning in his dealings with the Greeks also fought in the forefront of battle. To the elevated sensibilities of an Athenian statesman, he was simply a one-eyed barbarian.

But Macedonian kingship is of interest to the present study above all because of its religious character. The Macedonian king was the chief priest. It was his duty, for example, to purify the army, should the occasion arise, by the sacrifice of a dog (Curt. 10.9.11–12). Even when he had to be carried on a litter, Alexander continued to perform the daily sacrifices *patrio more* (Arr. 7.25.2; Curt. 4.6.10). But it is needless to repeat the long list of the sacrifices to various divinities mentioned in our sources.³⁶

The Macedonian king kept a staff of seers—the old *δόμων προφήται* whom Aeschylus recalls (*Agam.* 409). Thus Aristander, who had been a member of Philip's court, accompanied Alexander on his expedition and interpreted many a dream and omen.³⁷ Berve, remarking that after the time of the murder of Clitus (328 B.C.), we hear no more of Aristander and hardly anything more of omens, concluded that Alexander was now self-confident enough and inspiring enough to his army to do without this side of his religious prerogatives.³⁸ But another seer, Demophon, gave a prophecy at the time of the campaign against the Malli (326 B.C.),³⁹ and he was still important enough in the last year of Alexander's life to be one of those who consulted the Babylonian god (called 'Serapis' by Arrian) concerning the king's

³⁴ Cf. C. F. Edson, "Early Macedonia," in *Ancient Macedonia*, ed. B. Laourdas, I (Thessaloniki 1970) 17ff.

³⁵ Fritz Taeger, *Charisma: Studien zur Geschichte des antiken Herrscherkultes* I (Stuttgart 1957) 180–81.

³⁶ For such a list, see Berve, I.85–86; M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der gr. Religion* II (Munich 1961) 13; L. Cerfaux and J. Tondriaux, *Le Culte des souverains* (Tournai 1957) 125–26.

³⁷ For these, see Berve, II.62; Taeger, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.35) 187 n.33, gives a long list of omens etc.

³⁸ Berve, II.62–63.

³⁹ Diod. 17.98.3; Curt. 9.4.27–29 dramatizes the incident.

health (Arr. 7.26.2). In 324 B.C., in Opis, at the banquet of reconciliation after the mutiny, the Greek seers and the magi pour the first libations (Arr. 7.11.8).

There is other evidence that Alexander had not ceased to concern himself with omens. At about the same time at which, according to Berve, Alexander ceases to recognize omens, we hear that Alexander, in his disgust at a misborn lamb, had himself purified by Babylonians "whom it was his custom to take with him for such purposes"⁴⁰ and was relieved at the appearance of a more favorable omen (Plut. *Alex.* 57.5; cf. Arr. 4.15.7). As Alexander was approaching Babylon in 323 B.C., the Chaldaean astrologers brought Alexander an oracle from Bel to the effect that his entry into Babylon at this time would not be for the best (Arr. 7.16.5). Though Alexander suspected that their purpose was merely to keep the income of the temple to themselves, he was, according to Aristobulus, ready to comply with the oracle (Arr. 7.16.5; cf. Diod. 17.112.4–5). Plutarch records that at this time he was troubled by many omens, having grown excessively superstitious (*Alex.* 73.5). It is difficult to believe that Alexander ever abandoned the seers who belonged to his office any more than he abandoned the custom of daily sacrifice. On the contrary, one detects a mounting extravagance of religiosity in the last year of Alexander's life.

Alexander's religiosity is not, of course, a matter simply of the traditions of Macedonian kingship. His preoccupation with religious matters goes beyond any formal requirements of his office. In this connection the influence of Olympias, with her well-known enthusiasm for Dionysus, has often and no doubt correctly been mentioned, in the same way that Alexander's claim to divinity is referred to Philip's own similar though less extensive venture in having his statue carried in a procession along with those of the twelve gods.⁴¹ Strong though such influences may have been, they are insufficient to account for Alexander's vehement and rather eclectic piety.

Consider, for example, the matter of temple building. He ordered a temple of Zeus to be built at Sardis (Arr. 1.17.5–6). In his disappointment at the Ephesians' refusal to allow him to dedicate their temple of Artemis, to which he had caused to be paid the levy previously paid

⁴⁰ Plut. *Alex.* 57.4. One is reminded of the story of the single-horned ram told by Plut. *Per.* 6. Alexander, despite his supposed "scientific curiosity," would have consulted and believed only the seer, Lampon, not the philosopher, Anaxagoras.

⁴¹ Diod. 16.92.5; cf. Cerfaux and Tondriau, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.36) 123–25.

to the Persian king, he dedicated the temple of Athena Polias at the next city he came to, Priene.⁴² Temples to Isis and Greek gods were among the provisions for Alexandria in Egypt. When Alexander reached Babylon, he gave orders for the rebuilding of the temple of Bel, to whom he also sacrificed, and of the other temples destroyed by Xerxes (Arr. 3.16.4–5). He caused altars to be built on the Jaxartes (Plin. *NH* 6.49) and also on the Beas to the gods who had made him victorious (Arr. 5.29.1). The last plans contain a provision for the erection of six costly temples (Diod. 18.4.2). Even if deliberately distorted by Perdicas for his own ends,⁴³ nevertheless, or rather for this very reason, they reflect what might have been expected of Alexander.

The preceding observations on the religiosity of Alexander have been set forth in order to indicate a dimension of his character usually overlooked in recent scholarship and to serve as an introduction to the analysis of the main dynamic of his character, the striving for divinity through heroic ἀρετή. The heroes whom Alexander emulated were principally Achilles and Heracles. The other principal object of his emulation was Dionysus. Nearchus is the source for Alexander's emulation of two other models, namely, Cyrus and Semiramis, in his march across the Gedrosian desert (Arr. 6.24.2–3; Strabo 15.1.5). Cyrus and Semiramis are of interest in that they, too, show how Alexander tended to conceive of his projects in terms of rivalry with some great model; but they need not form part of the present discussion, since Alexander imitated them on only one occasion, and it was a matter of succeeding where they had failed. With Heracles, Achilles and Dionysus, it was a life-long preoccupation with surpassing their great achievements.

Alexander claimed descent from Achilles on his mother's side through Neoptolemus (Plut. *Alex.* 2.1; Curt. 4.6.29). When Alexander landed in Asia Minor, after setting up altars to Zeus, Athena and Heracles, he went up to Ilium, where, in the temple of Athena, he dedicated his own armor and took in exchange armor dating—so Arrian says and so, as will appear, Alexander believed—from the Trojan War (Arr. 1.11). He also made an offering at the tomb of Achilles (Arr. 1.12.1; Diod. 17.17.3; Plut. *Alex.* 15.7). These and other

⁴² For the disappointment at Ephesus: Strabo 14 (691); for the dedication at Priene, see Tod, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.2) 184. Cf. Badian, "AGA" 44, 47.

⁴³ E. Badian, "A King's Notebooks," *HSCP* 72 (1967) 183–204.

ceremonies of Alexander's first days in Asia Minor have been interpreted as propagandistic.⁴⁴ They were intended to symbolize the pan-Hellenic and vengeful character of the campaign. Undoubtedly, as has been argued above, Alexander intended to give his campaign this character in its early years and thus would have wished to exploit the propagandistic value of these ceremonies. But much later, long after Alexander needed to concern himself with what the Greeks thought, he still had the sacred shield from the temple at Ilium carried before him into battle. It was this shield with which Peucestas protected him in the city of the Malli (326 B.C.) (Arr. 6.9.3, 10.2; cf. 1.11.7). This fact shows that Alexander's imitation of Achilles was not mere romanticism, if we define romanticism as insubstantial and uncreative, since Alexander's attachment to the shield and his absorption in the spirit represented by the shield were obviously the source of ever-renewed strength.⁴⁵ As Arrian observed, Alexander's imitation of Achilles was a life-long pursuit (7.14.4). Even his grief for Hephæstion was expressed in Achillean form.⁴⁶

In this connection one should record the finding of W. B. Kaiser that Alexander's helmet on the decadrachms (the so-called Porus medallion) in the British Museum is not a combination of Greek and oriental styles but Homeric, as is the motif of *Zweikampf* with Porus.⁴⁷ In fact there are numerous examples of Alexander's delight in man-to-man combat. It was expected of the Macedonian king, but here again Alexander's deeds are obviously more than *pro forma*.⁴⁸ His motive is fundamentally heroic, and the inspiration comes from Homer. One might wish to describe Alexander's well-known attachment to Homer⁴⁹ as romantic; but could a merely romantic interest

⁴⁴ H. U. Instinsky, *Alexander der Grosse am Hellespont* (Würzburg 1949). But Instinsky is well aware that Homer's world is not, for Alexander, poetic in our sense, and that his absorption in it is not romantic (p.28; cf. p.65).

⁴⁵ As Taeger observed, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.35) 185.

⁴⁶ Arr. *ibid.* Cf. II. 18.27, where Achilles tears his hair in grief for Patroclus.

⁴⁷ W. B. Kaiser, "Ein Meister der Glyptik aus dem Umkreis Alexanders des Grossen," *JdI* 77 (1962) 231. For other helmet problems, see K. Kraft, "Der behelmte Alexander der Grosse," *JfNG* 15 (1965) 7-32 (who does not mention Kaiser). E. von Schwarzenberg, "Der lysippische Alexander," *BonnJbb* 167 (1967) 70, states that the spear held by Alexander in the best known of the Lysippan portraits is an allusion to Achilles.

⁴⁸ Berve, I.20-21.

⁴⁹ Plut. *Alex.* 8.2: Onesicritus records that he always kept the *Iliad* under his pillow. This would have become impossible after he put the *Iliad* in the chest that was the most valuable item amongst the spoils of Darius (Plut. *Alex.* 26.1.). He showed kindness to the Ilians

in heroism have caused Alexander to risk his life so many times and to suffer so many wounds (cf. Arr. 7.10.1)?

Alexander also claimed Heracles as an ancestor and felt the same pious envy of him as of Achilles (Arr. 3.3.2; cf. 4.10.6, 5.26.5). On one occasion Heracles is set alongside the gods to whom he customarily made sacrifice (Arr. 6.3.2), while elsewhere sacrifices of thanksgiving to Heracles with Zeus Soter and other gods are mentioned several times.⁵⁰ En route to Tyre Alexander told envoys of that city that he wished to sacrifice to Heracles (Arr. 2.15.7). When the Tyrians subsequently refused him admission to the city, he decided to lay siege to it. In the speech on this occasion reported by Arrian, Alexander explains to his officers the strategic importance of the city (Arr. 2.17). But the siege obviously had a personal meaning for Alexander. He had a dream in which he saw Heracles leading him to the walls of the city (Arr. 2.18.1). One should not, by the way, assume that such a rationalistic interpretation of the Tyrian Heracles as Arrian gives (2.16) would have meant anything to Alexander. To him Heracles-Melcarth was Heracles, just as Ammon was Zeus under another name. When, after a siege of seven months (Diod. 17.46.5; Curt. 4.4.19)—the most difficult single operation of his career—Alexander captured the city, he spared only the Tyrians who had taken refuge in the temple of Heracles, selling the rest into slavery. He sacrificed to Heracles at last, and held a parade and naval review in Heracles' honor. He rededicated with an inscription the Tyrian ship sacred to Heracles (Arr. 2.24.5–6). On his return to Tyre from Egypt he again sacrificed to Heracles (Arr. 3.6.1). He set up altars to the twelve gods at the limit of his eastern campaign in imitation of Heracles.⁵¹

Though Arrian does not believe the story that Heracles tried and failed to capture the rock of Aornos, he does believe that Alexander's desire to capture the rock was influenced by this story.⁵² We see here the same rivalry with Heracles that was part of the motivation for the visit to Siwah (Arr. 3.3.2). Callisthenes is the source for this motive.⁵³ Now in the case of Callisthenes' account of Alexander's visit to the

because of his kinship with them through Andromache, once queen of the Molossians, and because of his fondness for Homer (Strabo 13.1.27). Dio Chrysostom says that Alexander knew the whole *Iliad* by heart (Or. 4.39).

⁵⁰ In addition to Arr. *ibid.*, 1.4.5, *Ind.* 36.3 and the sacrifices at Tyre discussed below.

⁵¹ Strabo 3.5.5; cf. Justin 12.7.12; Diod. 17.95.1; Plut. *Alex.* 62.8; Arr. 5.29.1–2.

⁵² Arr. 4.28.1–4; cf. Diod. 17.85.2; Curt. 8.11.2; Justin 12.7.12.

⁵³ Cf. Arr. *ibid.* with Strabo 17.1.43. Cf. Pearson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.29) 161.

oasis, one might plausibly explain the reference to Heracles as flattery of Alexander or as propaganda directed toward a Greek audience. But when one finds Alexander thousands of miles from Greece besieging impossible places in emulation of Heracles and building altars in imitation of him, long after Alexander has ceased to be seriously concerned with what the Greeks think and after indeed Callisthenes is dead, can one still reduce his concern with Heracles to an invention of the sources?⁵⁴ It is not a flattering source or even a favorable one but the hostile Ephippus who records that Alexander often imitated the dress of Heracles.⁵⁵

The coinage of Alexander provides confirmation of his preoccupation with Heracles. The traditional ancestor of the Macedonian kings (Arr. 3.3.2; Plut. *Alex.* 2.1), Heracles appears on Macedonian coins from the fifth century,⁵⁶ but comes to predominate on Alexander's coinage.⁵⁷ For present purposes the most important conclusion that can be drawn from the study of these coins is that the traditional Heracles head begins to acquire the features of Alexander between 330 and 320 B.C.,⁵⁸ in particular the leonine brow,⁵⁹ and that this change is due to Alexander himself.⁶⁰ This coinage is thus taken to represent a change in Alexander, dating from the siege of Tyre, from imitation of Achilles to imitation of Heracles, a change confirmed by study of the portraits.⁶¹ In line with this attempt to connect imitation of certain heroes with certain stages in Alexander's life, Schachermeyr argued that in the course of the Indian campaign, Dionysus replaced Heracles as the prime object of Alexander's *φιλοτιμία*.⁶² But Alexander imitated the hero whom circumstances suggested. Towards the end of his life, at the time of the death of Hephaestion (324 B.C.), Alexander shaved his head in imitation of Achilles' grief for Patroclus (Arr. 7.14.4). This

⁵⁴ Berve, II.102ff, 168, believed that in the same year as the siege of the rock of Aornos, Alexander had a son by Barsine whom he named Heracles. Tarn, *JHS* 41 (1921) 18 and *op.cit.* (*supra* n.31) 330ff, argues that this child did not exist.

⁵⁵ Ephippus in Athen. 12.537e-538b. Cf. Pearson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.29) 61-68.

⁵⁶ G. Kleiner, "Alexanders Reichsmünzen," *AbhBerl* 5 (1947) 9-10.

⁵⁷ Kleiner, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.56) 5.

⁵⁸ K. Gebauer, *AthMitt* 63-64 (1938/9) 18.

⁵⁹ J. P. Guépin, "Leonine Brows and the Shadow of Pyrgoteles," *BABesch* 39 (1964) 135.

⁶⁰ Gebauer, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.58); Kleiner, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.56) 31.

⁶¹ G. Kleiner, "Das Bildnis Alexanders des Grossen," *JdI* 65/66 (1950/1) 217. On the contrary see Schwarzenberg, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.48) 66ff.

⁶² Fritz Schachermeyr, *Alexander der Grosse: Ingenium und Macht* (Salzburg 1949) 335-39; cf. Berve, I.94.

fact does not mean that Alexander had ceased to imitate Heracles and Dionysus. He emulated an ideal, emulating the representative of the ideal demanded by the occasion.

Dionysus has suffered more than either Achilles or Heracles from source criticism. Nearly everything that is said of Dionysus is attributed to fabrication, exaggeration or flattery by the sources.⁶³ For this reason it is well to begin the discussion of Alexander's emulation of Dionysus with a piece of evidence that goes back to Aristobulus. In explanation of Alexander's motives for a campaign against the Arabs, Arrian states:

There is a story current (*λόγος δὲ κατέχει*) that he heard the Arabs honoured only two gods, Uranus (the sky) and Dionysus: Uranus because he was actually visible to them and contained within himself all the stars including the sun, from which were derived the greatest and most obvious benefits for all human needs, and Dionysus because of the fame of his expedition to India. Alexander therefore considered himself not unworthy to be regarded as a third god by the Arabs, a god who has performed deeds not less splendid than Dionysus, if indeed he conquered the Arabs and then allowed them like the Indians to live in accordance with their own customs.⁶⁴

Strabo, citing Aristobulus, gives a similar account of Alexander's plans, explaining his motives thus: "And when Alexander heard that the Arabs honoured only two gods, Zeus and Dionysus, the gods who provided the most important things in life, he supposed they would honor him as a third god, after he had conquered them and then permitted them to enjoy the traditional autonomy which they had enjoyed before."⁶⁵ Now whichever preserves Aristobulus' language more exactly, the fact remains that emulation is explicit in Arrian and clearly implicit in Strabo. As Pearson observed, "We need not believe that Aristobulus interpreted Alexander's attitude correctly; but at least we must take note of an interpretation which comes from Macedonia, not from Ptolemaic Egypt, and is unaffected by Roman ideas of a deified ruler."⁶⁶

Thus when the poetasters Agis and Cleon compare Alexander to

⁶³ See A. D. Nock, "Notes on Ruler-Cult, I-IV," *JHS* 48 (1928) 21ff, who concluded that there is an "absence of evidence for any contemporary idea of Alexander's conquests as an imitation of those of Dionysus" (30).

⁶⁴ Arr. 7.20.1. I have used the translation by Pearson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.29) 184.

⁶⁵ Strabo 16.1.11. Again Pearson's translation, p.183.

⁶⁶ Pearson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.29) 184.

Dionysus, “opening heaven to him” (Curt. 8.5.8), it is not a matter of flattery that shows nothing about Alexander. In order to succeed as flattery, flattery must be accurate. Agis and Cleon associate Alexander with Dionysus because they know it will please him.⁶⁷ Alexander, after all, had let his reverence for Dionysus be known. He was not unwilling to have the murder of Clitus referred to the wrath of Dionysus on account of a neglected sacrifice (Arr. 4.8.1, 9.5–6) or on account of the sack of Thebes, to which he also attributed the mutiny on the Hyphasis (Plut. *Alex.* 13.3). It sounds, then, like a kind of mockery of Alexander when Ephippus attributes Alexander’s fatal illness to over-indulgence in wine caused by Dionysus (Athen. 10.434B).

The Nysa episode is obviously exaggerated in the *lóγoc* that Arrian disbelievingly records and in Curtius (Arr. 5.1ff; Curt. 8.10.7). Clitarchus has been at work here.⁶⁸ But Aristobulus mentions the Nysaeans, which means that Alexander did come to an Indian town the name of which sounded like Nysa.⁶⁹ Given this *interpretatio*, Alexander, out of the rivalry with Dionysus already suggested, would have wished to see the town as a foundation of Dionysus, whom he had now equalled and would soon surpass. A sentence in Arrian (5.2.1) to this effect may well go back to Aristobulus,⁷⁰ and we are told by Strabo that Alexander set up altars at the eastern limit of his expedition “imitating Heracles and Dionysus.”⁷¹ But for present purposes it is unnecessary to raise the extremely vexed question of the sources for the Nysa story; it is enough to see that there was a Dionysian incident and that rivalry would have been its mood. Arrian himself is willing to believe that it was authentically Dionysian.

⁶⁷ Similarly Protogenes painted Alexander as Dionysus with Pan. Plin. *NH* 35.106; *Novissime pinxit Alexandrum ac Pana*. Pliny refers to a single painting, in which Pan would have been the shield-bearer to Alexander-Dionysus: Heinrich Brunn, *Geschichte der gr. Künstler* II (Stuttgart 1859) 239–40. If Pliny is right about the time at which Protogenes executes this painting (*novissime*), then it was not during Alexander’s life-time, since Protogenes was still working at the time of the siege of Rhodes by Demetrius (Plut. *Dem.* 22). But the passage in Pliny shows that Alexander was associated with Dionysus soon after his death.

⁶⁸ Tarn, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.31) II.45–46; Pearson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.29) 215.

⁶⁹ Tarn, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.31) II.45, who also points out another early story, in a Peripatetic writer, that Nysa was a mountain in India. For a full discussion of Dionysus, Nysa and Alexander (and the source problems) see O. Stein, *RE* 17 (1937) 1640ff.

⁷⁰ Arr. 5.2.1; cf. Tarn, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.31) II.46.

⁷¹ Strabo 3.5.5; cf. Curt. 3.10.5. Arr. 7.10.6 has Alexander refer in his speech to the mutinous army at the Hyphasis to “the Indus that none but Dionysus had crossed.” But of course the speech cannot be shown to be authentic.

He says that he does not entirely agree with Eratosthenes' statement that the Dionysian influence on the Macedonians at Nysa was exaggerated to please Alexander (5.3.1). In fact, why should one doubt their enthusiasm for a god so beloved in their own country (Plut. *Alex.* 2.7), who was known to have been in these parts (Eur. *Bacch.* 13ff), and whose presence in this town was attested by the ivy that grew only here (Arr. 5.2.5; Diod. 1.19.7)?

At this point the case for Alexander's imitation of Dionysus rests. Whatever the facts of the celebration in Carmania, they have been lost to view beneath literary adornments and cannot be used in support of the present thesis.⁷²

Alexander's emulation of heroes is the sign of his belief in the possibility of his own divinity. His heroism is the fulfillment and attainment of the divinity that was vouchsafed him at Siwah. But before undertaking to describe the psychology of these beliefs, one must say something of the visit to Siwah (332 B.C.) and the supposed request for divine honors from the Greek cities (324 B.C.). Though the *προσκύνησις* episode need not form part of the discussion of Alexander's divinity,⁷³ its religious overtones are well attested.⁷⁴

The detour to Siwah was non-strategic and had nothing to do with Alexander's pharaohship.⁷⁵ It was a personal matter. The preceding events which bear most directly on the consultation of the oracle are the cutting or untying of the Gordian knot (spring 333 B.C.) and the victory at Issus (Nov. 333 B.C.). The oracle associated with the knot, that the man who could undo it would be lord of all Asia, would have affected Alexander deeply, since he believed that the god at Gordium was Zeus, and since he thought he had received divine signs of his

⁷² Radet saw a series of Dionysiac epiphanies: the *κῶμος* at Persepolis (330 B.C.); a Dionysiac aberration, i.e. the murder of Clitus (329/8 B.C.); the bacchanal at Nysa (327 B.C.); the bacchanal in Carmania (325 B.C.); recognition as Neos Dionysos in Athens (324 B.C.); Dionysiac celebration at Ecbatana (323 B.C.). On all this, see J. Tondriau, "Alexandre le Grand assimilé à différentes divinités," *RevPhil* 23 (1949) 41-53.

⁷³ Nilsson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.36) 148; J. P. V. D. Balsdon, "The 'Divinity' of Alexander," *Historia* 1 (1950) 363ff [= Griffith, *Main Problems* 179ff] and 371ff [= Griffith, *Main Problems* 187ff].

⁷⁴ Prostration before the Great King was customary for Persians, but, as Alexander would well have known, such prostration was reserved by the Greeks for gods. (The story of the Spartans, Sperthias and Bulis, in Hdt. 7.136 illustrates this fact.) Thus it would have been natural to connect Alexander's attempt to have *προσκύνησις* instituted at his court with his belief in his divine sonship. Arr. 4.9.9 knows of a *λόγος* that makes this connection. Cf. E. Bickerman, "A propos d'un passage de Chares de Mytilène," *PP* 18 (1963) 252, on the difference between the Graeco-Macedonian and the Persian understanding of *προσκύνησις*.

⁷⁵ Cerfaux and Tondriau, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.36) 135.

fulfillment of the oracle.⁷⁶ His victory at Issus was a partial confirmation of what he had come to believe at Gordium. There followed the long siege of Tyre and the invasion of Egypt. Meanwhile Darius, whose offers of peace Alexander had twice refused, remained to be conquered. The immediate motive for the visit to the oasis is the uncertainty that had grown upon Alexander in the period since the victory at Issus. One should remember that Alexander is not self-confident. His fearfulness is often alluded to; he showed dubiety about the grand strategy of the campaign against Darius.⁷⁷ His confidence in his superiority is not self-confidence but a belief in the revelation of this superiority—such a revelation, for instance, as had come at Gordium and had been confirmed at Issus. This belief needed to be renewed by oracles and divine signs, just as it needed to be tested continually in action. The consultation of the oracle at Ammon is not a vagary but perfectly consistent with Alexander's religiosity. In particular, the consultation of the oracle of Ammon should be seen as following from the promise of lordship over all Asia made by Zeus Basileios at Gordium.⁷⁸ It was easy for contemporaries to believe that this was precisely the subject of Alexander's consultation: thus the tradition, probably originating with Callisthenes, that Alexander asked the priest of Ammon if he was granted rule over the whole earth (Diod. 17.51.2; Curt. 4.7.2).

The visit itself is the most vastly discussed episode in Alexander's life. The fact that most concerns the present study is the incontestable importance to Alexander of the revelation, no matter how or in what terms it came.⁷⁹ The deep religiosity of Alexander is the grounds of the strong effect of this revelation. Its importance is seen in Alexander's heroism, in the push eastward after the death of Darius, in the

⁷⁶ Arr. 2.3.8. On Gordium see above all E. A. Fredricksmeyer, "Alexander, Midas, and the Oracle at Gordium," *CP* 56 (1961) 160ff. Pearson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.29) 38–39, sees the connection between Gordium and Siwah and wants it to be Callisthenes' notion; but admits doubt.

⁷⁷ *POxy.* 1798, fr.44.ii.1–16. (In their note on 6ff they cite Curt. 3.8.20, Justin 11.9.3, and, for the editors ἀγωνία, Diod. 17.31.4, 56.3, 116.4. Cf. Plut. *Alex.* 17 *init.* for a reference to Alexander's dubiety as regards the grand strategy of the campaign against Darius.) The text of this fragment of an Alexander historian can also be found in Jacoby, *FGrHist* 148. For affinities and discrepancies of this fragment with our other sources, see Jacoby's commentary, II BD pp.534–35. Clearly the value of the fragment is debatable; it cannot, however, be simply dismissed.

⁷⁸ Fredricksmeyer, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.76) 166.

⁷⁹ Cf. Berve, I.94–95; Cerfaux and Tondriau, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.36) 137; and on the contrary, Tarn, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.31) II.350–51.

ruthlessness with which he dealt with his men, and his carelessness of his own life.⁸⁰ But since at the time of the consultation of the oracle of Ammon Alexander is still in the Graeco-Macedonian phase of the campaign, one cannot expect him to emphasize his divine sonship—for such were the terms in which he understood the revelation⁸¹—at least not to Macedonians. Other oracles came to Alexander from Miletus concerning his origin from Zeus.⁸² These oracles must reflect what Alexander believed he had learned from Ammon. Later, before the battle of Gaugamela, in a prayer uttered before the Greek contingents, Alexander alluded to himself as the son of Zeus. Plutarch's report of the prayer is from Callisthenes but is not to be discredited for this reason.⁸³ Ehippus tells us that Alexander used sometimes to wear the purple robe, slippers and horns of Ammon.⁸⁴ But the divine sonship remains for the most part unstated throughout the years of campaigning, for the reason that the promise of divinity is being tested and fulfilled as Alexander becomes what he is. There is, however, one other piece of evidence for Alexander's belief in his divine sonship: the letter quoted by Plutarch (*Alex.* 28.2), in which Alexander refers to his "so-called father" Philip. If, as Hamilton stoutly argued,⁸⁵ the letter is genuine, then there is no reasonable doubt about this aspect of Alexander's religiosity.

The date of the letter is uncertain. If, as Hamilton thought, 323 B.C. is the date, then the letter would fit with Alexander's dying request that his corpse be conveyed to Ammon (Curt. 10.4.4) and also with the many indications of a new, fanatical religiosity: the decision to deify Olympias;⁸⁶ the order for the pyre of Hephaestion, to cost

⁸⁰ Wilamowitz, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* II² (Basel 1956) 263, said that, after the visit to the oracle of Ammon, "lebt er durch den Glauben an das Göttliche in ihm. Sein ganzes Leben und Handeln, sein Heldentum und auch seine Sünden werden begreiflich, wie ich meine, allein begreiflich durch diesen echten und heissen Glauben." Cf. Nilsson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.36) 147, and O. Kern, "Der Glaube Alexanders des Grossen," *FuF* 14 (1938) 405–07.

⁸¹ Diod. 17.51.1; Curt. 4.7.25; Justin 11.11.2–12; Plut. *Alex.* 27.5.

⁸² Zeus (Strabo 17.1.43) is *interpretatio Graeca*: see Taeger, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.35) 193 n.17.

⁸³ See Hamilton, *Commentary* 87.

⁸⁴ Athen. 12.537E. Gebauer, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.59) 21, was perhaps wrong in saying that the horns do not appear on coins until after Alexander's death: see J. F. Healy, "Alexander the Great and the Last Issue of Electrum Hektai at Mytilene," *NC* 2 (1962) 65–71, who finds allusion to Zeus Ammon as early as ca. 330 B.C. on Mytilenean coins perhaps intended to compliment Alexander.

⁸⁵ J. R. Hamilton, "Alexander and his 'So-Called Father,'" *CQ* 3 (1953) 151–57 = Griffith, *Main Problems* 235–41.

⁸⁶ Curt. 9.6.26 (326 B.C.); cf. 10.5.30.

10,000 talents;⁸⁷ the consultation of Ammon as to whether Hephaestion might be worshipped as a hero; the pardon of Cleomenes on condition of the satisfactory completion of the shrines in Egypt (Arr. 7.23.6–8); the last plans, which, even if distorted by Perdiccas, reflect what the army would have believed of Alexander; and the over-blown pomp of Alexander's court.⁸⁸ It was at this time, according to Plutarch, that Alexander became excessively superstitious, and the palace was full of sacrificers, purifiers and seers (*Alex.* 75.1).

Against this background a request for divine honors from the Greek city-states in 324 B.C. appears not incredible. The contemporary evidence for the awarding of such honors is Dinarchus, *Dem.* 94, and Hypereides, *Dem.* fr.8 col.31. In Athens the pro-Macedonian Demades made the proposal for Alexander and was fined for his efforts.⁸⁹ There are many satirical quips on the subject preserved in later writers.⁹⁰ As at so many other points in Alexander's life, a political motive may well be bound up with the religious. Though the request (if there was one) was surely not legalistic in intent,⁹¹ it was still a way of reminding the Greeks of the authority of the man who had promulgated the decree for the return of the exiles.⁹² But far more than this, a request for divine honors would have issued from a new fanatical development of the lifelong religiosity of Alexander.

III. Heroism and Divinity

The early Greek view of divinity is markedly ambiguous. On the one hand, the gods are remote, harsh and vengeful;⁹³ in comparison

⁸⁷ Plut. *Alex.* 72.5; Diod. 17.115; Arr. 7.14.8.

⁸⁸ Athen. 12.538A–B; 539D–F; cf. Arr. 7.8.2.

⁸⁹ Ael. *VH* 5.12; Athen. 6.251B; Val.Max. 7.2, ext.13.

⁹⁰ For a collection, see Balsdon, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.73) 383 = Griffith, *Main Problems* 199.

⁹¹ As Nilsson, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.36) II.149, observed: "So juristisch wie Ed. Meyer hat Alexander schwerlich gedacht." See Balsdon, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.83) 202–03, for argumentation of this point. In a *Nachtrag* (Nr.12) to the second edition of his *Gottmenschtum und gr. Städte* (*Zetemata* 14, Munich 1970), C. Habicht supports, against E. J. Bickerman, "Sur un passage d'Hypéride (Epitaphios col. VIII)," *Athenaeum* 41 (1963) 70–85, the likelihood of an Alexander cult (though a short-lived one) in Athens. Habicht rightly stresses the importance of Arr. 7.23.2 on the 'theoric' embassy to Alexander. He concedes Bickerman's and Taeger's objections to his view (pp.32–33) that Alexander and Hephaestion were associated in cult (on which had depended his view that Alexander had tacitly requested divine honors in requesting a cult of Hephaestion).

⁹² Cf. Cerfaux and Tondriau, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.36) 141–42.

⁹³ Such, for example, is the view attributed to Solon by Herodotus (1.31.4–5).

with them, man can feel only self-contempt. Zeus regrets that he gave immortal horses to Peleus, to a mortal, which is the most pitiable thing on earth (*Il.* 17.443). Apollo warns Diomedes that “the tribe of deathless gods and of men who go upon the earth is never the same” (*Il.* 5.441–42). On the other hand, the opposite of Apollo’s statement could be maintained, as in Hesiod’s line, “From one origin are begotten gods and mortal men” (*Op.* 108), a notion amplified in Pindar’s well-known lines, “One is the race of men, one is the race of gods, and from one mother do we both derive our breath; yet a power that is wholly sundered parteth us, in that the one is naught, while for the other the brazen heaven endureth as an abode unshaken forever. Albeit, we mortals have some likeness, either in might of mind or at least in our nature to the immortals . . .”⁹⁴ Thus divinity is far and near.⁹⁵ *Nah ist und schwer zu fassen der Gott.*

The hero is the embodiment of this theology. In him the two sides of the antithesis are combined and reconciled, though uneasily. He is a mortal subject to his mortality, but through a divine ἀρετή within him he surpasses the ordinary limits. He is not a god, but from the mortal point of view he is half-divine. In Homer not only are the heroes honored as gods by their people (*Il.* 12.310–28 etc.), but already they are “a race of men who are demigods” (*Il.* 12.23; cf. *Hymn.Hom.* 31.18–19). So Hesiod classifies heroes (*Op.* 159–60). In Pindar heroes are regularly ἀντίθεοι (*Pyth.* 1.53; 4.58; cf. *Ol.* 3.35; *Pyth.* 3.88; *Isthm.* 8.24; fr.172.1 B.). Thus in prayers and in thanksgiving the heroes are coupled with the gods (*Aesch. Agam.* 513–17; cf. fr.55 N.²; *Thuc.* 2.74.3, 4.87.2; *Hdt.* 8.109.3; *Lycurg. Leoc.* 1). In Sophocles (*Phil.* 1418–20) Heracles claims that he has acquired immortal ἀρετή:

καὶ πρῶτα μὲν σοὶ τὰς ἐμὰς λέξω τύχας,
ὄρους πονήσας καὶ διεξελθῶν πόνους
ἀθάνατον ἀρετὴν ἔσχον, ὡς πάρεσθ’ ὄραν.

As Cedric Whitman has argued, heroism lived on in the fifth century as a kind of norm, and heroism continued to mean a certain divinity.⁹⁶

The complex of beliefs associated with heroism was never system-

⁹⁴ *Nem.* 6.1ff. The translation is by J. Sandys in *LCL*.

⁹⁵ On the ambiguities of divinity in Homer, see Albin Lesky, *A History of Greek Literature*, transl. J. Willis and C. deHeer (New York 1966) 65–73.

⁹⁶ C. H. Whitman, *Sophocles: A Study of Heroic Humanism* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1951) ch.xi, “Sophocles and the Fifth Century.”

atized.⁹⁷ The heroes of poetry are spoken of as half-divine; the heroes of cult are often closely connected in worship with deities; some cult figures were worshipped as either heroes or gods.⁹⁸ If we set Alexander against the background of such beliefs, what is most striking is that he never sought heroic honors. Our sources contain many references to emulation of heroes but nothing concerning heroization. Alexander sought heroism as distinct from heroization, since heroism implied divinity. Alexander's feelings in these matters can be seen in the fact that he wished to heroize his friend Hephaestion. A hero cult would suffice a lesser man than Alexander. He himself sought something more.

For the broader heroic ideal persisted even into the fourth century B.C. Aristotle, in the so-called *Hymn to Arete*,⁹⁹ associated his patron, Hermeias of Atarneus, who had been treacherously executed by the Persian king, with Achilles, Heracles and other heroes:

Arete, you whom the mortal race wins by much toil,
the fairest prey in life,
for the beauty of your form, maiden,
it is an enviable lot in Hellas both to die
5 and to endure toils violent and unceasing.
On such fruits do you set the mind:
equal to the Immortals, better than gold,
and noble ancestors and languid-eyed sleep.
For your sake Heracles, the son of Zeus, and Leda's youths
10 endured much in their deeds
hunting after your power.
Through longing for you, Achilles and Ajax came to the house
of Hades.
Because of the gracious beauty of your form the nursling
of Atarneus forsook the sun's rays.
Therefore the Muses will exalt him, famous in song for
his deeds and immortal,

⁹⁷ L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford 1921) 370: "The hero-cult once instituted, the Greek religious consciousness was at least able to keep clear the distinction between the hero and the deity: the forms of worship were different, at least as between the heroic ritual and that of the Olympians; and the hero was a subordinate personage, though immortal, with local and limited power . . . But for the clear regularization of the position of the hero to deity, there was no accepted dogma or consistent system: often indeed the former was closely associated with the latter in worship . . ."

⁹⁸ Farnell, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.97) ch.ii.

⁹⁹ Diog.Laert. 5.7 calls the poem a hymn.

The daughters of Memory, exalting reverence for Zeus
 who guards the rights of hospitality, exalting the
 gift of honor that is faithful friendship.¹⁰⁰

The heroic life remains the model of the highest achievement, and heroism still means the possibility of divinity (6–8). Arete is “equal to the Immortals” (7). The mortal (*cf.* 1) who can attain ἀρετή, *i.e.* the mortal who already has within him the capacity for ἀρετή, attains to an immortal, a divine quality.

The notion that the display of ἀρετή could bring one divinity was also often alluded to by Isocrates, and his example was, of course, Heracles (Isoc. 1.50, 5.132). He also says that “if any of those of former times became immortal through their ἀρετή,” he thinks that Evagoras deserves this gift (9.70). To Philip, Isocrates held up Heracles as the example of the mortal who had achieved ἰσόθεον . . . δόξαν by his campaign against Troy (Isoc. 5.145). How literally Philip received this suggestion, one does not know. But it is obvious that Isocrates was serious about his policy for Greece and thus would have used the most persuasive arguments possible. If he holds up Heracles as an example to Philip, he must think that Philip can be so inspired. As for Alexander, there is no reason to doubt that rivalry with heroes was a passion of his. What the *Hymn* and these statements of Isocrates add to an understanding of heroism is that still in the fourth century B.C. heroism was associated with divinity, as it had been from the beginning. Clearly Aristotle and Isocrates did not offer Alexander a program for the attainment of divinity, and Alexander cannot be shown to be following any definite plan to that end. But he can be shown to be animated by an ideal of ἀρετή that appears in Isocrates and Aristotle and was thus part of the spiritual ambience in which Alexander grew up.

The contemporaneity of the notion of the possibility of an heroic and divine ἀρετή is illustrated also in a passage at the beginning of Book 7 of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*:

. . . The qualities of character to be avoided are three in kind: vice, moral weakness and brutishness. The opposites of two of these are obvious: one is called virtue (ἀρετήν) and the other moral strength. The most fitting description of the opposite of brutishness would be

¹⁰⁰ I have translated the text given by Diehl.³ Various readings are of course disputed, especially ἀγρεύοντες (10), on which see C. M. Bowra, “Aristotle's Hymn to Virtue,” *CQ* 32 (1938) 188–89. Neither of his conjectures would affect the interpretation here offered.

to say that it is superhuman virtue (*τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶς ἀρετήν*), a kind of *heroic and divine* excellence; just as Homer has Priam say about Hector that he was of surpassing excellence: “for he did not seem like one who was a child of a mortal man, but of a god.” Therefore, if as is said, an excess of virtue can change a man into a god, the characteristic opposed to brutishness must evidently be something of this sort.¹⁰¹

Note here again the coupling of the heroic and the divine,¹⁰² and especially the illustration from the *Iliad*, where superhuman ἀρετή appears as divine sonship. In just this way did Alexander conceive of his own ἀρετή.

Clearly Aristotle’s classification of ethical qualities cannot be directly applied to Alexander; yet this classification not only illustrates the contemporaneity of the notion under discussion, but also suggests how this notion might have affected Alexander. If there existed the possibility, *i.e.*, if it was believed (*cf.* “as is said”) that the possibility existed, then someone might attempt to realize this possibility of heroic and divine excellence. Aristotle does not mean that men can literally become heroes or gods, but only that a superhuman ἀρετή would be the opposite of brutishness. Alexander, on the other hand, might have taken literally the human possibility of heroism and divinity achieved through toilsome ἀρετή.

The *Hymn to Arete* is of use to us in suggesting how Alexander might have understood the requirements of such an achievement. The hero must already have in him the ἀρετή that will signify his heroism, but the potentiality is far from sufficient. Rather, the very potentiality of such ἀρετή means a life of toil beyond what the ordinary mortal can endure. The life of the hero is in allegiance to, and is a ceaseless unfolding of, his ἀρετή. As Wilamowitz said of the *Hymn*, “The heroes did not offer up their lives in order to gain *arete*, but rather offered to the *arete* they possessed the life they led and the death they died.”¹⁰³

In Alexander’s life the cutting of the Gordian knot and the oracle at Siwah might have served as guarantees of the ἀρετή which Alexander had, from our point of view, already revealed, but which, from his point of view, had been revealed to him and therefore needed the confirmation of oracles. Furthermore, in accordance with heroism as

¹⁰¹ This is the translation, with slight alterations, by M. Ostwald in the Library of Liberal Arts (New York 1962) 174.

¹⁰² *Cf.* Arist. *Pol.* 1332b16–23; *Pl. Leg.* 818c3.

¹⁰³ *Aristoteles und Athen* II (Berlin 1893) 11. *Cf.* Arist. *EN* 1103a31–33 cited by Wilamowitz.

understood by Aristotle in the *Hymn*, the condition of such a revelation as had come from Ammon was that Alexander spend his life in the fulfillment of it. One is reminded of Socrates' lifelong confirmation of the response of the Pythia concerning his wisdom (Pl. *Apol.* 23B4–10). Alexander could measure the accomplishments of his ἀρετή and thus the attainment of the divinity that lay in store for the hero only by the standard of the great heroes known in legend and poetry: thus his emulation of them.

This heroism is summed up in certain parts of the speech to the mutinous troops on the Hyphasis. The speech may be entirely Arrian's invention; yet it is an accurate interpretation of Alexander's character. "I for my part hold that there is no limit to the labors of a noble man except the labors themselves, those of them which lead to fair deeds." "Fair deeds belong to those who undergo labor and take chances. And it is sweet to live with ἀρετή and to die leaving behind immortal fame. Do you not know that our ancestor Heracles would not, by remaining in Tiryns or Argos, or in the Peloponnesus or Thebes, have attained such fame as to become or to seem a god, having been a mortal?" (Arr. 5.26.1; 4–5). It was precisely through the imitation of Heraclean ἀρετή that Alexander hoped to attain the divinity revealed to him by the oracle of Ammon, though for Alexander part of the definition of Heraclean ἀρετή could be Achillean or Dionysian ἀρετή as well. Thus it is of no consequence for the psychology of Alexander that he once imitated non-Greek models, Cyrus and Semiramis, or that some of his Greek models were never deified. What Alexander imitates is their ἀρετή. Such imitation is his way of proving his own ἀρετή; and if ἀρετή had once brought divinity it might again.

The relation of heroism and aspiration to divinity is in fact expressed on the coins: ". . . the obverse and reverse of Alexander's tetradrachms function as a unity in such a way that the thought of Alexander as Heracles and son of Zeus can hardly be avoided. What especially contributes to this effect is the unusual appearance of the enthroned Zeus as the counterpart to Heracles."¹⁰⁴

IV. The Debate of Anaxarchus and Callisthenes

Two of our sources, Arrian (4.10.6ff) and Curtius (8.5.5ff), contain a debate on the subject of deification in general and the deification of

¹⁰⁴ Kleiner, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.56) 11.

Alexander in particular. This debate is a well-known kind of Alexander story, which could be labelled “Alexander and the philosophers.” But this debate may contain the residue of something historical, and, in any case, it clearly presents the fundamental theological alternatives in the matter of deification as they would have appeared to Alexander’s contemporaries. Thus the debate provides a scheme according to which we can define Alexander’s own attitude toward the possibility of his divinity.

The context of the debate in Arrian and Curtius is the *προσκύνησις* episode. Plutarch does not report the debate, but his account of the episode (*Alex.* 54.3–6) puts Callisthenes in the same light as in Arrian and Curtius. In all of our sources, the episode follows the murder of Clitus and leads to the death of Callisthenes.¹⁰⁵ The debate appears, then, to have been for the sources of our sources and also for Curtius and Arrian themselves an explanation of the meaning of Alexander’s actions at this time. These actions required explanation because they showed a new dimension of Alexander’s character. He had been capable of cruelty earlier for political and military ends. The murders of Clitus and Callisthenes, not practical exigencies, are a more private matter and are related to Alexander’s view of himself.

These murders are linked in our sources by the *προσκύνησις* episode, and, within this episode, by the debate. The subject of the debate is deification. At some point, then (we are necessarily vague), our tradition saw these murders in terms of Alexander’s pretensions to divinity. No matter how good or bad the tradition is here, the debate is of interest to the present discussion since it outlines so clearly the theological issues that would have been provoked by Alexander’s pretensions if they were expressed as explicitly at this time as they were later.

The participants in the debate are, in Arrian, Callisthenes and Anaxarchus; in Curtius, Callisthenes and a Cleo who is not mentioned elsewhere. Since the position of Anaxarchus in Arrian, which corresponds perfectly to the position of Cleo in Curtius, can be shown to agree with everything else we know about Anaxarchus, the mysterious Cleo can be discounted as a figure invented by Curtius for his own reasons. Furthermore, Anaxarchus and Callisthenes appear elsewhere as rival philosophers in Alexander’s court, and there is no reason to

¹⁰⁵ Plut. *Alex.* 50–55; Arr. 4.8ff, and note esp. 4.14.4; Curt. 8.6ff; cf. Diod. 17 *init.* (the table of contents), where the death of Callisthenes follows the murder of Clitus.

doubt the historical reality underlying these stories, especially considering the bitterness with which the philosophical schools of the day opposed one another. Plutarch records that Callisthenes and Anaxarchus gave Alexander different sorts of consolation after the murder of Clitus (*Alex.* 52.3–7; *cf.* *Arr.* 4.9.7ff); and implies that there was enmity between them (*Alex.* 52.8). Strabo (13.1.27) says that Alexander read Homer with Callisthenes and Anaxarchus (*cf.* *Plut. Alex.* 8).

No matter who should be considered the winner of the debate at a theoretical level, Anaxarchus was the winner as regards the practical consequences. Our sources associate the death of Callisthenes with his philosophical position as well as with his personality. Anaxarchus, on the other hand, remained the king's favorite until the end. In 323 B.C., at Alexander's entry into Babylon, Anaxarchus was one of those who advised Alexander not to heed the warnings of the Chaldaeans (*Diod.* 17.112.4–5; *Just.* 12.13.5; *Diog.Laert.* 9.61). Plutarch says that Alexander considered Anaxarchus the most valuable of his friends (*De Alex. fort.* 331E). Anaxarchus evidently had the knack of pleasing Alexander, so much so that he could get away with teasing Alexander about his pretensions to divinity. In fact, Anaxarchus seems to have been remembered chiefly for his quips and his pronouncements on this subject. There is a story from Satyrus (*FHG* 3.164 fr.18) preserved in Plutarch (*Alex.* 28.4) and in Athenaeus (6.250–51) according to which Anaxarchus asked Alexander, after it had thundered, "Could you, the son of Zeus, thunder like that?" Aelian has a notice to the same effect: "Anaxarchus, called the eudaemonist, laughed at Alexander for making himself divine. Once when Alexander was ill and the physician ordered a gruel to be prepared for him, Anaxarchus said with a laugh: 'The hopes of our god rest in a bowl (or dose of medicine)'" (*VH.* 9.37). If, as Habicht has argued, there were cults of Alexander in Asia Minor from 334/3 B.C.,¹⁰⁶ and if the divine sonship meant as much to Alexander as I have said, then Anaxarchus' irony had a likely object in Alexander.

Yet Anaxarchus, as in the debate, encouraged Alexander's pretensions to divinity. Once the philosophical basis of Anaxarchus' position becomes clear, it will be seen that there was for him no contradiction between his encouragement and his irony. Anaxarchus has two arguments for deifying Alexander (*Arr.* 4.10.6; *cf.* *Curt.*

¹⁰⁶ Habicht, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.91) 23 and *Nachtrag* Nr.10 (pp.245–46).

8.5.10–11). The second of these maintains that, since the Macedonians will surely honor Alexander as a god when he is dead, it is juster to honor him thus when he is alive, when it is of use to him. We turn from the dubious piety of this to the first argument, which shows more clearly Anaxarchus' philosophical assumptions. He says that the Macedonians would with greater justice honor Alexander as a god than Heracles or Dionysus, since the former is an Argive and the latter a Theban. Anaxarchus here assumes first that divinity is strictly local. A people should honor gods of its own creation. Second, he assumes that gods can in fact be created by *fiat*, and thus that they exist only by convention. In short, Anaxarchus' position is conventionalist, and this is what our scanty sources would lead us to expect, no matter what label—sceptic, eudaemonist, Democritean—we should apply to him.¹⁰⁷

Diogenes Laertius' brief notice tells us hardly anything about Anaxarchus' teaching; but we know more about his pupil Pyrrho, who also accompanied Alexander. Pyrrho held that all moral distinctions were conventional: νόμῳ δὲ καὶ ἔθει πάντα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους πρᾶττειν (Diog.Laert. 9.61). One can assume that this doctrine came from Anaxarchus (or a common source), since it is the groundwork not only of Anaxarchus' position on deification but also of his consolation of Alexander after the murder of Clitus. At that time Anaxarchus encouraged Alexander to be a law unto himself, on the grounds that everything done by the one who holds power is just. Might is right. This position is most familiar to us from Plato's portrait of Callicles in the *Gorgias*, where Callicles' position that justice is what the strongman wills was also based on conventionalism (especially 491E–492C).

Callisthenes opposes the conventionalism of Anaxarchus, maintaining the old triad of man, hero and god (Arr. 4.11.3). The distinctions within the triad are not to be tampered with by mortals (Arr. 4.11.4), who cannot create gods (Curt. 8.5.18). For Callisthenes, who is arguing against *προσκύνησις*, the distinctions are especially expressed in the different kinds of honors paid to gods, heroes and mortals (Arr. 4.11.3–4; Curt. 8.5.19). Callisthenes admits that mortals can be deified—Heracles is the example—but only after death and only by the pronouncement of Delphi (4.11.7)—*hominem consequitur aliquando, numquam comitatur divinitas* (Curt. 8.5.16).

¹⁰⁷ For the testimonia, see E. Zeller, *The Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics*, transl. O. J. Reichel (London 1880) 518 n.3.

Neither of the two sides of the debate would have found favor with Alexander. The conventionalism of Anaxarchus would have rendered meaningless Alexander's heroism, the aim of which would thus have been not the revelation of Alexander's ἀρετή but his people's admiration. Clearly, however, Alexander cared less for the honors the world could bestow than for the continual campaigning by which he could prove his superhuman greatness. In imitating heroes Alexander did not aim at heroization after death or during life but at the divine ἀρετή that was out of reach of all but a few mortals. This sort of thing is not provided for in the views of Anaxarchus, who does not grant gods or heroes any but a conventional existence. But Anaxarchus' views presented no real threat to Alexander's enterprise, and Anaxarchus knew how to be pleasing, both by flattery and favors (Ael. *VH* 9.30).

But Callisthenes' views did present a threat. If, as he said, the gap between men and gods was unbridgeable, and if any superhuman status could be attained only after death, then Alexander's personal enterprise was futile. As the heroic phase of the campaign progressed, it did not please Alexander to have someone with Callisthenes' views and austere personality in his retinue.

V. Conclusion

In the life of Alexander myth becomes history only to become myth again, not only because his contemporary historians inevitably see him in terms of myth, but also because he saw himself in, and wanted to be seen in, those terms. Thus our sources do not altogether conceal the "real" Alexander; rather, Alexander consciously and willfully gave himself a certain ideality through conceiving of his life as a reenactment of myth.¹⁰⁸ His individuality is, then, not a matter of originality and peculiarity but of the spectacular degree to which he could fulfill the heroic ideal of the myths.

But the fulfillment, as in the myths, meant overstepping the limits. As he returns from the east to Babylonia, the march through the Gedrosian desert, the reign of terror,¹⁰⁹ and perhaps the proclamation

¹⁰⁸ On the "myth as lived" in antiquity, see Thomas Mann, "Freud and the Future" (1936), in *Essays of Three Decades*, transl. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York 1947) 422–24. "The life in the myth, life as a sacred repetition, is a historical form of life, for the man of ancient times lived thus" (p.423).

¹⁰⁹ There was a reign of terror: E. Badian, "Harpalus," *JHS* 81 (1961) 16–19.

of his own divinity, as well as other matters already touched upon, mark a change in his character, a fanatical development of his religiosity. And all the while his heroism has been meaningless to a Diogenes¹¹⁰ and laughably pretentious to a Menander.¹¹¹ His divinity soon becomes the butt of satire in the Greek cities. Alexander's heroism could seem then not the sacred reenactment of myth he intended, but a performance, even a masquerade, as he dresses for dinner in the lion-skin of Heracles. One recalls Hegel's saying that Achilles, the ideal youth of poetry, commences the Greek achievement, and Alexander, the ideal youth of reality, concludes it.¹¹² Alexander is this ideal youth not simply analogously to the ideal youth of epic but because of Achilles. Achilles, or the heroic life, is the formal cause, as it were, of Alexander's life. But in willing an imitation of the heroic life and in fulfilling it with his boundless energy, Alexander breaks the mould.

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¹¹⁰ Plut. *Alex.* 14.2; cf. Hamilton, *Commentary* 34.

¹¹¹ See sec. I of this paper *sub fin.*

¹¹² G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, transl. J. Sibree (New York 1956) 223.