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**ARRIAN'S PREFACE TO THE ANABASIS  
ALEXANDROU AND PLUTARCH'S PROLOGUE  
TO THE LIFE OF ALEXANDER\***

**KEYWORDS:** Arrian, Plutarch, biography, history, preface, polemics

**SUMMARY:** It is usually maintained that the main object of Arrian's criticism in his *Anabasis* are the historians of Alexander the Great. In the following I would like to argue that one of the writers Arrian criticized was also Plutarch of Chaeronea who wrote an influential biography of the Macedonian king. Although Arrian never referred directly to Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, he read not only many historical works on the king but used and criticized other accounts, called by him *ta legomena* ('tales'). To this latter group Plutarch's *vita Alexandri* should be included as well.

**EXORDIUM**

The aim of this paper is simple: to prove that in his programmatic *praefatio* to the *Anabasis Alexandrou* Arrian referred also polemically to Plutarch's very short and almost cursory, but famous introduction to the *Life of Alexander*. Therefore I would like also to suggest that looking from a broader perspective it was Plutarch's biography of Alexander which should be included – together with other available, numerous histories of Alexander from the Hellenistic times<sup>1</sup> – to the general, yet

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\* I thank Dr. Katarzyna Jazdzewska (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw) for her valuable comment. Any faults remain mine.

<sup>1</sup> On which see Pearson 1960; cf. Pédech 1984.

enigmatic category of the *legomena* (λεγόμενα) Arrian has been using in his Alexander history (*Anab.* 1. *praef.* 3).<sup>2</sup> This of course presupposes, in turn, that the young Bithynian adept of Stoicism who just has left the school of Epictetus in the Epirote Nicopolis (before, or about 113),<sup>3</sup> was well acquainted both with Plutarch's *vita Alexandri* (written most probably in the very beginning of the second century<sup>4</sup>) as with his two notorious Alexander-‘declamations’.<sup>5</sup>

As far as I know no scholar to date drew the attention to the idea that in the introductions to his history Arrian likely alludes to his older Greek compatriot.<sup>6</sup> Long ago an American expert Steele wrote an interesting paper devoted to the verbal and stylistic similarities in the two works but he stressed any lack of the evidence for direct influences, especially as far as ideas are concerned (Steele 1916; Schoene 1870). However, quite recently Bradley Buszard has proven that Arrian read Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*,<sup>7</sup> and in this respect his paper remains exceptionally important as it encouraged me to argue what always seemed to me obvious: Arrian's good knowledge of Plutarch's writings concerning the Macedonian conqueror.<sup>8</sup> This last observation, however, although

<sup>2</sup> E.g., at *Anab.* 7. 26. 3-7. 27.

<sup>3</sup> See Wheeler 1977: 20. I follow Bosworth (1980) in claiming that the *Anabasis* belongs to the earlier phase of Arrian's literary career which of course is the view which is not shared universally; on this see Sisti 2002: 44.

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all dates refer to AD. J. R. Hamilton (1969: xxxvii) thinks of the years between 110-115; cf. Brunt 1976: xix; Hornblower 1994: 56. Jones (1966: 66-70) also prefers the date of early second century (he is followed by Pelling 2009b: 252; Pelling 2011: 2-ca. 110) which makes no substantial difference to my arguing for Arrian's knowledge of this biography.

<sup>5</sup> *Περὶ τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου τύχης ἢ ἀρετῆς* (*De Alexandri fortuna aut virtute* = *Mor.* 326d-345b); cf. Ziegler 1949: 85-87; Russell 1973: 166-167; Anderson 1993: 114-116; Prandi 2000; see esp. the notes by D'Angelo 1998 and Cammarota 1998.

<sup>6</sup> An eminent exception is Bosworth 1980: 12. He admits that Plutarch's biography ‘could have given Arrian the stimulus to improve upon it’ but expresses a voice of reservation that ‘Arrian worked from different sources’.

<sup>7</sup> Buszard (2010: 567) reminds that *Alexander* and *Caesar* were conceived as a one piece, i.e., scroll (cf. Stadter 1988), so the *Alexander* must have been consulted by Arrian, too; cf. also the ‘Introduction’ of Pelling 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Which, on the other hand, would be something obvious given the social aspects and practice (realities) of ancient readership, in the circumstances when works on any given theme usually were known to anyone dealing with the same subject-matter. The

occasionally signaled, still is not adequately acknowledged among modern experts in Arrian as it deserves to be. Perhaps understandably, as the main objection for this is straightforward: Arrian's 'Olympian' silence about Plutarch (Bosworth 1980; Baynham 2003). If one seeks in the *Anabasis* any direct reference to the Chaeronean philosopher, this would be indeed cautious attitude. But in fact, literary influences cannot always (in fact – very rarely) be detected in such a direct way, that is, by a simple quotation from, or recalling of an author by her/his name (Badian 1987: 611). Due to the peculiar nature of the evidence that remains at our disposal, a literary historian could not always be dogmatic. So, *mutatis mutandis*, from the fact that Thucydides does not name Herodotus should we infer that he did not read the work of the *pater historiae*? (a later tale even runs that he heard personally a public lecture Herodotus had delivered before the Athenians). Or, can one reject immediately the assertion that Xenophon was not acquainted with Thucydides' κτῆμά ἐξ αἰεὶ on the sole basis that he did not record the predecessor's name? Of course, a true dilemma in such and alike cases is the following: if direct, 'hard' evidence is lacking, where should one look for corroboration of the views as these advanced here? Each case must be treated separately, true, but nevertheless I think that in this particular instance there is some ground justifying such a suggestion.

In the following I shall deal with the problem by investigating four essential points: 1), a portion of the text will be devoted to the similarities between history and biography which prove that biography was not far from historiography, so Plutarch's work was logically under Arrian's consideration as an important source for Alexander story; 2), closer attention will be paid to the different way the Bithynian thinker treats a few key episodes described *also* in the Plutarchan Alexander-*vita* which in itself may be interpreted as his effort to rebut – on a par with the rebuttal of other narratives – the data in this influential biography, and to replace them with his own authoritative version; 3), one should acknowledge in both authors a different interpretation of the figure of Alexander and his memorable accomplishments: in this respect, Arrian

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existence of such books provided often either a real impulse for writing (again) on the same topic, or – as in the case of the Greek historiography – to continue the theme; Fornara 1988; cf. Whitmarsh 2004: 5.

certainly disagreed with Plutarch, and this factor also may point to his literary rivalry (*aemulatio*) with the Boeotian sage.<sup>9</sup> It will be suggested that among many reasons Arrian had taken into the consideration when he attempted to rewrite the story of the Macedonian conqueror,<sup>10</sup> a contest with the older rival and his vision of Alexander both as ‘a philosopher on the throne’<sup>11</sup> as a dreamer carrying the glowing beacon of a far-reaching and romantic plan (Wardman 1955: 97; Bosworth 1986: 12; Asirvatham 2012; Boulet 2013: 49), played the important role.<sup>12</sup> According to Plutarch, such a plan was to be the realization of an alleged Graeco-Macedonian-Persian *Verschmelzungspolitik*,<sup>13</sup> just an ancient prefiguration of a honest but utopia-like *alle Menschen werden Brüder*-ideal; finally, 4), an intriguing episode from Arrian’s early career will be recalled in order to suggest that his quarrel with Plutarch may also have been based on a personal resentment.

<sup>9</sup> But cf. Powell 1939: 229. See also Bosworth 1980; Baynham 2003; Baynham 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Trajan’s Parthian campaigns, notoriously undertaken as an ‘anabasis’ (cf. Lepper 1948: 196-198, on the ancient authorities see especially Cassius Dio, 68. 30. 1; cf. *Itiner. Alex.* 1) and the Emperor’s politics of *imitatio Alexandri*; Bosworth 1995; Bosworth 2007: 447; cf. Wirth 1976; den Hengst 2010: 77; Pelling 2011: 26), presented probably for Arrian both the most direct, military-political stimulus as an actual source of inspiration (Burliga 2013), irrespective of the controversial issue whether he took part in it and held any office (Wirth 1974: 169-204; Bosworth 1980). I suppose Arrian’s interest in Alexander was also strengthened by – in all probability – the four kingship orations of his Bithynian compatriot, Dio ‘Chrysostomus’ of Prusa (see Jones 1978: 115-123; Szarmach 1979; cf. Whitmarsh 2001: 202-203). Written about the year 100 and addressed to Trajan, they raise several moral problems connected with maintaining royal power and ruling empire; see Roisman 1983-1984; Zecchini 1983: 197-199. Of great importance (but here we may only speculate) might be the same philosopher’s long treatise (in eight books) – its subject-matter had to do with the virtues of the Macedonian conqueror. Unfortunately, the work is lost.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. note 46, below.

<sup>12</sup> So Bosworth (1980: 12) cites the opinion of other scholars that it may be not a coincidence that Arrian wrote also the biographies of Dion and Timoleon who were also – noticeably – Plutarch’s heroes. However, this highly interesting fact cannot be pursued here.

<sup>13</sup> A vision that goes back as far as to the Prussian historian Droysen 1833; cf. Badian 1976: 280; Bosworth 2006: 10. On which see Tarn 1949, whose views were refuted by Badian 1958: 425f. and Badian 1976 (an excellent overview); cf. Bianchetti 2005: 127-154.

## 1. BIOGRAPHY VS. HISTORY?

In the case of Arrian the importance of this prefatory statement which must be read with its second part, inserted at another place (*Anab.* 1. 12. 5; Schepens 1971; Stadter 1981; Moles 1985; Marincola 1989; Gray 1990), has been recognized and appreciated by modern experts long time since. They two constitute the sophisticated train of thought, with the author's famous rhetorical *recusatio* when introducing himself.<sup>14</sup> But above all, Arrian's first preface was unmistakably meant to be highly polemical passage. His intention there was to blow away other numerous accounts of the Alexander 'tale', to 'clean out' – in his conviction – that whole 'Augeas' stable' of the Hellenistic Alexander-production. Whether the writer was successful in his efforts or not is the topic fiercely debated until now.<sup>15</sup> Today, the Bithynian historian's unmasked, evident rhetoric in argumentation is pointed out, rather than his (alleged) *wie es eigentlich gewesen war*-faculty to present historical data in the Tacitean-like, *sine ira et studio*-manner, that's, without open prejudices and major distortions.<sup>16</sup> Regarding the historical value of the *Anabasis* as a historical source the modern authorities aim to find out many flaws and faults in Arrian's narrative, and to rehabilitate the so-called Vulgate-tradition, starting with the works of Callisthenes and Clitarchus (Pearson 1960: 22-49, 212-242; Bosworth 1988b: 295-300; cf. Hornblower 1994: 40-41; Prandi 1996: 13; Baynham 1998; Rzepka 2006; McNerney 2007: 424-430; cf. Dreyer 2009: 71). Be that

<sup>14</sup> In the 'second' preface; cf. Bosworth 1980: 106.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. especially the revisionist studies of Bosworth, e.g. Bosworth 1976a; Bosworth 1976b. As usual in the case of this scholar, his papers contain many valuable and insightful observations, yet is difficult to follow the author who claims (Bosworth 1976b) that it was the literary style which Arrian, first and foremost, was obsessed with. Far from it. I am convicted that one should take the Nicomedian *pepaideumenos*' 'methodological' rhetoric as seriously as possible (cf. Burliga 2012); see Baynham 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Which itself could not also be taken at face value and interpreted as the expression of a perfect impartiality (see Syme 1958; cf. Wiseman 1993), or – especially – of any readiness of avoiding personal condemnatory/laudatory notes; see Scheller 1911: 49 (citing Polybius, 1. 14. 5 and 8. 10. 7; see Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 59) who aptly comments that for the ancients there was no contradiction between the demand of telling truth and inserting moral judgments: 'Veritas in eo quoque est observanda quod non mendose laudet vituperetve scriptor, sed ex ipsis factis iudicium suum repetat'; see Luce 1989: 17.

as it may, this very intriguing issue cannot here concern us longer.<sup>17</sup> Instead of this what must be addressed here is the vital question: what kind of polemics Arrian's preface (as well as his vision of Alexander's everlasting achievements) contains? Why was his work on Alexander so pathbreaking and crucial, as he himself boastfully claims at the end of the preface (*Anab.* 1. *praef.* 3): ὅστις δὲ θαυμάσεται ἀνθ' ὅτου ἐπὶ τοσοῖσδε συγγραφεῦσι καὶ ἐμοὶ ἐπὶ νοῦν ἦλθεν ἥδε ἡ συγγραφή, τά τε ἐκείνων ἀντα τις ἀναλεξάμενος καὶ τοῖσδε τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἐντυχὼν οὕτω θαυμάζτω.<sup>18</sup>

It was always thought that it was a bunch of the Hellenistic Alexander-historians against whom Arrian was writing. Essentially, as a general statement this observation must be accepted as valid (Brunt 1976; Atkinson 2013; Pownall 2013). So, it may be inferred that when dealing with a true flow of the Alexander-industry Arrian's great methodological merit was to make a very reasonable, 'Herodotean' choice between contradictory or conflicting traditions:<sup>19</sup> in practice, this meant

<sup>17</sup> Yet, it should be said that the recent, somewhat severe attacks on Arrian's historical methods and, in consequence, on his historical reliability, go too far. Partly, it must be here conceded, to some extent they are understandable, as they constitute a reaction to the earlier idolatry of this 'best' Alexander-historian, especially if made (and such was a practice) at the price of underestimating of the other versions (especially that by Curtius Rufus; cf. Atkinson 1998: xxv-xvi; Baynham 1998; Billows 2000: 305; Rzepka 2006). It is true that Arrian was not an ideal researcher (how could he have been? was there any ever?), that he has his own bias (see below), that he made more or less serious mistakes (counted by Bosworth 1972; Bosworth 1976: 34-46; cf. Spencer 2002: 7; Davidson 2001), and that his two main sources, the works of Ptolemy and Aristobulus, were not without flaws also (on the latter there is a notorious tale preserved in Lucian's *How to write history?*, §12 = *FGrH* 139 T4 = F44; Avenarius 1960; Anderson 1990). On the other hand, when regarding geographical data, he was the main authority for Strabo's account of India; cf. Brunt 1983; Pownall 2013 – according to her the episode may be apocryphal). But it would be an exaggeration to deny his efforts to determine the true version of events.

<sup>18</sup> Ed. A. G. Roos & G. Wirth, Teubner; cf. Schepens 1971: 255.

<sup>19</sup> In three ways: first, as he – in the vein of the father of history – stressed the importance of the accounts based on eyewitness experience; second, Arrian not rarely leaves the reader with a choice between different accounts of the same event (or he recalls, at least, the existence of such accounts), although he himself does not fail to notice his critical stance or doubts; third, like Herodotus he thought worth emphasizing that these *legomena* were also *axiophegetotera* ('worthy of belief': Strasburger 1982: 135; cf. Wiseman 1993: 135); on a similar procedure see Curtius, 9. 1. 35: *Equidem plura trans-*

to rely mainly on the valuable accounts made by the two eyewitnesses to the expedition, Ptolemy and Aristobulus,<sup>20</sup> and to criticize (on many particular points) all the rest (Brunt 1983: 542-550).<sup>21</sup> But what about the above mentioned λεγόμενα ὑπὲρ Ἀλεξάνδρου? (Stadter 1980: 60-76; Bosworth 1988a: 61-93) Arrian says:

ἔστι δὲ ἃ καὶ πρὸς ἄλλων ξυγγεγραμμένα, ὅτι καὶ αὐτὰ ἀξιαφήγητά τέ μοι ἔδοξε καὶ οὐ πάντη ἄπιστα, ὥς λεγόμενα μόνον ὑπὲρ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἀνέγραψα ('However, I have also recorded some statements made in other accounts of others, when I thought them worth mention and not entirely untrustworthy, but only as tales told of Alexander'; tr. P. A. Brunt, Loeb).<sup>22</sup>

Obviously, here the term λεγόμενα is purportedly ambiguous but I believe this category should be taken more broadly than one is usually accustomed to assume. It encompassed all what Arrian has read (Pearson 1955: 430-431). It would be thus a mistake, I would suggest, to confine it to the existing historical works only. In Arrian's case it must have comprised the existing Alexander literature, available to him, including both philosophical treatises as biographies of this terrifying and iconic figure of the past – all that vast literary tradition that Lionel Pearson included in the general category of 'Rhetoricians, Antiquarians, and Others' (Pearson 1960: 243-264; see Hamilton 1978: 19-21). Among the latter there was undoubtedly that most eminent and (what obvious) most actual βίος – Plutarch's *vita Alexandri*.<sup>23</sup> In consequence, it was Plutarch who should have been included to Arrian's

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*cribo quam credo; nam nec affirmare sustineo de quibus dubito, nec subducere quae accepi* ('As for myself, I report more things than I believe; for I cannot bring myself to vouch for that about which I am in doubt, nor to suppress what I have heard'; tr. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb); with Atkinson 1998: 530, *ad loc.*; cf. Bosworth 1988a: 61-62; Bosworth 1995: 7.

<sup>20</sup> Baynham 2003 and 2010; but Roisman 1984, 379, n. 27, observes that in many cases Arrian preferred the relations that differ from these found in his two main sources; cf. Brunt 1983, 553-554.

<sup>21</sup> A honourable exception of Nearchus the Cretan must be especially mentioned.

<sup>22</sup> See Tonnet 1988: 131.

<sup>23</sup> If Buszard (2010: 581-582) is right, there is a possibility that the adverb μόνον refers not to ὥς λεγόμενα but to ὑπὲρ Ἀλεξάνδρου (so, the meaning would be not: 'only as tales told of Alexander' but: 'about Alexander alone'). If so, this would be an

list of τῶν συγγραψάντων and ἔστιν οἱ ἀνέγραψαν (*Anab.* 6. 11. 8). I therefore think that for Arrian's purposes a sharp Plutarchan divide between ιστορίαι and βίοι was without substantial value. Accordingly, there were some other elements in Plutarch's methodological *credo* that could be relevant to Arrian. Now, let us take a closer look at Plutarch's famous statement.

As it is notoriously recognized, Plutarch is making a fundamental difference between biography and history, as Polybius already did (10. 24<sup>24</sup>; cf. Nepos, *Pelop.* 1; Leo 1901: 146; Momigliano 1993: 1; Pelling 2000; Pelling 2002a; Pelling 2009a; Pelling 2009b; Pelling, Duff 2013: 340; Pelling Schorn 2014: 688-690). But where such reservation came in the case of Alexander at all from? As a matter of fact, a sharp distinction between biography and history is something exceptional in Plutarch's practice as biographer, and (as many scholars observed) his 'anti-historical' rhetoric is not so common in his other *vitae* (Whitmarsh 2005: 79; Grethlein 2013: 92); conversely, a straightforward divide between the two genres seems to be peculiar to this concrete Plutarchan *vita* and does not appear in his other biographies where the learned essayist fails to hold so firmly the distinction between *erga* and *bios*.

The most plausible explanation of this is the figure of Alexander himself, as Plutarch realized that regarding the king there was at one's disposal such an endless sea of various accounts that he could not take responsibility for their detailed recording<sup>25</sup>. Here lies probably the source of Plutarch's strong reservation, as he wished to anticipate a future critique that his story is neither told in quite chronological order nor

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additional argument that Plutarch's biography *must* have been taken by Arrian into the consideration.

<sup>24</sup> Polybius' statement is, however, highly ambiguous. He does not deny that a description of a king or eminent personalities should be excluded from history. His point is only that such digressions within a historical work ought to be applied to the account of deeds, not in a separate introduction. The Polybian example proves, I believe, that in the ancient literary practice the difference between biography and history was that of a degree only: it means (to use Momigliano's words) that Greek and Romans 'were also able to appreciate what remains human in a king or in a politician' (Momigliano 1993: 104).

<sup>25</sup> Hamilton (1969: xlix) counted that in the *Life of Alexander* there are 24 references to the other sources; Pelling 2009a: 608.



embracing all the details from Alexander story.<sup>26</sup> Thus he conceded it necessary to define his goal more narrowly – to give man's *ethos* (ἦθος; Görgemanns 2003: 648; Nawotka 2010: 20).<sup>27</sup> According to Plutarch, it was the occasion to make a comparison of his own procedure to that of painters (οἱ ζωγράφοι). He explains therefore that the painter's goal is to show the face and soul of an individual (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα; *Alex.* 1.3), but by doing so he is by no means obliged or at pains to give on his painting the whole background (Korus 1978: 208; Duff 1999: 16). So by analogy, as Plutarch argues, is the task of a biographer: what is important, he also implies that his effort will not be to give any detailed

<sup>26</sup> Modern scholars observe, however, that in comparison with the *vita* of his contemporary, the Roman Suetonius (writing down, as it is maintained, about ten or twenty years after Plutarch), Plutarch's lives retain, in general, chronological order: Momigliano 1993; Görgemanns 2003: 648-649.

<sup>27</sup> Burridge 2001: 248; Duff 1999: 13-22; cf. Mossman 1988: 93: 'Plutarch is concerned with Alexander's internal development more than his external career'. I am far from denying that the two types of writing were not distinguished totally in antiquity (Fornara 1983; Momigliano 1993; Wardle 2014: 6). The point is thus if (to quote Mossman, above) that 'more' (the Plutarchan μᾶλλον) can be determined precisely and how far can we push such an argument? One should, however, bear in mind that Plutarch's 'methods' as a biographer had its necessary limits: although not of primary importance, Plutarch inserts much what informs the reader of the king's character by narrating the historical events (cf. König 2009: 87). Now, his exceptional statement in *Alexander* looks as an attempt of self-justification, yet it does not change the fact that history remained 'substance that makes up the *Lives*' (so rightly Hägg 2012: 272; cf. also Stadter 2007: 538: 'Plutarchan biography had to have its foundation in historical fact'). Consequently, Mossman's statement, true as it generally is, does not exclude the possibility that the biographer used the same sources as Arrian did, and that his biography contains a lot of historical narrative, that is the king's *erga* (which always was a criterion of a historical work, according to Aristotle, *Poet.* 1451b 4-11; cf. Duff, 1999: 28; Pelling 2006: 255) – the importance of which, by contrast, is stressed, e.g., in the *Life of Pericles*, 2. 3 and *Lives of Aemilius Paulus and Timoleon*, 1. 1 (cf. Stadter 1989: 60-61; see Hägg, 2012: 272). Finally, one must ask of the results of Plutarch's efforts: how much does his biography differ from a historical narrative? Here the additional point is that Mossman seems to ignore a different philosophical angle from which Plutarch approached Alexander – a factor which appears to have been in antiquity more important than the alleged, strict differences between so fluid 'genres' like biography and history (see Pelling 2006; Pelling 2009a: 612; Pelling 2009b). It might also be of some importance to remind that Jacoby has included one essay of Plutarch (now lost but quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Preparatio Evangelica*) to 'history': *On the Daidala at Plataiai*; cf. Schachter 2014.

account of so many events (τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ὑποκειμένων πράξεων), for such a description of great deeds and military or political conflicts, battles or sieges (ἔασαντας ἑτέροις τὰ μεγέθη καὶ τοὺς ἀγῶνας; *Alex.* 1. 3) must be left to the others, that is, by implication to the historians (Hamilton 1969, *ad loc.*).

Be that as it may, Plutarch's standpoint might look for Arrian, a careful reader of the *vita Alexandri*, as self-justification, and provide a great stimulus. Again, I do not want to imply that this lecture gave the ambitious Bithynian man of letters one and only (or: decisive) impulse. But should we reject by the same a possibility that Arrian might have understood such a 'minimalistic' program in this biography as a challenge, and considered thus himself (rightly, or not) as one of those Plutarchan *heteroi*, a group of these 'another' writers whose task – contrary to Plutarch's (οὔτε γὰρ ἱστορίας γράφομεν, ἀλλὰ βίου) – was that of historians, traditionally obliged to record κλέα ἀνδρῶν / κλεῖα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων / τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων / ἔργα μέγала τε καὶ θωμαστά,<sup>28</sup> that's, deeds that since long were the subject-matter of epic poetry and historiography. Not coincidentally Arrian (*Anab.* 7. 30. 2) lays emphasis – to use here Plutarch's own phraseology – on ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι and great military achievements (μάχαι μυριόνεκροι καὶ παρατάξεις αἱ μέγιστα καὶ πολιορκίαι πόλεων). This means that his effort might have been purportedly directed against Plutarch's rhetoric to focus not on τὰ μεγέθη καὶ τοὺς ἀγῶνας, rather than on man's *ethos*.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Homer, *Il.* 9. 189; Hesiod, *Theog.* 100; Herodotus, 1. 1; cf. Diodorus, 17. 117. 5: πράξεις δὲ μεγίστας κατεργασάμενος οὐ μόνον τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ βασιλευσάντων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ὕστερον ἐσομένων μέχρι τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς βίου; see Marincola 1997: 34-35; Briant 2015: 141.

<sup>29</sup> See notes 26 and 27, above. Plutarch's rhetoric did not mean, naturally, that the biographer's goal – δῆλως ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας, ἀλλὰ πρᾶγμα βραχὺ πολλάκις καὶ ῥῆμα καὶ αἰδιὰ τις ἔμφρασιν ἦθους – was totally alien to the historians of Alexander, including Arrian. Quite the contrary; cf. Kraus 2010: 408.

## 2. THE AEMULATIO AT WORK: ARBELA, 'SOTER', AND EPHEMERIDES

There are a lot of passages in Arrian where he presents his own, modified version of the events narrated by others, in a deliberate and openly expressed opposition to them.<sup>30</sup> Modern experts try to find out the authorities he was actually relying on, yet given the loss of almost all the Alexander-production this is not an easy task. Anyway, what is clear is that that Arrian's intention was polemics – a usual practice of the Greek historians from the very beginning was to enter a literary competition, *ἀγών*, *aemulatio*. This being so, it remains intriguing to find out that in his effort to establish the most probable version of the events Arrian sometimes seems to take issue with accounts recorded by Plutarch – in a few cases the story narrated by Arrian remarkably differs from that given by the biographer. Again, although it would be a risky thing to claim that *Life of Alexander* remained Arrian's main (or sole) object of criticism, it is obvious that trying to replace previous versions, his critique must have concerned Plutarch too. It looks as if only occasion permitted, Arrian corrected – where it was necessary – the erroneous thinking he has found in the biography, but without naming its author. Instead, the young Stoic preferred to go another way of his implied critique: he abandoned his usual self-restraint and devoted more space to indicate the error. Some of these passages were analyzed thoroughly by Professor Bosworth (1988a), although – given a different aim of his investigation – he was less interested in the question which is significant here to me: why at all in some cases did Arrian think suitable to place explanations and corrections in such an expanded form as he did.

As the first, fine example of such literary rivalry we may cite Arrian's long, polemical digression where took the place the last great battle of Alexander with Darius: was it Gaugamela or Arbela? (*Anab.* 6. 11. 4-6).<sup>31</sup> The passage's aim is to reject the erroneous views concerning the spot of the clash, yet it seems very probable that it might have

<sup>30</sup> On this see Schepens 1971: 256, quoting Livy, *praef.* 2.

<sup>31</sup> Arrian mentions Arbela at 3. 8. 7; 3. 15. 15 and 3. 16. 3 (see note 34).

been directed *also* against the mention made by Plutarch,<sup>32</sup> this time in the speech *De Alex. fort. & virt.* 326f, who – contrary to his own, right identification of the place in the *Life of Alexander* (31. 6) – said of Arbela.<sup>33</sup> For Arrian this may have been the evidence for Plutarch's carelessness and the occasion to issue his implicit critique.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, what is also striking here (*Anab.* 6. 6. 11. 4-6) is that the historian is obliged to insert a long (and vehement in tone) digression, giving thus a far more detailed explanation of the sources of the error than the reader might find in a cursory narrative by (for example) Plutarch. The presence of such a digression in the *Anabasis* does not seem to be coincidental.

In the second polemical passage Ptolemy's alleged role in saving Alexander during the siege of the Indian city of the Malli is discussed. It was believed (mistakenly, as Arrian emphasizes: *Anab.* 6. 11. 8) that thanks to his courage Ptolemy, together with Peucestas, saved

<sup>32</sup> The same mistake was made by Diodorus, 17. 64. 1, Frontinus, *Strat.*, 2. 3. 19; Polyaeus, *Strat.* 4. 3. 17; and Lucian, *Dial. mort.* 12. 2.

<sup>33</sup> I say 'also', for one must remember that Arrian might have found the error in other accounts that are lost now. Bosworth (1980; 1988a: 78), who does not give a comment on Arrian's possible issue with Plutarch, stressing, like Arrian, that the battle Τὴν δὲ μεγάλην μάχην πρὸς Δαρεῖον οὐκ ἐν Ἀρβήλοις, ὥσπερ οἱ πολλοὶ γράφουσιν, ἀλλ' ἐν Γαυγαμήλοις γενέσθαι συνέπεσε ('[...] was not fought at Arbela, as most writers state, but at Gaugamela'; tr. B. Perrin, Loeb); cf. Hamilton 1969: 80 who cites Strabo, *Geogr.* 16. 1. 3 (ἐν δὲ τῇ Ἀτουρίᾳ ἐστὶ Γαυγάμηλα κώμη, ἐν ᾗ συνέβη νικηθῆναι καὶ ἀποβαλεῖν τὴν ἀρχὴν Δαρεῖον), and according to whom the source of the confusion were the Macedonian soldiers themselves: οἱ μέντοι Μακεδόνες τοῦτο μὲν ὁρῶντες κόμιον εὐτελές, τὰ δὲ Ἀρβηλα κατοικίαν ἀξιόλογον, κτίσμα ὡς φασιν Ἀρβήλου τοῦ Ἀθμονέως, περὶ Ἀρβηλα τὴν μάχην καὶ νίκην κατεφήμισαν καὶ τοῖς συγγραφεῦσιν οὕτω παρέδωκαν. This last remark calls the figure of the historian Callisthenes, on which see Devine 1994: 90; see esp. Pearson 1960: 22-49; Rzepka 2015: forthcoming.

<sup>34</sup> At *Anab.* 3. 22. 4 Arrian himself seems to have made the same mistake, saying of Darius' shameful escape from Arbela, not Gaugamela, and Bosworth sees this erroneous attribution in the power of the rhetorical tradition Arrian has followed (1980: 348: 'a remarkable lapse'; 1988a: 78; see Romm 2010: 138). However, it seems improbable that Arrian really had made a mistake here: at 3. 15. 15 he clearly states that Alexander went from the battlefield to Arbela in order to capture Darius (who remained there) and his treasure, while at 3. 22. 4, in Darius' obituary, he only says that the Persian king fled further – from Arbela eastwards. Here Arrian is not implying that Arbela was the battlefield, and, still following Ptolemy and Aristobulus, he does not identify, strictly speaking, Arbela as Gaugamela; cf. Briant 2015: 130-131.

Alexander and gained the famous nickname Σωτήρ ('the Saviour').<sup>35</sup> The Bithynian historian writes here generally of τῶν συγγραψάντων and ἔστιν οἱ ἀνέγραψαν – it was them who repeated the falsehood. Brunt (1983: 135) renders them as 'the historians' and 'some recorded' but still the question remains who exactly were 'they'? Certainly Clitarchus and Timagenes, as Curtius Rufus proves (9. 5. 21: *Ptolomaeum, qui postea regnavit, huic pugnae adfuisse auctor est Clitarchus et Timagenes: sed ipse, scilicet gloriae suae non refragatus afuisse se, misum in expeditionem, memoriae tradidit*)<sup>36</sup>. But again, it is difficult to think that Plutarch with his version, relatively recent and repeating the old error at two places of the *De Alexandri fortuna et virtute* (327a-b and 344d: Λιμναῖοι γὰρ καὶ Πτολεμαῖοι καὶ Λεοννάτοι),<sup>37</sup> could have escaped from Arrian's consideration. The mistake was too serious to be left by the young historian without a reproaching comment, especially if he relied on Ptolemy's work. On this occasion Professor Bosworth (1988a: 83) observed that in this particular case Arrian's polemic is directed against 'a historical authority, and this authority is relatively late', yet the name of Plutarch as the most likely target of criticism does not appear in his discussion.

Perhaps the most evident example of Arrian's polemical stance remains, however, the case of the *Royal Diaries*, the notorious βασιλικαὶ ἐφημερίδες (Jacoby, *FGrH* 117, p. 618-622; cf. Pearson 1955: 432-433; Bosworth 1971; Bosworth 1988b: 299; Goukowsky 1978: 199-200; Brunt 1983: 503-504). Much ink was spilt over the vexed problem whether Arrian, quoting these diaries (*Anab.* 7. 25. 1-7. 26. 3), had at his disposal their authentic version or used an apocryphal forgery (Badian 1968; Badian 1987). The studies of Pearson, Badian and Bosworth have proven that it is impossible to say whether the original *Diaries*

<sup>35</sup> Bosworth 1988a: 80-82.

<sup>36</sup> Ed. M. Lucarini, Teubner. Curtius, as Bosworth 2012: 400, says, 'is by far the fullest derivative of Cleitarchus', however not in this case. Romm 2010: 249, thinks that Curtius 'places Ptolemy at the scene of Alexander's wounding' but the Roman historian's attitude is rather closer to Arrian's.

<sup>37</sup> So Anderson 1993: 114. In *Alexander*, 63, Plutarch does not mention Ptolemy; cf. Hamilton 1969: 177.

existed at all.<sup>38</sup> What concerns us here is that Arrian *thought* the copy he was using was.<sup>39</sup> He certainly did not doubt its validity and gave it credit to be authentic document, relying on it his report of the king's illness and death.<sup>40</sup> Now, remarkably, the same *basilikai ephemerides* are quoted – as far as we can it state – only by Plutarch (chapters 76. 1-77. 1 of his *Alexander*),<sup>41</sup> as Diodorus and Curtius do not even make any mention of the document (Atkinson 1998).<sup>42</sup> The comparison between the two versions is thus inevitable, and it is sharpened by a true enigma that while the two accounts agree essentially in outlining how the illness ran they differ in details concerning the king's last days. This has been acknowledged by modern authorities (Badian 1987: 610; Bosworth 1988a: 158-161<sup>43</sup>), and was variously explained but now an agreement seems to prevail that what we read in Plutarch and Arrian hardly is any extract from an 'Ur'-journal, or an 'authentic' document. From my point of view the most vital question is the following: why did Arrian decide to insert such a long passage of Alexander's last days following these diaries ('journal'), if the story on the same topic could be already found in-, and known from Plutarch? The most probable answer would be that it was certainly important for Arrian that he could present the 'corrected' (better) version of the final stage of Alexander's life and to replace the narrative in biography with his *own* authoritative

<sup>38</sup> Pearson 1955: 429-439, Brunt 1983: 294-295; Badian 1985: 489; Badian 1987; Bosworth 1988a: 158; Zambrini 2004: 213; *pace* Hammond 1983: 4-11; Hammond 1988: 129-150; Hammond 1989: 276-277; Hammond 1993: 306-311.

<sup>39</sup> Plutarch, *Alex.* 77. 1: Τούτων τὰ πλεῖστα κατὰ λέξιν ἐν ταῖς ἐφημερίσιν οὕτως γέγραπται; Arrian, *Anab.* 7. 26. 3: οὐ πόρρω δὲ τούτων οὔτε Ἀριστοβούλῳ οὔτε Πτολεμαίῳ ἀναγέγραπται.

<sup>40</sup> Which, otherwise, has fundamental consequences for the rejecting or reconstructing one of the most vital points of Greek history.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the notes of Hamilton 1969: 210-213; see Jacoby who in his *FGrH* (p. 619-622. Also in his commentary at p. 403-406) he puts the version in the two writers in parallel columns; see Bosworth 1971; Bosworth 1988a: 158-167; Bosworth 2010.

<sup>42</sup> We omit the later quotation from the *Diaries* in Aelian, *VH*, 3. 23 (= *FGrH* 117 F2a).

<sup>43</sup> Bosworth adds that the two accounts are 'formally inconsistent'; he notes also the differences in chronology of the events, as Arrian's version has one day more. The discrepancies may be explained either by the circulation of the two different redactions of the *Diaries*, or Arrian's adding one additional day in his own report (Bosworth 1988a: 165).

version. So, I would like to suggest again, Arrian did not make this without a reason. Conversely, it was a deliberate step, as it stood – let us remind – in accord with his programmatic *credo* from the preface: to narrate Alexander's deeds as they were. But again, such a way of explanation of Arrian's motives does not conflict with his another aim which all the time was to repudiate *ta legomena*. This last goal meant in turn to enter into the literary dispute (ἔρις), and here Plutarch, an acknowledged author of the latest major contribution in the Alexander-studies at that time, comes to sight again.<sup>44</sup>

### 3. THE STOIC AGAINST 'THE PHILOSOPHER-KING'

Having suggested as very probable that Arrian's polemics in a few selected episodes from the expedition was directed *also* against the reports on the same subject that he has read in Plutarch, we may deal with another argument which, although less direct and more general, remains nonetheless equally important: I mean the Bithynian's different understanding and philosophical approach toward the king. Arrian remained a Stoic thinker, so I suggest that the vehement assaults Plutarch had made on the adherents of the Stoa Poecile in *Mor.* 1033a-1086b (Cherniss 1975: 369-371; Opsomer 2013: 88-103) also had some importance for the Bithynian *Epicteti de grege porcus* and influenced his reserved attitude towards the Chaeronean. The result of representing

<sup>44</sup> One should also mention that Arrian differs from Plutarch when reporting what did Alexander send to Athens after the battle of Granicus. He writes of panoplies, while Plutarch says of shields only. Probably they both were right. Arrian must have known that Alexander had sent *in fact* armor, while at the time he and Plutarch visited Athens, the shields remained – one with the famous inscription that both quote – and were exhibited on the Acropolis. Yet, it is tempting to argue that Arrian deliberately chose to write of whole armor, apparently correcting Plutarch (Diodorus does not write of the votive shields). Another striking case would be Arrian's ostentatious omitting the story of the queen of the Amazons, as Ptolemy and Aristobulus omitted it. Not surprisingly, a list of nine writers who credited it and five who rejected it as unbelievable, is found in Plutarch (*Alex.* 46); cf. Steele 1916: 422. Stadter (1981: 166) calls also the attention how different from Plutarch is Arrian's treatment of the famous episode of Alexander's meeting with Diogenes. Plutarch relates the anecdote as certain and gives some details, while Arrian places it out of historical context (*Anab.* 7. 2. 1) and expresses his doubts about its authenticity, treating the story as *ta legomena* (λέγεται).



different philosophical schools is the different portrait of Alexander in both authors.

As such, the issue itself was rather neglected by modern experts and remains highly controversial. P. A. Brunt in his thoughtful 1977 study claimed that Arrian did not write the *Anabasis* with a Stoic colour. Professor Badian (1968: 192), mainly interested in Alexander's (alleged) 'notebooks', conceded that at the beginning of Book VII of the *Anabasis* Arrian adopted philosophical stance, yet he concludes that the Greek historian 'does not give us a philosophical disquisition and indeed does not force any conclusion on the reader'. With the claim that Arrian uses no 'force' to insist his views upon his addressee one may willingly agree but this should not be understood as if the disciple of Epictetus forgot Stoic precepts and Stoic notions of man.

The theme is complex but perhaps the most famous example will suffice here as instructive. As it is well known, Plutarch saw in Alexander a 'philosopher on the throne', a thinker in arms who turned into deeds what others treated only in theory, by discussions.<sup>45</sup> As Bosworth (1988a: 72-73) rightly recalled, in the biography this argument is to be seen, among others, in the episode when the king speaks to the Indian ascetics: Alexander examines them from the position of a person with wisdom, say, a sage (*Alex.* 64).<sup>46</sup> But quite a different situation occurs in Arrian's account, where Alexander is only friendly oriented towards philosophy which means a fundamental difference in the readers' perception and evaluation of the ruler. The difference in approach

<sup>45</sup> After Strabo, *Geogr.* 15. 1. 64 (715), quoting Onesicritus of Astypalaea (*FGrH* 134 F17a; with the remarks of Whitby 2012; cf. Schachermeyr 1949: 128; Pearson 1960: 83-111; Pédech 1984: 74-75; Prandi 2000: 253f.; Bosworth 1996: 1-3; Wiemer 2011: 201) who notoriously saw in Alexander 'philosopher in arms' (μόνον γὰρ ἴδοι αὐτὸν ἐν ὅπλοις φιλοσοφῶντα). Plutarch followed this line of thought: in his first essay on the virtue of Alexander he calls the king 'philosopher' twice: *De fort. & virt. Alex.* 4 (328b: ὀφθήσεται γὰρ οἷς εἶπεν οἷς ἐπραξεν οἷς ἐπαίδευσεν φιλόσοφος) and 11 (329a: εἰκότως ἂν φιλοσοφώτατος νομίζοιτο); in the same vein he saw in Lycurgus a philosopher (*Lyc.* 31. 2-3; cf. Schneeweiss 1979: 376. According to Whitby 2012, the whole chapter 5 (328 c-d) is devoted to concept of Alexander as 'philosopher in arms'; Bosworth 1996: 2-3, thinks it was Plutarch who has confirmed the idea of Alexander's 'mission to impose civilization'.

<sup>46</sup> With the remarks of Hamilton 1969: 178-185; cf. Ps.-Callisthenes, 3. 5-6; Nawotka 2010: 283-284.



becomes clear in the same episode with Calanus – in Arrian Alexander allows to be instructed, and even frankly censured, by the Brahmins (*Anab.* 7. 1) for his conquests and insatiable, absurd in fact, longing for glory, that is in practice – in the Indian thinkers' conviction – for the politics of imperialism (*Anab.* 7. 19. 6: 'always insatiate in winning possessions'). Again, I believe such a line of thought was thoroughly that of a Stoic.<sup>47</sup> Arrian did not hesitate to express his moral judgment (it was not the first time, of course<sup>48</sup>), stressing the vanity of the king's 'earthly' efforts in the face of imminent death. Hence his open praise of the Indian sophists at *Anab.* 7. 1. 5 (ἐπαίνῳ – 'I commend') and their knowledge of what is right and just in man's life. Does this mean by the same 'a condemnation' of Alexander? No. Rather it proves Arrian's understanding of the man who was unable to define his life goals properly to live happily (a Stoic precept), and who led by powerful *pothos* incessantly preferred to chase what is unavailable.<sup>49</sup> 'On that occasion – writes the Greek historian – Alexander commended their remarks and the speakers, but his actions were different from and contrary to what he commended' (*Anab.* 7. 2. 1). Alexander's career was thus not wise man's way of life, rather than that of 'corrupted' mind – a personality

<sup>47</sup> See Marcus Aurelius, *Medit.* 8. 3, with Rutherford 1991: 165-166. Pace Professor J. Atkinson (2013: XXXIV), who was of the opinion that there is some discrepancy between Arrian's admiration for Alexander and the Stoic scale of values, I think to the contrary. Atkinson is right in writing that the *Anabasis* is not 'A Study in Tyranny', but nonetheless a Stoic scale of values is visible in the work. It is not to be taken simply as a proof of the author's rhetorical disapproval or approval (see, e.g., Stewart 1993: 15; Stoneman 2003). Above all, as a Stoic Arrian tried to understand the Alexander's motivation and steps. If he as a Stoic appreciated the king's exceptional achievements (*Anab.* 7. 30. 1), it is not the same as the author's identification with Alexander's way of life. This life appeared to Arrian to be a way of no return.

<sup>48</sup> A spectacular example remains his passage in *Anab.* 4. 7. 4-4. 14. 4, being in fact a long moral reflection, expressed in the narrative about the killing of Cleitus; see Bosworth 1995: 54, who very acutely calls this 'the great digression' and 'a sustained moral commentary'; cf. Carlsen 2014: 209-221.

<sup>49</sup> Which reminds what Theophrastus was to say of Callisthenes in his (lost) work *Callisthenes, or On Grief*, as quoted by Cicero, *Tusc. disp.* 3. 21 (= *FGrH* 124 T19b). Alexander is described there as follows: *hominem summa potentia summaque fortuna, sed ignarum quem ad modum rebus secundis uti conveniret*; cf. Mensching 1963: 274f.; Goukowsky 1978: 173-174; Wiemer 2011: 198 (to whom I owe this reference), and the commentary by Rzepka 2015 (forthcoming).

blinded by false ambitions and torn apart by an excessive passion for power (*Anab.* 5. 25. 2: πόνους τε ἐκ πόνων καὶ κινδύνους ἐκ κινδύνων ἐπαναιρούμενον ὀρῶντες τὸν βασιλέα).<sup>50</sup> In the light of such interpretation there could have been no possibility for Arrian to see in Alexander ‘a philosopher in arms’. The concept, so espoused in Plutarch, was totally at odds with Arrian’s understanding of the man.

Another compelling evidence for the Stoic interpretation of Alexander’s achievements in the *Anabasis* was indicated by Professor Schepens (1971: 267). He rightly pays due attention to the fact that the Stoic interpretation of Alexander’s accomplishments contains Arrian’s statement that it was a deity under which Alexander was born (*Anab.* 7. 30. 2: οὐκουν οὐδὲ ἐμοὶ ἔξω τοῦ θείου φῦναι ἂν δοκεῖ ἀνὴρ οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ ἀνθρώπων ἐοικώς). The king’s successes were thus, to some extent, the result of a divine providence which, again, needless to say, does not agree with Plutarch’s view that Alexander deserved nothing to *Tyche*.

To recapitulate – the above passages point to the conclusion that Arrian’s *Anabasis*, raising the theme how to evaluate Alexander’s exploits, was therefore meant to be directed *also* against the Plutarchan concept of Alexander as philosopher-king. Here we need to stress out

<sup>50</sup> See *Anab.* 5. 25. 3 – 5. 26 (the concept of *imperium sine fine* in Alexander’s speech at Hyphasis) and 5. 24. 8: ‘For he thought there could be no end of the war as long as any enemy was left’; cf. Arrian, *Ind.* 9. 11: ἀλλὰ Ἀλέξανδρον γὰρ ἐλθεῖν τε καὶ κρατῆσαι [πάντων] τοῖς ὅπλοις ὅσους γε δὴ ἐπῆλθε· καὶ ἂν καὶ πάντων κρατῆσαι, εἰ ἢ στρατιῇ ἤθελεν (see also Strabo, 16. 1. 11: τὸ δ’ ἀληθὲς ὀρεγόμενον πάντων εἶναι κύριον); with Bosworth 1995: 338, 343; Carlsen 2014: 221. Arrian’s Stoic estimate has much common with what Professor Bosworth (1996) has characterized as ‘the tragedy of triumph’ – a conviction that conquests bring to a conqueror not joy or satisfaction but more trouble and uneasiness. Briant (2010: 25) takes *pothos* as a ‘psychological makeup’ which he finds a factor insufficient for the understanding of Alexander’s motives. But this is a point where ancient and modern ways of interpreting the events and the nature of personal motivation diverge: where one speaks recently of psychology, ancient philosopher (as Arrian) thought of ethics (cf. Briant 2015: 135, citing Auerbach’s *Mimesis*). Yet, the fact itself that there is in Arrian a lot of speculation about the king’s *pothos* proves the writer’s profound interest in ethical dilemmas (cf. Baynham 2009: 290; Wheeldon 1989: 36). This does not mean, as Briant reminds, that other factors in the Alexander history were and are unimportant now, or that one may forget that ‘Even an individual as outstanding as Alexander belongs to a historical context, which he has to engage’.

the term 'concept' for Arrian wrote no pure military account of Alexander's deeds but *inevitably* presented also his own understanding and judgment of the great conqueror's personality. This was a natural, say, step, if we bear in mind that the *Anabasis* was written by a Stoic philosopher who read many other Alexander accounts, and interpreted some of Alexander's deeds from a Stoic point of view.<sup>51</sup> Polemics that exceeded far beyond a mere presentation of a historically accurate account of Alexander's expedition was thus inevitable in Arrian's plan. Given the immense literary tradition about Alexander such a polemic was 'embedded', so to speak, in his project (Buszard 2010: 574; Whitmarsh 2004: 4-5). So, the writings of Plutarch as well as the Platonic and Peripatetic philosophical views the biographer favored (Hershbell 2004; Dillon 2013: 61-72; cf. Babut 1969; Russell 1973: 84-98; Cherniss 1976), logically stood behind one of Arrian's motives. It was these views that *additionally* seem thus to have provided a natural object (if not: target) for Arrian as being rival to his own ambitious undertaking. As in the case of every account of Alexander's exploits and character (Stadter 2007), it could not be otherwise, since such accounts contained the author's evaluating of the king's ἦθος.

#### 4. ENVOI: A 'SECOND SOPHISTIC' ENCOUNTER AT DELPHI?

Now, let us pass from 'literature to life' and pay the attention to an event that possibly might have had an influence on Arrian's critical attitude towards Plutarch and enhance his reluctance to the Boeotian Alexander-writings. I mean the intriguing episode from the ambitious Bithynian's early career when he – most probably – personally met Plutarch at Delphi.

Generally, as Sir Ronald Syme has convincingly shown (Syme 1982; cf. Badian 2003b: 26-27), the details of Arrian's early 'cv' and his Roman *cursus honorum* remain obscure. Nevertheless, at some points epigraphy provides some help. So, between the years 111-114 Arrian is attested to have been included to the *concilium* of the imperial governor of the province Achaëa, Avidius Nigrinus, who was – as it

<sup>51</sup> The scholarly literature is vast; cf. Fears 1974.

happened – a close friend of the future Emperor Hadrian (Syme 1982; Bosworth 1980; Bosworth 1988a; Bosworth 1995; Stadter 1980; Atkinson 2013: xiv). About 114 this Nigrinus visited Delphi, so Arrian, by an amazing coincidence, must have met there a noble priest of Apollo (Stadter 2014a: 207), holding this old prestigious religious office since many years (Sinko 1951; Jones 1971: 13-38; Korus 2003: 63). This priest was nobody else than Plutarch himself (*An seni*, 17; Hirzel 1912: 11; Hamilton 1969: xv; Swain 1996: 136; Stadter 2014b: 20; Pelling 2014) who – noticeably – had dedicated also one of his moral essays (Περὶ φιλαδελφίας; *De frat. amore*<sup>52</sup>) to his two influential Roman *amici*, the Avidii brothers – Arrian’s actual patron’s father and uncle.<sup>53</sup> It was this time, one may reasonably infer, when an opportunity occurred for a very probable encounter of Arrian with the acknowledged and noble Boeotian man of letters. As far as I know the possibility of such a meeting has been first ingeniously put by Professor Everett L. Wheeler in his thoughtful biography of Arrian (Wheeler 1977: 27).<sup>54</sup> Wheeler thinks that ‘at least official contact between two seems unavoidable’. In the same manner wrote recently another Arrian-authority, Professor Stadter, according to whom the Nicomedian ‘must have met Plutarch’ (Stadter 2014a: 200). Contrary to the other imaginary encounters of ‘the greats’ like Scipio and Hannibal, or, more recently, Haendel and Bach, one may assume here the highest likelihood of such a meet-

<sup>52</sup> *De frat. amore* 478b: οὕτω δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ὑμῖν, ὃ Νιγρίνῃ καὶ Κυῆτε, τὸ σύγγραμμα τοῦτο περὶ φιλαδελφίας ἀνατίθημι κοινὸν ἄξιόις οὔσι δῶρον (‘In like manner do I also dedicate this treatise *On brotherly love* to you, Nigrinus and Quietus, a joint gift for you both who well deserve it’; tr. W. C. Helmbold, Loeb); on the two men see Groag, Stein 1933: 189-190; on the chronology of Plutarch’s writings see Jones 1966: 61-74; Jones 1971: 51-55.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Groag, Stein 1933: nos. 1407, 1410; see Sherwin-White 1966: 388; Bowersock 1969: 111; Stadter 2002: 227f. Additionally, as Jones 1971: 51, reminds, Quietus (a friend of the heroic Stoic Thrax Paetus) was the addressee of the another Plutarchan treatise *On the delays of the divine vengeance* (Περὶ τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ βραδέως τιμωρουμένων; *De sera numinis vindicta*, 548a).

<sup>54</sup> Earlier on, Christopher Jones (1971: 36) rightly observed that Plutarch certainly had a knowledge of the school Epictetus had founded in Nicopolis, although in the extant works of Plutarch there is no hint at, or reference to it, as – remarkably – no word is issued about Arrian’s famous Stoic *praeceptor* (the same is true in the case of the Dio Chrysostomus; Jones 1978). The same may be said of Arrian too: there is neither allusion nor mention of Plutarch in the Nicomedian’s *Discourses of Epictetus*.

ing. Yet, even if safely assumed that it really has occurred, any further speculation how it proceeded must remain in guessing. Nevertheless, there is perhaps another intriguing trace that for Arrian, at least, a conversation did not need to leave a nice impression.

In the beautiful essay *On the tranquility of mind* (Περὶ εὐθυμίας; *De tranquillitate animi*: Mor. 464e-477e), there is an interesting view the Boeotian essayist holds of the young Greeks from the Black Sea region. Their aim was to excel in the Roman 'rat race' in order to gain profits in holding prestigious administrative *honores* (Hamilton 1969: xviii-xix; cf. Madsen 2006: 66). Remarkably, there is a mention (470c) of a Βιθυνός whose modest aim is not to be honored by his fellow-citizens in a native local city (εἴ τινος μερίδος ἢ δόξαν ἢ δύναμιν ἐν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ πολίταις εἴληχεν) but who is obsessed by career and complains (ἀλλὰ κλαίων) not only for achieving the office of patrician but, next, pretorship, and then consulship, or consulship second time (ὅτι μὴ φορεῖ πατρικίους· ἐὰν δὲ καὶ φορῇ, ὅτι μηδέπω στρατηγεῖ Ῥωμαίων· ἐὰν δὲ καὶ στρατηγῇ, ὅτι μὴ ὑπατεύει). Plutarch's bitter notice could not have referred to Arrian personally, one may be sure, yet if the young Arrian knew this essay, it must certainly have sounded unpleasantly to the ear of man who traveled in the company of the Roman dignitary, with a hope for promotion. It is not inconceivable that Plutarch has repeated his reserved standpoint in the presence of Arrian while talking. If so, to the young Stoic this might have been a derogatory lesson that he has remembered well. In any case, despite of Plutarch's good-natured but at the same time condescending 'warnings', Arrian went nonetheless his own way – successfully, as we know of his later spectacular rising in the Roman military administration which at that time was, in some sense, an unique phenomenon among the representatives of the provincial Greek elite (Lucian, *Alex.* 2; Schwartz 1895: 1230-1231; Zecchini 1983: 8-9; Vidal-Naquet 1984: 316-317; Sisti 2001: XIII).

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Valuable as it is, the *Anabasis* by the 'younger Xenophon' was not meant to be a dispassionate work. What Professor Henry Theodore Wade-Gery put once famously of the historian of the Peloponnesian war ('perhaps no good historian is impartial; Thucydides certainly

not' [Wade-Gery 2012: 1475]), you can say about Arrian too. Like his great Athenian predecessor, Arrian *sine dubio* was not such an ideal researcher (Lane Fox 1978: 500). We need no more 'Arriankult', as Davidson wrote in 2001, true. On the other hand, our knowledge in this matter cannot stop us from appreciating Arrian's benevolence and his brave effort to face the rich but hopelessly complicated tradition concerning Alexander. A great part of this job was thus to correct erroneous views about the king, to re-establish the facts anew (Heckel 2015: 24) – which meant simply polemics. In the above it was several times suggested that in all probability Arrian attempted at such work with Plutarchan biography, *inter alia*, in mind, and that Plutarch's work must remained one of Arrian's oubjects of criticism.<sup>55</sup> Even if not mentioned by name, the Boetian and his *Life of Alexander* appear to have been the most natural point of departure in the Epictetus' apprentice new Alexander history, also for this reason that the criticized biography was relatively 'fresh', actual, and known in the circles of the other *viri literati* (*pepaideumenoi*). Absolute certainty in this matter (as in so many issues in the tale of Alexander; Bowden 2014: 145) cannot be reached, however, so the conjectural character of this paper, in accord with Aristotle's memorable sentence from the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1. 3 = 1094b 25): πεπαιδευμένου γάρ ἐστιν ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον τὰκριβὲς ἐπιζητεῖν καθ' ἕκαστον γένος, ἐφ' ὅσον ἡ τοῦ πράγματος φύσις ἐπιδέχεται.

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<sup>55</sup> One may doubt, whether Arrian would agree with the judgment of Davidson (2001) that Plutarch 'is pretty useless as a historian'; cf., e.g., Badian 2003a: 27, 33 on Plutarch as the only source for Alexander's youth.

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