

**Plutarch, Moralia**  
**On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander**

1 This is Fortune's discourse, who declares that Alexander is her own characteristic  
5 handiwork, and hers alone. But some rejoinder must be made on behalf of philosophy,  
or rather on Alexander's behalf, who would be vexed and indignant if he should be  
thought to have received as a pure gift, even at the hands of Fortune, the supremacy  
which he won at the price of much blood and of wounds that followed one after  
another;

10 and Many a night did he spend without sleeping,  
Many a blood-stained day did he pass amid combats unceasing,  
against irresistible forces and innumerable tribes, against impassable rivers and  
mountain fastnesses whose summit no arrow could reach, furthered by wise counsels,  
steadfast purpose, manly courage, and a prudent heart.

15

2 I think that if Fortune should try to inscribe her name on his successes, he would  
say to her, "Slander not my virtues, nor take away my fair name by detraction. Darius  
was your handiwork: he who was a slave and courier of the king, him did you make the  
20 mighty lord of Persia; and Sardapanalus, upon whose head you placed the royal diadem,  
though he spent his days in carding purple wool. But I, through my victory at Arbela,  
went up to Susa, and Cilicia opened the way for me into the broad land of Egypt; but  
to Cilicia I came by way of the Granicus, which I crossed, using as a bridge the dead  
bodies of Mithridates and Spithridates. Adorn yourself, proud Fortune, and vaunt your  
dominion over kings that never felt a wound nor shed a drop of blood. For they have  
25 been Fortune's favourites, men such as Ochus was and Artaxerxes, whom at the very  
hour of their birth you placed upon the throne of Cyrus. But my body bears many a  
token of an opposing Fortune and no ally of mine. First, among the Illyrians, my head  
was wounded by a stone and my neck by a cudgel. Then at the Granicus my head was cut  
open by an enemy's dagger, at Issus my thigh was pierced by the sword. Next at Gaza  
30 my ankle was wounded by an arrow, my shoulder was dislocated, and I whirled heavily  
round and round. Then at Maracanda the bone of my leg was split open by an arrow.  
There awaited me towards the last also the buffetings I received among the Indians  
and the violence of famines. Among the Aspasians my shoulder was wounded by an arrow,  
and among the Gandridae my leg. Among the Mallians, the shaft of an arrow sank deep  
35 into my breast and buried its steel; and I was struck in the neck by a cudgel, when  
the scaling-ladders which we had moved up to the walls were battered down; and  
Fortune cooped me up alone, favouring ignoble barbarians and not illustrious  
adversaries with such an exploit. But if Ptolemy had not held his shield above me,  
and Limnaeus taking his stand before me had not fallen, a target for ten thousand  
40 shafts, and if my Macedonians had not overthrown the wall with spirit and main force,  
then that nameless village in a foreign land must needs have become the tomb of  
Alexander."

3 Moreover, there were the trials of the campaign itself: storms, droughts, deep  
45 rivers, the heights of the Birdless Rock, the monstrous shapes of savage beasts, an  
uncivilized manner of life, the constant succession of petty kings and their repeated  
treachery. Then there were also the difficulties before his expedition: Greece was  
still gasping over Philip's wars; Thebes staggering to her feet after her fall, was  
shaking the dust of Chaeroneia from her arms, and Athens was stretching forth a  
50 helping hand to join with Thebes. All Macedonia was festering with revolt and looking  
toward Amyntas and the children of Aëropus; the Illyrians were again rebelling, and  
trouble with the Scythians was impending for their Macedonian neighbours, who were in  
the throes of political change; Persian gold flowed freely through the hands of the  
popular leaders everywhere, and helped to rouse the Peloponnesus;

55 Philip's treasuries were bare of money, and in addition there was owing a loan of two  
hundred talents (as Onesicritus records). In such poverty and in circumstances  
fraught with such uncertainty, a stripling, scarcely older than a boy, had the daring  
to hope for Babylon and Susa; nay more, to conceive the project of dominion over all  
the world, relying only on the thirty thousand foot and four thousand cavalry which  
60 were his; for, according to Aristobulus, that was the full extent of their number.  
But King Ptolemy puts them at thirty thousand foot and five thousand horse,  
Anaximenes at forty-three thousand foot, fifty-five hundred horse. And the great and  
glorious war-chest which Fortune had ready for him was only seventy talents, as  
Aristobulus says, though Duris says it was provision for only thirty days.

65

4 Was, then, Alexander ill-advised and precipitate in setting forth with such humble resources to acquire so vast an empire? By no means. For who has ever put forth with greater or fairer equipment than he: greatness of soul, keen intelligence, self-restraint, and manly courage, with which Philosophy herself provided him for his  
70 campaign? Yes, the equipment that he had from Aristotle his teacher when he crossed over into Asia was more than what he had from his father Philip. But although we believe those who record that Alexander once said that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* accompanied him as equipment for his campaigns, since we hold Homer in reverence, yet  
75 are we to condemn anyone who asserts that the works of Homer accompanied him as a consolation after toil and as a pastime for sweet leisure, but that his true equipment was philosophic teaching, and treatises on Fearlessness and Courage, and Self-restraint also, and Greatness of Soul? For of course it is obvious that Alexander wrote nothing on the subject of either syllogisms or axioms, nor did he  
80 have the opportunity of sharing the walks in the Lyceum, or of discussing propositions in the Academy. For it is by these criteria that those define philosophy who regard it as a theoretical rather than a practical pursuit. And yet even Pythagoras wrote nothing at all, nor did Socrates, nor Arcesilaüs, nor Carneades, who were all most notable among philosophers. Nor were these philosophers continuously occupied with such tremendous wars, nor with spreading civilization among foreign  
85 princes, nor in establishing Grecian cities among savage nations, nor did they go on and on, instructing lawless and ignorant tribes in the principles of law and peace; but, even though they had leisure, they relinquished the writing of philosophy to sophists. Whence, then, comes our belief that they were true philosophers? Surely from what they said, or from the manner of life which they led, or from the  
90 principles which they taught. By these criteria let Alexander also be judged! For from his words, from his deeds, and from the instruction which he imparted, it will be seen that he was indeed a philosopher.

5 And first, if you will, consider a matter entirely contrary to the general belief, and compare Alexander's pupils with those of Plato and Socrates. Plato and Socrates  
95 taught pupils of splendid natural endowment who spoke the same language; so that, even if the pupils understood nothing else, at least they understood the Greek tongue. And even so, Plato and Socrates did not win over many. But their pupils, such as Critias and Alcibiades and Cleitophon, were prone to spew the good word forth, as a horse the curbing bit, and turned them to other ways. But if you examine the results of Alexander's instruction, you will see that he educated the Hyrcanians to respect the marriage bond, and taught the Arachosians to till the soil, and persuaded the Sogdians to support their parents, not to kill them,  
100 and the Persians to revere their mothers and not to take them in wedlock. O wondrous power of Philosophic Instruction, that brought the Indians to worship Greek gods, and the Scythians to bury their dead, not to devour them! We admire Carneades' power, which made Cleitomachus, formerly called Hasdrubal, and a Carthaginian by birth, adopt Greek ways. We admire the character of Zeno, which persuaded Diogenes the  
105 Babylonian to be a philosopher. But when Alexander was civilizing Asia, Homer was commonly read, and the children of the Persians, of the Susianians, and of the Gedrosians learned to chant the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides. And although Socrates, when tried on the charge of introducing foreign deities, lost his cause to the informers who infested Athens, yet through Alexander Bactria and the Caucasus  
110 learned to revere the gods of the Greeks. Plato wrote a book on the One Ideal Constitution, but because of its forbidding character he could not persuade anyone to adopt it; but Alexander established more than seventy cities among savage tribes, and sowed all Asia with Grecian magistracies, and thus overcame its uncivilized and brutish manner of living. Although few of us read Plato's *Laws*, yet hundreds of  
115 thousands have made use of Alexander's laws, and continue to use them. Those who were vanquished by Alexander are happier than those who escaped his hand; for these had no one to put an end to the wretchedness of their existence, while the victor compelled those others to lead a happy life. Therefore it is even more just to apply Themistocles' saying to the nations conquered by Alexander. For, when Themistocles in  
120 exile had obtained great gifts from Artaxerxes, and had received three cities to pay him tribute, one to supply his bread, another his wine, and a third his meat, he exclaimed, "My children, we should be ruined now, had we not been ruined before." Thus Alexander's new subjects would not have been civilized, had they not been vanquished; Egypt would not have its Alexandria, nor Mesopotamia its Seleuceia, nor  
125 Sogdiana its Prophtasia, nor India its Bucephalia, nor the Caucasus a Greek city hard by; for by the founding of cities in these places savagery was extinguished and

135 the worse element, gaining familiarity with the better, changed under its influence. If, then, philosophers take the greatest pride in civilizing and rendering adaptable the intractable and untutored elements in human character, and if Alexander has been shown to have changed the savage natures of countless tribes, it is with good reason that he should be regarded as a very great philosopher.

140 6 Moreover, the much-admired *Republic* of Zeno, the founder of the Stoic sect, may be summed up in this one main principle: that all the inhabitants of this world of ours should not live differentiated by their respective rules of justice into separate cities and communities, but that we should consider all men to be of one community and one polity, and that we should have a common life and an order common to us all, even as a herd that feeds together and shares the pasturage of a common field. This  
145 Zeno wrote, giving shape to a dream or, as it were, shadowy picture of a well-ordered and philosophic commonwealth; but it was Alexander who gave effect to the idea. For Alexander did not follow Aristotle's advice to treat the Greeks as if he were their leader, and other peoples as if he were their master; to have regard for the Greeks as for friends and kindred, but to conduct himself toward other peoples as though  
150 they were plants or animals; for to do so would have been to cumber his leadership with numerous battles and banishments and festering seditions. But, as he believed that he came as a heaven-sent governor to all, and as a mediator for the whole world, those whom he could not persuade to unite with him, he conquered by force of arms, and he brought together into one body all men everywhere, uniting and mixing in one  
155 great loving-cup, as it were, men's lives, their characters, their marriages, their very habits of life. He bade them all consider as their fatherland the whole inhabited earth, as their stronghold and protection his camp, as akin to them all good men, and as foreigners only the wicked; they should not distinguish between Grecian and foreigner by Grecian cloak and targe, or scimitar and jacket; but the  
160 distinguishing mark of the Grecian should be seen in virtue, and that of the foreigner in iniquity; clothing and food, marriage and manner of life they should regard as common to all, being blended into one by ties of blood and children.

165 7 Now Demaratus the Corinthian, one of Philip's intimate friends, when he had seen Alexander in Susa, exclaimed with tears of joy that all the Greeks who had died before that hour had been deprived of a great joy, since they had not seen Alexander seated on the throne of Darius. But I swear that for my part I feel no envy because of this spectacle toward them that saw it, for it was but the handiwork of Fortune, and the lot of other kings as well. But methinks I would gladly have been a witness  
170 of that fair and holy marriage-rite, when he brought together in one golden-canopied tent an hundred Persian brides and an hundred Macedonian and Greek bridegrooms, united at a common hearth and board. He himself, crowned with garlands, was the first to raise the marriage hymn as though he were singing a song of truest friendship over the union of the two greatest and most mighty peoples; for he, of one maid the  
175 bridegroom, and at the same time of all the brides the escort, as a father and sponsor united them in the bonds of wedlock. Indeed at this sight I should have cried out for joy, "O dullard Xerxes, stupid fool that spent so much fruitless toil to bridge the Hellespont! This is the way that wise kings join Asia with Europe; it is not by beams or rafts, nor by lifeless and unfeeling bonds, but by the ties of lawful  
180 love and chaste nuptials and mutual joy in children that they join the nations together."

185 8 Considering carefully this order of affairs, Alexander did not favour the Median raiment, but preferred the Persian, for it was much more simple than the Median. Since he deprecated the unusual and theatrical varieties of foreign adornment, such as the tiara and the full-sleeved jacket and trousers, he wore a composite dress adapted from both Persian and Macedonian fashion, as Eratosthenes has recorded. As a philosopher what he wore was  
190 a matter of indifference, but as sovereign of both nations and benevolent king he strove to acquire the goodwill of the conquered by showing respect for their apparel, so that they might continue constant in loving the Macedonians as rulers, and might not feel hate toward them as enemies. Conversely it were the mark of an unwise and vainglorious mind to admire greatly a cloak of uniform colour and to be displeased by  
195 a tunic with a purple border, or again to disdain those things and to be struck with admiration for these, holding stubbornly, in the manner of an unreasoning child, to the raiment in which the custom of his country, like a nurse, had attired him. When men hunt wild animals, they put on the skins of deer, and when they go to catch birds, they dress in tunics adorned with plumes and feathers; they are careful not to

200 be seen by bulls when they have on red garments, nor by elephants when dressed in  
white; for these animals are provoked and made savage by the sight of these  
particular colours. But if a great king, in taming and mollifying headstrong and  
warring nations, just as in dealing with animals, succeeded in soothing and stilling  
them by wearing a garb familiar to them and by following their wonted manner of life,  
205 thereby conciliating their rough natures and smoothing their sullen brows, can men  
impeach him? Must they not rather wonder at his wisdom, since by but a slight  
alteration of his apparel he made himself the popular leader of all Asia, conquering  
their bodies by his arms, but winning over their souls by his apparel? And yet men  
marvel at the disciple of Socrates, Aristippus, that whether he wore a threadbare  
210 cloak or a fine Milesian robe he retained his gentility in either; but they impeach  
Alexander because, although paying due respect to his own national dress, he did not  
disdain that of his conquered subjects in establishing the beginnings of a vast  
empire.

For he did not overrun Asia like a robber nor was he minded to tear and rend it, as  
215 if it were booty and plunder bestowed by unexpected good fortune, after the manner in  
which Hannibal later descended upon Italy, or as earlier the Treres descended upon  
Ionia and the Scythians upon Media. But Alexander desired to render all upon earth  
subject to one law of reason and one form of government and to reveal all men as one  
people, and to this purpose he made himself conform. But if the deity that sent down  
Alexander's soul into this world of ours had not recalled him quickly, one law would  
220 govern all mankind, and they all would look toward one rule of justice as though  
toward a common source of light.  
But as it is, that part of the world which has not looked upon Alexander has remained  
without sunlight.

225 9 Therefore, in the first place, the very plan and design of Alexander's expedition  
commends the man as a philosopher in his purpose not to win for himself luxury and  
extravagant living, but to win for all men concord and peace and community of  
interests.

And, in the second place, let us examine his sayings too, since it is by their  
230 utterances<sup>49</sup> that the souls of other kings and potentates also best reveal their  
characters. The elder Antigonus remarked to a certain sophist who put in his hands a  
treatise on justice, "You are a fool to say anything about justice when you see me  
smiting other people's cities."

The despot Dionysius remarked that one should trick children with dice, but men with  
235 oaths. Upon the tomb of Sardanapalus is written,  
These are still mine – what I ate, and my wanton love-frolics.

Who would not own that by these several sayings are revealed Sardanapalus's love of  
pleasure, Dionysius's impiety, and Antigonus's injustice and greed? But if you  
240 subtract from Alexander's sayings his crown, his relationship with Ammon, and his  
noble birth,

they will appear to you as the utterances a Socrates or a Plato or a Pythagoras. Let  
us, then, pay no heed to the proud boasts which the poets inscribed upon his  
portraits and statues, studying, as they were, to portray, not Alexander's  
moderation, but his power:

245 Eager to speak seems the statue of bronze, up to Zeus as it gazes:

"Earth I have set under foot; Zeus, keep Olympus yourself."

And another man makes Alexander say, "I am the son of Zeus." These expressions, then,  
as I have said, the poets addressed to Alexander in flattery of his good fortune.  
But of the genuine sayings of Alexander we might first review those of his youth.  
250 Since he was the swiftest of foot of all the young men of his age, his comrades urged  
him to enter the Olympic games. He asked if the competitors were kings, and when his  
friends replied that they were not, he said that the contest was unfair, for it was  
one in which a victory would be over commoners, but a defeat would be the defeat of a  
king.

255 When the thigh of his father Philip had been pierced by a spear in battle with the  
Triballians, and Philip, although he escaped with his life, was vexed with his  
lameness, Alexander said, "Be of good cheer, father, and go on your way rejoicing,  
that at each step you may recall your valour." Are not these the words of a truly  
philosophic spirit which, because of its rapture for noble things, already revolts  
260 against mere physical encumbrances? How, then, think you, did he glory in his own  
wounds, remembering by each part of his body affected a nation overcome, a victory  
won, the capture of cities, the surrender of kings? He did not cover over nor hide  
his scars, but bore them with him openly as symbolic representations, graven on his  
body, of virtue and manly courage.

265

10 And in the same spirit if ever there chanced to be in hours of ease or at a banquet a comparison of the verses of Homer, each man choosing his favourite line, Alexander always judged this verse to be the greatest of all:

Both things is he: both a goodly king and a warrior mighty.

270

This praise, which at the time it was written another had received, Alexander conceived to be a law for himself, so that he said of Homer that in this same verse he had honoured the manly courage of Agamemnon and prophesied that of Alexander. Accordingly when he had crossed the Hellespont, he went to see the site of Troy, imagining to himself the heroic deeds enacted there; and when one of the natives of the country promised to give him the lyre of Paris, if he wished it, Alexander said, "Of his lyre I have no need; for I already possess Achilles' lyre to the accompaniment of which, as he rested from his labours,

280

he sang the famed deeds of heroes. But the lyre of Paris gave forth an altogether weak and womanish strain to accompany his love songs." Thus it is the mark of a truly philosophic soul to be in love with wisdom and to admire wise men most of all, and this was more characteristic of Alexander than of any other king. His attitude toward Aristotle has already been stated; and it is recorded by several authors that he considered the musician Anaxarchus the most valuable of all his friends, that he gave ten thousand gold pieces to Pyrrhon of Elis the first time he met him, that he sent to Xenocrates, the friend of Plato, fifty talents as a gift, and that he made Onesicritus, the pupil of Diogenes the Cynic, chief pilot of his fleet.

285

But when he came to talk with Diogenes himself in Corinth, he was so awed and astounded with the life and the worth of the man that often, when remembrance of the philosopher came to him, he would say, "If I were not Alexander, I should be Diogenes," that is to say: "If I did not actively practise philosophy, I should apply myself to its theoretical pursuit." He did not say, "If I were not a king, I should be Diogenes," nor "If I were not rich and an Argead"; for he did not rank Fortune

290

above Wisdom, nor a crown and royal purple above the philosopher's wallet and threadbare gown. But he said, "If I were not Alexander, I should be Diogenes"; that is to say: "If it were not my purpose to combine foreign things with things Greek, to traverse and civilize every continent, to search out the uttermost parts of land and sea, to push the bounds of Macedonia to the farthest Ocean, and to disseminate and shower the blessings of Greek justice and peace over every nation, I should not be

295

content to sit quietly in the luxury of idle power, but I should emulate the frugality of Diogenes. But as things are, forgive me, Diogenes, that I imitate Heracles, and emulate Perseus, and follow in the footsteps of Dionysus, the divine author and progenitor of my family, and desire that victorious Greeks should dance again in India and revive the memory of the Bacchic revels among the savage mountain tribes beyond the Caucasus. Even there it is said that there are certain holy men, a

300

law unto themselves, who follow a rigid gymnosophy and give all their time to God; they are more frugal than Diogenes since they have no need of a wallet. For they do not store up food, since they have it ever fresh and green from the earth; the flowing rivers give them drink and they have fallen leaves and grassy earth to lie upon. Because of me even those faraway sages shall come to know of Diogenes, and he of them. And I also, like Diogenes, must alter the standard of coinage and stamp foreign states with the impress of Greek government."

305

11 Very well. Do Alexander's actions, then, reveal the caprice of Fortune, the violence of war, the might of conquest, or do they rather reveal the great courage and justice, the great restraint and mildness together with the decorous behaviour and intelligence, of one who did all things with sober and sane judgement? For, by Heaven, it is impossible for me to distinguish his several actions and say that this betokens his courage, this his humanity, this his self-control, but everything he did

310

seems the combined product of all the virtues; for he confirms the truth of that principle of the Stoics which declares that every act which the wise man performs is an activity in accord with every virtue; and although, as it appears, one particular virtue performs the chief rôle in every act, yet it but heartens on the other virtues and directs them toward the goal. Certainly one may observe that in Alexander the warlike is also humane, the mild also manly, the liberal provident, the irascible placable, the amatory temperate, his relaxation not idle, and his labours not without recreation. Who but he combined festivals with wars, campaigns with revels, Bacchic rites and weddings and nuptial songs with sieges and battle-fields? Who was ever more

315

hostile to wrongdoers or kinder to the unfortunate? Who more stern to his opponents or more indulgent to petitioners?

320

325  
330

It occurs to me to introduce here an incident touching Porus. For when Porus was brought as a captive before Alexander, the conqueror asked how he should treat him. "Like a king, Alexander," said Porus. When Alexander asked again if there were nothing else, "No," said he, "for everything is included in that word." And it naturally occurs to me also to exclaim over each of Alexander's deeds, "Like a philosopher!" For in this is included everything. He became enamoured of Roxanê, the daughter of Oxyartes, as she danced among the captive maidens; yet he did not offer any violence to her, but made her his wife. "Like a philosopher!" When he saw Darius pierced through by javelins, he did not offer sacrifice nor raise the paeon to indicate that the long war had come to an end; but he took off his own cloak and threw it over the corpse as though to conceal the divine retribution that waits upon the lot of kings. "Like a philosopher!" Once when he was reading a confidential letter from his mother, and Hephaestion, who, as it happened, was sitting beside him, was quite openly reading it too, Alexander did not stop him, but merely placed his own signet-ring on Hephaestion's lips, sealing them to silence with a friend's confidence. "Like a philosopher!" For if these actions be not those of a philosopher, what others are?

12 But let us compare the actions of men who are admitted to be philosophers. Socrates forbore when Alcibiades spent the night with him. But when Philoxenus, the governor of the coast-lands of Asia Minor, wrote to Alexander that there was in Ionia a youth, the like of whom for bloom and beauty did not exist, and inquired in his letter whether he should send the boy on to him, Alexander wrote bitterly in reply, "Vilest of men, what deed of this sort have you ever been privy to in my past that now you would flatter me with the offer of such pleasures?" We admire Xenocrates because he would not accept the gift of fifty talents which Alexander sent him. But shall we not admire the giving of it? Or do we think that he who does not welcome a gift and he who bestows it are not at one in their contempt for money? Because of philosophy Xenocrates had no need of wealth and because of philosophy Alexander had need of wealth that he might lavish it upon such men. How many times has Alexander said this when forcing an attack amid a shower of missiles? And yet we believe that all men are endowed with the capacity to form right judgements. For Nature of herself is prone to lead men toward the Good. But philosophers differ from common persons in having their powers of judgement strong and firm to face danger, since the common man is not fortified by conceptions such as these: "Best is one omen" and "Death is the end for all men"; but crises destroy all his calculations in the face of danger, and the fantastic imaginings of perils close at hand dispel his powers of judgement. For not only does "fear," as Thucydides says, "drive out memory," but it also drives out every purpose and ambition and impulse, unless philosophy has drawn her cords about them.

#### **Plutarch, Moralia**

##### **On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander**

1 Yesterday we forgot, it seems, to remark that the age of Alexander had the good fortune to produce both many artistic achievements and many men of great talent. Perhaps, however, this was not part of Alexander's good fortune, but rather that of the artists, to have obtained as witness and spectator of their achievements the man who was both best able to judge of their success and to reward them most liberally. At any rate, it is said that, when Arcestratus, a poet of a later age, who, though an accomplished writer, was passing his days in poverty and neglect, someone remarked to him, "If you had been born in Alexander's time, for every verse he would have given you a Cyprus or a Phoenicia." And I think that the foremost of the artists of that age became so, not because they lived in Alexander's day, but through what Alexander did for them. For a good climate and a lightness of the surrounding air produces a bountiful harvest; and likewise the favour, esteem, and benignity shown by a king evokes a rich increase in the arts and in men of talent. And, conversely, through jealousy and parsimony or emulous rivalry on the part of monarchs all artistic production is quenched and perishes. Thus the despot Dionysius, as the story goes, while listening to a celebrated harper, engaged to give him a talent. Next day, when the man asked for the fulfilment of the promise, Dionysius said, "Yesterday I was delighted with your performance, and during the time that you were singing I also delighted you with hopes! The result is that at that very time you were receiving full pay for the pleasure you gave by having your pleasure too!" Alexander, the tyrant of Pherae (this last should be his only appellation; he should not be permitted to disgrace the name of Alexander), as he watched a tragic actor,

felt himself much moved to pity through enjoyment of the acting. He jumped up, therefore, and left the theatre at a rapid pace, exclaiming that it would be a dreadful thing, if, when he was slaughtering so many citizens, he should be seen to weep over the sufferings of Hecuba and Polyxena. And he came near visiting punishment upon the actor because the man had softened his heart, as iron in the fire. Archelaüs was thought to be somewhat niggardly in his favours, and Timotheüs liked to hint at this by often chanting this refrain:

Over the earth-born silver you rave.  
 But Archelaüs, with some wit, chanted in reply:  
 That, however, is what you crave.

Ateas, the Scythian king, took the flute-player Ismenias captive, and ordered him to play at a banquet. The rest were delighted, and applauded, but Ateas swore his horse's neighing was sweeter to his ear. So far from the Muses' habitation did he allow his ears to dwell, and his soul he kept in the mangers, better attuned to hear, not horses' neigh, but asses' bray!

At the court of monarchs such as these what advancement or esteem could there be for Art, or for Poetry and Music of excellence? Nor, again, could artistic endeavour flourish at the court of those who wish to be rival performers in these arts, and thus through malice and ill-will suppress the true artists. Such a prince was Dionysius (to use him again as an example), who threw the poet Philoxenus into the stone-quarries; for when Dionysius ordered him to correct a tragedy of his, Philoxenus cancelled the whole piece from the very beginning to the final flourish. Philip also was in these matters somewhat more petty and childish than became him, since he had acquired his knowledge late in life. Thus they tell the tale that Philip<sup>86</sup> once argued with a certain harp-player about the technique of his instrument, and even thought he was confuting the man; but the harp-player smiled gently and said, "God forbid, your Majesty, that you should ever fall so low as to know more of these matters than I."

2 But Alexander, knowing well in what matters he should be merely a spectator and listener, and in what he should play the chief rôle, trained himself always to be formidable in arms, and, in the words of Aeschylus, Sturdy contender in arms, baleful to all that oppose. This art he inherited from his ancestors, the Aeacidae, and from Heracles; but upon the other arts he freely bestowed honour without jealousy according to their worth and artistic excellence; but he was not so easily carried away by the pleasure they gave him as to try to imitate them. The tragic actors of his time were the group that centred about Thettalus and Athenodorus. At the contest of these two, the kings of Cyprus defrayed the expenses of the performance and Alexander's most celebrated generals served as judges. When Athenodorus won, "I would rather," said Alexander, "have lost half my kingdom than see Thettalus defeated." However, he did not intercede with the judges nor find fault with the judgement, since he felt that, while he must be superior to all men, yet he must submit to Justice.

The comic actors of his time were the group that centred about Lycon of Scarpheia. When Lycon inserted in one of his comedies a begging verse, Alexander laughed and gave him ten talents.

Various harp-players also were his friends, among them Aristonicus, who came to Alexander's aid in a certain battle, and was slain, fighting gloriously. Therefore Alexander ordered to be made and set up at Delphi a bronze statue of him, with lyre in hand and spear advanced; thereby he not only honoured this particular man, but also paid tribute to Music herself, in the belief that she is a creator of true men and, in particular, that she fills with inspiration and impetuosity those who are truly her foster-children.

For once upon a time, when Antigenides was playing on his flute the Chariot Song, Alexander became so transported, and his spirit so inflamed by the strains, that he leapt up and laid hands upon the weapons that lay near, and thus confirmed the testimony of the Spartans who used to sing,

The noble playing of the lyre is meet to match the sword.  
 Apelles the painter and Lysippus the sculptor also lived in the time of Alexander. The former painted "Alexander wielding the Thunderbolt" so vividly and with so natural an expression, that men said that, of the two Alexanders, Alexander, son of Philip, was invincible, but the Alexander of Apelles was inimitable. And when Lysippus modelled his first statue of Alexander which represented him looking with his face turned towards the heavens (as indeed Alexander often did look, with a slight inclination of his head to one side), someone engraved these verses on the statue, not without some plausibility,

Eager to speak seems the statue of bronze, up to Zeus as it gazes  
"Earth I have set under foot: Zeus, keep Olympus yourself!"  
465 Wherefore Alexander gave orders that Lysippus only should make statues of him. For  
Lysippus was, it seemed, the only one that revealed in the bronze Alexander's  
character and in moulding his form portrayed also his virtues. The others wished to  
imitate the flexing of his neck and liquid softness of his eyes, but were unable to  
preserve his virile and leonine expression.  
470 Among the other artists at his court was Stasicrates the master-sculptor, not seeking  
to make something flowery or pleasant or lifelike to look upon, but employing a  
magnificence in workmanship and design worthy of a king's munificence. He followed  
Alexander into Asia and found fault with the paintings, sculptures, and moulded  
likenesses that had been made of him, on the ground that they were the works of timid  
475 and ignoble artists. "But I, your Majesty," said he, "have conceived the project of  
placing your likeness in living and imperishable material, with roots that are  
everlasting and weight immovable and unshakable.  
For Mount Athos in Thrace, in that part where is its highest and most conspicuous  
summit, has well-proportioned surfaces and heights, limbs and joints and proportions  
480 that suggest the human form. When it has been properly carved and worked into shape,  
it can be called Alexander's statue, and Alexander's statue it will be; with its base  
set in the sea, in its left hand it will encompass and hold a city with ten thousand  
inhabitants, and with its right pour from a bowl of libation an ever-flowing river  
485 down into the sea. But as for gold and bronze, ivory, wooden timbers, and dyes, which  
make those paltry images that can be bought and sold, stolen, or melted down, let us  
reject them all!" Alexander listened to his words and admired but declined with  
thanks the lofty designs and the boldness of the artist. "But," said he, "let Athos  
remain as it is. It is enough that it be the memorial of the arrogance of one king;  
but my imprint the Caucasus shall show and the Emodian range and the Tanais and the  
490 Caspian Sea; these will be the image of my deeds.

3 But imagine, pray, that such a work had been completed and made evident to men's  
eyes. Is there anyone who could look upon it and suppose that the form, the  
arrangement, and the appearance were created by Fortune and Accident?  
495 No one, I think. What of Apelles' "Wielder of the Thunderbolt"? What of the statue  
which takes its name from the Spear? Shall we admit, then, that greatness in a statue  
cannot, without the help of Art, be created by Fortune's profuse provision of gold  
and bronze and ivory and much rich material, but is it possible that a great man, or  
rather the greatest man of all that have ever lived, without the help of Virtue, was  
500 perfected through Fortune's supplying him with arms and money, foot and horse?  
But for him who has not learned how to use these things they are a danger, not a  
strength and enrichment, but a means of proving his weakness and pettiness. For  
Antisthenes was right when he said, "We should pray that our enemies be provided with  
all good things, except courage; for thus these good things will belong, not to their  
505 owners, but to those that conquer them." Therefore they say that Nature also for  
defence has caused horns, wonderful for their size and jagged points, to grow upon  
the deer, the most cowardly of all animals; and therein does Nature teach us that  
strength and arms are of no benefit to such as have not the courage to stand their  
ground.  
510 Thus also Fortune, by frequently bestowing on cowards and fools military forces and  
dominions, in which they disgrace themselves, emblazons and commends Virtue as the  
one quality that constitutes the greatness and beauty of man. For if indeed, as  
Epicharmus says,  
515 Mind has sight and Mind has hearing;  
but  
All things else are deaf and blind;  
then it happens that these are really lacking in reason. For our perceptive faculties  
seem to respond to their own special stimuli; but the fact that it is mind which aids  
us and mind which emblazons our deeds, and it is mind that conquers and overpowers  
520 and plays the monarch, and that "all things else," since they are "blind and deaf"  
and soulless, mislead and burden and disgrace their possessors, if Virtue be not  
present, is a truth which may be gleaned from history.  
Now of the two monarchs Semiramis and Sardanapalus, in whose hands were placed the  
same power  
525 and dominion, Semiramis, though a woman, equipped great expeditions, armed her ranks,  
established the Babylonian Empire, and sailed about the Persian Gulf subduing the  
Ethiopians and Arabs. But Sardanapalus, though born a man, spent his days at home  
carding purple wool, sitting with his knees drawn up in front of him am ong his

530 concubines; and when he died, they made a stone statue of him dancing in a barbaric fashion and apparently snapping his fingers above its head. They engraved upon it: "Eat, drink, and sport with love; all else is naught."

When Crates saw a golden statue of Phrynê the courtesan standing at Delphi, he cried out that it stood there as a monument to Greek licentiousness; and thus if one examine either the life or the tomb of Sardanapalus (for I think there is no

535 difference between them), one would say that they are a monument to the bounty of Fortune. But if this be so, shall we allow Fortune to lay hold upon Alexander after Sardanapalus, and to lay claim to Alexander's greatness and power? For what greater gift did she bestow on him than those which other monarchs received at her hands: arms, horses, missiles, money, guardsmen? Let Fortune endeavour to make an Aridaeus

540 great by these, if she can, or an Ochus or Oarses or Tigranes the Armenian, or the Bithynian Nicomedes. Of these Tigranes cast down his crown before the feet of Pompey and ignominiously received back his kingdom, which had become the spoil of war. But Nicomedes<sup>114</sup> shaved his head and put on the freedman's cap and proclaimed himself an emancipated slave of the Roman people.

545

4 Shall we say, then, that Fortune makes men petty, timid, and abject in spirit? Yet it is not right for anyone to charge baseness to misfortune, or courage and intelligence to good fortune; but Fortune was magnified by Alexander's reign, for in him she was illustrious, invincible, magnanimous, inoffensive, and humane. Then,

550 immediately after Alexander's decease, Leosthenes said that his forces, as they wandered here and there and fell foul of their own efforts, were like the Cyclops after his blinding, groping about everywhere with his hands, which were directed at no certain goal; even thus did that vast throng roam about with no safe footing, blundering through want of a leader. Or rather, in the manner of dead bodies, after

555 the soul departs, when they are no longer held together by natural forces, but undergo dispersion and dissolution, and finally are dissipated and disappear altogether; even so Alexander's forces, having lost him, maintained a gasping, agitated, and fevered existence through men like Perdicas, Meleager, Seleucus, and Antigonus, who, as it were, provided still a warm breath of life and blood that still

560 pulsed and circulated. But at length the host wasted away and perished, generating about itself maggots, as it were, of ignoble kings and rulers in their last death-struggle. This, then, it is likely that Alexander himself meant when he rebuked Hephaestion for quarrelling with Craterus: "What," said he, "will be your power and your achievements if someone deprive you of Alexander?" But I, for my part, shall not

565 hesitate to say this very thing to the Fortune that presided over Alexander's career: "What is your greatness or your repute? Where is your power or your invincibility, if someone deprive you of Alexander?" That is to say, "If someone deprive you of your skill in arms, your munificent use of riches, your self-restraint in expending them, your boldness against your foes in battle, your mildness towards the vanquished? Make

570 another great, if you can; but one that shall not be generous with his substance, nor court danger in the front ranks, nor give honour to his friends, nor feel pity for his captives, nor be temperate in his pleasures, nor sleepless in crises, nor placable in his victories, nor humane amid his successes. What man is great in the exercise of power, if folly and wickedness attend him?

575 Take away virtue from the fortunate man and in everything he is petty; in acts of generosity, through parsimony; in hard tasks, through softness; in religion, through superstition; towards the good, through envy; among men, through cowardice; among women, through wantonness." Just as inexpert artisans, who construct large pedestals for petty offerings, make the smallness of the offerings noticeable, so Fortune,

580 whenever she elevates a petty character by acts that have a certain pomp and circumstance, makes the more conspicuous and disgraceful the blundering and instability that result from a shallow character.

585

5 Wherefore greatness lies, not in the possession of good things, but in our use of them,

since even infant children inherit their fathers' kingdoms and dominions, even as Charillus, whom Lycurgus carried in his swaddling-clothes into the common dining-hall and proclaimed king of Sparta in place of himself. Assuredly it was not the child who was great, but he who surrendered to the child its paternal rights, and did not keep

590 them for himself nor take them away.

But who could have made Aridaeus great, whom, differing no whit from a child, only that his swaddling-clothes were royal purple, Meleager set on the throne of Alexander? And indeed it was well that he did so, that for a few days it might be observed how it is that men rule by right of virtue and how by gift of Fortune. For

595 in succession to a real competitor for sovereignty Meleager introduced a mere actor, or rather, did a mute figure wearing a crown parade across the stage, as it were, of the inhabited world.

Even a woman can carry a burden if a man impose it upon her. Conversely, however, one might affirm that it lies within the strength of even a  
600 woman or a child to take up and impose the gifts of power and wealth and sovereignty. The eunuch Bagoas took up the kingship of Persia and bestowed it upon Oarses and Darius.<sup>121</sup> But the ability to sustain and administer great authority when one has received it, and not to be crushed or turned from one's purpose by the weight and the magnitude of one's activities, is the mark of a man who possesses virtue, sense, and  
605 intelligence.

This virtue Alexander possessed, whom some accuse of drunkenness and a passion for wine! But he was truly a great man, for in his conduct of affairs he was sober, nor was he made drunk nor led to revelling by authority and power; but others, when they get but a small portion, or even a taste, of power are unable to control themselves:  
610 Bad men, when gorged with wealth, or chancing on Some honours in the State, caper and prance When luck, unhopèd for, to their house has come.

Cleitus, when he had scuttled three or four Greek triremes at Amorgos, caused himself to be proclaimed Poseidon and carried a trident. Demetrius, to whom Fortune added the  
615 little that she was able to subtract from Alexander's power, allowed himself to be called "The Heaven-descended," and the subject states did not send ambassadors to him, but "Sacred Deputies," and his replies they spoke of as "Oracles." Lysimachus, who obtained possession of the regions adjoining Thrace, the mere outskirts of the kingdom of Alexander, as it were, reached such a pitch of arrogance and boldness as to say, "The Byzantines now come to me when I am touching Heaven with my spear." But Pasiades of Byzantium, who was present, said, "Let us be off, lest he make a hole in the sky with his spear-point!"

And yet why should anyone mention these men who might have some legitimate ground for pride because of Alexander, when even Clearchus, after he became despot of Heracleia, used to carry a thunderbolt, and named one of his sons Thunderer? And Dionysius the  
625 younger styled himself the son of Apollo in the inscription: Sprung from a Dorian mother by union with Phoebus Apollo. And Dionysius's father killed ten thousand or more citizens, and, led on by envy, betrayed his brother to the enemy,  
630 nor could he wait for his already aged mother to die a few days later, but strangled her; yet in one of his tragedies he wrote these words: The mother of foul wrong is tyranny!

Notwithstanding, of his daughters he named one Virtue, another Temperance, a third Justice. And yet other persons publicly styled themselves Benefactors, Conquerors,  
635 Saviours, or The Great; but no one would be able to tell the tale of their marriages one after another, like the matings of horses, as they spent their days with no restraint amid herds of women, their corruption of boys, their beating of drums in the company of emasculated men, their daily dicing, their flute-playing in the public theatres, the night that was too short for them at their dinners, and the day at  
640 their breakfasts.

6 But Alexander took his breakfast at daybreak seated; he dined late in the evening; he drank only after sacrificing to the gods; he played dice with Medius when he had a fever; he played games while travelling, at the same time also learning to wield a  
645 bow and mount a chariot. For himself he married Roxanê, the only woman he ever loved; but Stateira, the daughter of Darius, he married for imperial and political reasons, since the union of the two races was highly advantageous. But as for the other Persian women, he was as much their superior in self-control as in valour he was superior to Persian men. For he looked at no woman against her will and those that he  
650 looked at he passed by more readily than those that he did not look at; and although he bore himself humanely toward all other persons, it was toward fair youth alone that he conducted himself haughtily.

He would not listen to a single word in praise of the beauty of the wife of Darius, who was a very handsome woman; but when she died, he graced her funeral with such a  
655 royal pomp and bewailed her death so feelingly that his self-control was questioned amid his display of humanity, and his goodness incurred the charge of wrongdoing. For Darius was disturbed by suspicion of Alexander's power and youth; for he also was still one of those who believed Alexander's victory to be through Fortune. But when he had tested the matter from every angle, and recognized the truth, "Then," said he,  
660 "the lot of the Persians is not so utterly wretched, nor will anyone say that we are

altogether cowardly or unmanly in that we have been overcome by such a man. But for my part I pray the gods for fair fortune and for might in war, that I may surpass Alexander in bestowing favours; and I am possessed by an ambitious and emulous desire to prove myself more humane than Alexander. But if my power be spent, do thou, O Zeus, ancestral god of the Persians, and ye other gods that guard our kingship, grant that none other than Alexander take his seat upon the throne of Cyrus." This was Darius's way of adopting Alexander, invoking the gods as witnesses.

7 Thus do men prevail through Virtue. Ascribe to Fortune, if you will, Arbela and the Cilician victory and his other deeds of violence and war: Fortune battered down the walls of Tyre for him; Fortune opened the way to Egypt; through Fortune Halicarnassus fell, and Miletus was captured, and Mazaeus left the Euphrates unguarded, and the Babylonian plain was strewn with corpses. But at least it was not in any way Fortune's gift that he was temperate, nor was it because of Fortune that he was self-controlled, nor did Fortune lock his soul and keep it impregnable to pleasure and invulnerable to desire; in fact, these were the qualities by which he defeated Darius himself. The rest were but defeats of arms and horses, battles, slaughters and routs of men. But the truly great and indisputable defeat Darius suffered: he yielded in virtue and greatness of soul, in prowess and justice, and marvelled at Alexander's invincibility in pleasure, in toil, in the bestowal of favours. It is true that Tarrius, son of Deinomenes, and Antigenes of Pallenê, and Philotas, the son of Parmenion, were also invincible at least amid shields, pikes, battle-cries, and the clash of arms; but towards pleasures and women and gold and silver they were no better than their captives. In fact, when Alexander was freeing the Macedonians from debt and paying creditors for everybody, Tarrius said falsely that he was a debtor, and produced at the bank a person who asserted that he was Tarrius's creditor; later, when he was detected, he was ready to commit suicide had not Alexander, coming to know of this, exculpated him, and allowed him to keep the money; for the king remembered that when Philip was assaulting Perinthus, Tarrius, although his eye was pierced by a missile, would not submit nor suffer the shaft to be extracted until they had routed the enemy.

Antigenes joined himself with those who were being sent back to Macedonia because of sickness or wounds, and had himself enrolled among them; but when, however, it was discovered that he had nothing wrong with him, but was feigning some infirmity, and it was seen that he was a stout fighting man whose body was covered with wounds, the matter vexed Alexander. When he asked the reason for such conduct, Antigenes confessed that he was in love with Telesippa, and was accompanying her to the sea, since he could not be left behind if she went away. "Whose is she?" asked Alexander, "and to whom must we speak?" Antigenes replied that she was free-born. "Then," said Alexander, "let us persuade her with promises and presents to remain behind." So ready was he with an excuse for every lover rather than for himself.

And further, Philotas, the son of Parmenion, had in his licentiousness the nurse, as it were, of all his ills. For among the captives taken at Damascus was a courtesan from Pella, by name Antigona. Ere this she had crossed over to Samothrace, and there had been taken captive by Autophradates. She was comely enough to look upon and, after Philotas had attached himself to her, she had complete possession of him. Indeed that man of iron was so softened that he was not in control of his reasoning powers amid his pleasures, but unlocked and brought forth many of his secrets for the woman: "What was that famed Philip, were it not for Parmenion? What was this Alexander, were it not for Philotas? Where his Ammon, and where his serpents, if we do not wish it so?" These words Antigona reported to an intimate friend of hers among the women, and she reported them to Craterus; Craterus brought Antigona herself secretly to Alexander, who did not touch her person, but restrained himself and, working secretly through her, he discovered the whole of Philotas's plans. And for a period of more than seven years Alexander never revealed his suspicion; not in his cups, the reputed drunkard! not in anger, this man of fiery temper! not to a friend, this man who trusted Hephaestion in everything and shared everything with him! In fact it is recorded that once, when he had broken the seal of a confidential letter from his mother and was reading it silently to himself, Hephaestion quietly put his head beside Alexander's and read the letter with him; Alexander could not bear to stop him, but took off his ring and placed the seal on Hephaestion's lips.

8 But one might grow weary in the enumeration of these matters by which Alexander is shown to have made the most honourable and the most regal use of his authority. And even though he became great through Fortune, he is even greater in that he made good

use of his Fortune. And the more we praise his Fortune the more shall we exalt his Virtue by reason of which he became worthy of his Fortune.

730 Now, however, I shall proceed at once to the first steps in his advancement and the beginnings of his power, and I shall examine in those matters the rôle played by Fortune, by reason of which men assert that Alexander became great through the instrumentality of Fortune. In Heaven's name! Why do they not assert this of one that never felt a wound nor lost a drop of blood nor ever served in war, whom the neighing of a horse placed upon the throne of Cyrus, even as the first Darius, the son of  
735 Hystaspes? Or of Xerxes, whom a king, flattered by his wife, as Darius was flattered by Atossa, set upon the throne? Did the royal diadem come to Alexander's doors, as to Oarses through the machinations of Bagoas, who stripped from him the garb of a courier and put upon him the royal raiment and the tiara that ever stands erect? Was he suddenly and unexpectedly chosen by lot and  
740 thus came to rule the inhabited world, as at Athens the Thesmothetae and Archons attain their office?

Would you learn how it is that men come to the throne by choice of Fortune? Once upon a time among the Argives the family of Heracleidae became extinct, from which family it was their ancestral custom to select the Argive kings. When in their search they  
745 made inquiry of the god at Delphi, he replied that an eagle would show them; and a few days later an eagle appeared on high and, swooping down, alighted on the house of Aegon, and Aegon was chosen king.

Again in Paphos when the reigning king was seen to be unjust and wicked, Alexander expelled him and searched for another, since the family of Cinyradaea appeared to be  
750 already passing away or extinct. However, they told him that there still survived one poor and obscure person, who eked out a forsaken existence in a certain garden. Men were sent to fetch him and, when they arrived, he was found watering his garden-plots; and he was much perturbed when the soldiers laid hands on him and ordered him to come with them. He was brought before Alexander and, dressed as he was in a single  
755 cheap garment, he was proclaimed king, and received the royal purple, and became one of those who are styled the king's "Companions." His name was Abdalonymus. Thus does shifting Fortune create kings, change their raiment, and quickly and easily alter the status of men who expect nothing of the sort, and do not even hope for it.

760 9 But what greatness did Alexander acquire beyond his just merits, what without sweat, what without blood, what without a price, what without labour? He drank rivers fouled with blood, crossed streams bridged by dead bodies, through hunger ate the first grass that he saw, dug through nations buried in deep snow and cities built  
765 beneath the earth, sailed over a battling sea; and as he traversed the parching strands of Gedrosia and Arachosia, it was in the sea, not on the land, that first he saw a living plant.

If to Fortune, as to a human being, one might present Frankness in Alexander's behalf, would she not say, "When and where did you ever vouchsafe a way for the  
770 exploits of Alexander? What fortress did he ever capture by your help without the shedding of blood? What city unguarded or what regiment unarmed did you deliver into his hands? What king was found to be indolent, or what general negligent, or what watchman asleep at the gate? But no river was easy to cross, no storm was moderate, no summer's heat was without torment. Betake yourself to Antiochus, the son of  
775 Seleucus, or to Artaxerxes, the brother of Cyrus; depart to Ptolemy Philadelphus! Their fathers, while yet alive, proclaimed them kings; they won battles that did not cost a tear; they made merry all their lives in processions and theatres; and every one of them, because of good fortune, grew old upon the throne.

"But in the case of Alexander, though I were to mention nothing else, behold his body  
780 gashed with wounds tip to toe, bruised all over, smitten at the hands of his enemies Now with the spear, now the sword, now with mighty masses of boulders.

On the banks of the Granicus his helmet was cleft through to his scalp by a sword; at Gaza his shoulder was wounded by a missile; at Maracanda his shin was so torn by an  
785 arrow that by the force of the blow the larger bone was broken and extruded.

Somewhere in Hyrcania his sight was dimmed, and for many days he was haunted by the fear of blindness. Among the Assaceniens his ankle was wounded by an Indian arrow; that was the time when he smilingly said to his flatterers, 'this that you see is  
blood, not

790 Ichor, that which flows from the wounds of the blessed immortals.' At Issus he was wounded in the thigh with a sword, as Chares states, by Darius the king, who had come into hand-to-hand conflict with him.

Alexander himself wrote of this simply, and with complete truth, in a letter to

Antipater: 'I myself happened,' he writes, 'to be wounded in the thigh by a dagger. But nothing untoward resulted from the blow either immediately or later.' Among the  
795 Mallians he was wounded in the breast by an arrow three feet long, which penetrated his breastplate, and someone rode up under him, and struck him in the neck, as Aristobulus relates. When he had crossed the Tanais against the Scythians and had routed them, he pursued them on horseback an hundred and fifty stades, though he was grievously distressed with diarrhoea.

800

10 "Well done, Fortune! You exalt Alexander and make him great by running him through from every side, by making him lose his footing, by laying open every portion of his body. Not like Athena before Menelaüs did you guide the missile to the stoutest parts of his armour, and by breastplate, belt, and kilt take away the intensity of the  
805 blow, which only grazed his body with force enough to cause blood to flow; but you exposed to the missiles the vital portions of Alexander's body unprotected, you drove home the blows through his very bones, you circled around his body, you laid siege to his eyes and his feet, you hindered him in pursuing his foes, you endeavoured to strip him of his victories, you upset his expectations."

810 No other king seems to me to have felt the hand of Fortune more heavily upon him, even though on many it has fallen harshly and malignantly. But like a thunderbolt it cut down the other rulers, and destroyed them; toward Alexander, however, fortune's ill-will became but contentious and quarrelsome and hard to overpower, even as it was toward Heracles. For what manner of Typhons or monstrous giants did she not raise up  
815 to oppose him? Whom of his foes did she not fortify with a vast supply of weapons or deep rivers or jagged cliffs or the might of beasts from foreign lands? But if Alexander's thought had not been set on high emprise, if it had not derived its impelling force from great Virtue, and had not refused to submit to defeat in its wrestling with Fortune, would he not have grown tired and weary of marshalling and  
820 arming his forces, weary of his sieges and pursuits amid unnumbered revolts, desertions, and riots of subject peoples, defections of kings, against Bactria, Maracanda, Sogdiana, as if he were cutting off the heads of a hydra which ever grew again in renewed wars among these faithless and conspiring peoples?

825 11 I shall be thought to be making a strange statement, yet what I shall say is true: it was because of Fortune that Alexander all but lost the repute of being the son of Ammon! For what offspring of the gods could have toiled through such hazardous, toilsome, and painful Labours save only Heracles, the son of Zeus? But it was one arrogant man who imposed upon Heracles the task of capturing lions, of pursuing wild  
830 boars, of frightening off birds so that he might not have time to go about performing greater deeds, such as punishing men like Antaeus and stopping creatures like Busiris from their abominable murders. But upon Alexander it was Virtue who laid the kingly and god-like Labour, the end and aim of which was not gold, carried about by countless camels, nor Persian luxury, banquets, and women, nor the wine of Chalybon, nor the fish of Hyrcania, but to order all men by one law and to render them  
835 submissive to one rule accustomed to one manner of life. The desire which he cherished to accomplish this task was implanted in him from childhood, and was fostered and increased with the years that passed. Once, when ambassadors came from the Persian king to Philip, who was not at home, Alexander, while he entertained them hospitably, asked no childish questions, as the others did,  
840 about the vine of gold, or the Hanging Gardens, or how the Great King was arrayed; but he was completely engrossed with the most vital concerns of the dominion, asking how large was the Persian army; where the king stationed himself in battle (even as the famed Odysseus asked  
845 Where are his arms that he wields in the battle, and where are his horses?); and which roads were the shortest for travellers going inland from the sea – so that the strangers were astounded and said, "This boy is a 'great king'; our king is only wealthy." But after Philip's end, when Alexander was eager to cross over and, already absorbed in his hopes and preparations, was hastening to gain a hold upon Asia,  
850 Fortune, seizing upon him, blocked his way, turned him about, dragged him back, and surrounded him with countless distractions and delays. First she threw into the utmost commotion the barbarian elements among his neighbours, and contrived wars with the Illyrians and Triballians. By these wars he was drawn from his Asiatic projects as far away as the portion of Scythia that lies along the Danube; when, by sundry manoeuvres, he had subjugated all this territory with much danger and great  
855 struggles, he was again eager and in haste for the crossing. Again, however, Fortune stirred up Thebes against him, and thrust in his pathway a war with Greeks, and the dread necessity of punishing, by means of slaughter and fire and sword, men that were

his kith and kin, a necessity which had a most unpleasant ending.  
 860 After this he crossed with provision for thirty days, as Phylarchus relates; but  
 Aristobulus says, with seventy talents. He divided the greater part of his  
 possessions at home and his royal revenues among his friends; Perdicas alone would  
 take nothing when Alexander offered, but asked, "What are you leaving for yourself,  
 Alexander?" And when Alexander replied, "High hopes!", "Then," said Perdicas, "we  
 865 shall also share in these; for it is not right to take your possessions, but right to  
 wait in expectation of those of Darius."

12 What, then, were the hopes on which Alexander relied when he crossed into Asia?  
 Not a force counted by means of a wall that would hold a city of 10,000 men, nor  
 870 fleets that sailed through mountains, nor scourges or fetters, insane and barbaric  
 implements for chastising the sea; but externally they were the great ambition in his  
 little army, mutual rivalry of hot youth, competition for repute and excellence among  
 his Companions. And within himself he had his own high hopes, reverence for the gods,  
 fidelity towards his friends, frugality, self-control, experience, fearlessness  
 875 toward death, high courage, humanity, affability, integrity of character, constancy  
 in counsel, quickness in execution, the height of good repute, and a disposition to  
 gain his end in everything honourable. For not appropriately nor convincingly did  
 Homer employ a combination of three similes in his comparison describing the fair  
 appearance of Agamemnon:

880 Like in his eyes and his head unto Zeus who delighteth in thunder,  
 Like unto Ares in waist, and in breadth of his chest to Poseidon.  
 But if the god who begat Alexander made his natural endowment an harmoniously joined  
 combination of many virtues, may we not say that he possessed the high spirit of  
 Cyrus, the discretion of Agesilaüs, the intelligence of Themistocles, the experience  
 885 of Philip, the daring of Brasidas, the eloquence and statesmanship of Pericles? And,  
 to compare him with the men of still more ancient days, he was more self-restrained  
 than Agamemnon; for Agamemnon set a captive woman above his wedded wife, but  
 Alexander, even before his marriage, kept aloof from his captives. He was more  
 magnanimous than Achilles; for Achilles gave back the body of Hector for a small  
 890 ransom, but Alexander buried Darius at great expense; Achilles, when he had become  
 reconciled, accepted gifts and recompense from his friends to requite him for ceasing  
 from his Wrath, but Alexander enriched his enemies by conquering them. He was more  
 reverent than Diomedes; for Diomedes was ready to fight with gods, but Alexander  
 believed the gods to be the authors of all success. He was more deeply mourned by his  
 895 relatives than was Odysseus; for Odysseus' mother died of grief, but the mother of  
 Alexander's foe, for the goodwill she bore him, shared his death.

13 In short, if Solon's statesmanship also was due to Fortune, and if Miltiades'  
 generalship, and Aristides' justice were but the result of Fortune, then surely  
 900 there is no work of Virtue in these men, but it is a name only, talk based on  
 appearance, pervading their lives to no purpose, a figment of the sophists and  
 legislators. But if every one of these men and of others like them became poor or  
 rich, weak or strong, ugly or handsome, lived to a ripe old age or met an untimely  
 death through Fortune, or if each one of them proved himself a great general, a great  
 905 lawgiver, or great in government and statesmanship through Virtue and Reason, then  
 consider Alexander and compare him with them all. Solon brought about a cancellation  
 of debts in Athens which he called the "Relief from Burdens" (Seisachtheia); but  
 Alexander himself paid the debts which his men owed to their creditors. Pericles  
 collected tribute from the Greeks and with the money adorned the Acropolis with  
 910 temples; but Alexander captured the riches of barbarians and sent them to Greece with  
 orders that ten thousand talents be used to construct temples for the gods.

Brasidas's dash along the shore to Methonê through the armed host of the enemy amid  
 showers of missiles made him renowned in Greece; but that daring leap of Alexander in  
 the country of the Oxydrachae, incredible to them that hear of it and fearful to them  
 915 that saw it, when he hurled himself down from the walls into the midst of the enemy,  
 who received him with spears and arrows and naked swords – with what may one compare  
 it, save with the levin bolt that breaks and flashes in the midst of a hurricane,  
 like the apparition of Phoebus that darted down to earth, gleaming round about with  
 flaming armour. The enemy at first were amazed and affrighted and retired with  
 920 trembling fear; but a moment later, when they saw that he was but one man attacking  
 many, they made a stand against him.

There indeed Fortune made manifest great and splendid results of her kindness  
 toward Alexander, when she cast him into an insignificant foreign town and shut him  
 in and fenced him round about! And when his men were earnestly trying to bring help

925 from without and were attempting to scale the walls, Fortune, by breaking and  
shattering their ladders, took away their foothold and hurled them from the walls.  
And of the three men who alone were quick enough to grasp the wall and, throwing  
themselves down inside, to take their stand beside the king, Fortune straightway  
snatched up one and made away with him before he could strike a blow; and a second,  
930 pierced through by many arrows, was only so far from death that he could see and  
perceive his king's danger. But the charges and shouting of the Macedonians were  
unavailing for they had no machines nor engines with them; but in their zeal they  
tried to hack the walls with their swords, and were forced to break them off with  
their bare hands, and all but bite their way through.

935 But the king, who was Fortune's favourite, and was always guarded and personally  
protected by her, was caught within like a wild beast in the toils, alone and without  
succour; nor was he struggling for Susa or Babylon, nor to capture Bactria, nor to  
vanquish the great Porus; for in great and glorious conflicts, even though men fail,  
disgrace, at least, can find no place. But so contentious and malicious was Fortune,  
940 so greatly did she favour barbarians and hate Alexander, that she tried to destroy  
not only his body and his life, but also, in so far as she could, to destroy his  
repute and to wipe out his fair fame. For it were not a terrible thing for Alexander  
to fall and lie buried beside the Euphrates or the Hydaspes, nor ignoble to meet  
death by coming into close combat with Darius or in confronting the horses and swords  
945 and battle-axes of the Persians as they fought to defend their king, nor to be  
overthrown while he bestrode the walls of Babylon and to fall from his high hope.  
Thus fell Pelopidas and Epameinondas; their death was a death belonging to Virtue,  
not to misfortune, engaged as they were in such a high emprise. But of what sort was  
the deed of Fortune, who is now under scrutiny? Was it not that on the farthest  
950 outposts of a land beside a foreign river within the walls of an obscure hamlet,  
which surrounded and hid away from sight the lord and master of the inhabited world,  
he should perish, smitten and stricken by ignominious weapons and whatever else lay  
at hand? For his head was wounded through his helmet by an axe, and someone shot an  
arrow through his breastplate so that it penetrated the bones of his breast and was  
955 lodged there firmly, while the shaft protruded and hampered him and the iron point  
was four fingers broad and five fingers long. But – the extreme of all the dangers he  
confronted – while he was defending himself against those who had attacked him in  
front, the archer who shot him had plucked up courage to approach him with a sword,  
but Alexander with his dagger was too quick for the man and knocked him down and  
960 killed him; but while he was thus occupied, someone ran out from a mill, and gave him  
a blow on the neck with a cudgel from behind; this confused his senses, and his head  
swam. But Virtue was by his side and in him she engendered daring, and in his  
companions strength and zeal. For men like Limnaeus and Ptolemy and Leonnatus and all  
those who had surmounted the wall or had broken through it took their stand before  
965 him and were a bulwark of Virtue, exposing their bodies in the face of the foe and  
even their lives for the goodwill and love they bore their king. Surely it is not due  
to Fortune that the companions of good kings risk their lives and willingly die for  
them; but this they do through a passion for Virtue, even as bees, as if under the  
spell of love-charms, approach and closely surround their sovereign.

970 What spectator, then, who might without danger to himself have been present at that  
scene, would not exclaim that he was witnessing the mighty contest of Fortune and  
Virtue; that through Fortune the foreign host was prevailing beyond its deserts, but  
through Virtue the Greeks were holding out beyond their ability? And if the enemy  
gains the upper hand, this will be the work of Fortune or of some jealous deity or of  
975 divine retribution; but if the Greeks prevail, it will be Virtue and daring,  
friendship and fidelity, that will win the guerdon of victory? These were, in fact,  
the only support that Alexander had with him at this time, since Fortune had put a  
barrier between him and the rest of his forces and equipment, fleets, horse, and  
camp.

980 Finally, the Macedonians routed the barbarians, and, when they had fallen, pulled  
down their city on their heads. But this was no help to Alexander; for he had been  
hurried from the field, arrow and all, and he had the shaft in his vitals; the arrow  
was as a bond or bolt holding his breastplate to his body.  
And when they tried forcibly to pull it out of the wound by the roots, as it were,  
985 the iron would not budge, since it was lodged in the bony part of the breast in front  
of the heart. They did not dare to saw off the protruding portion of the shaft, since  
they were afraid that the bone might be split by the jarring and cause excruciating  
pain, and that an internal haemorrhage might result. But when Alexander perceived  
their great perplexity and hesitation, he himself tried with his dagger to cut off  
990 the arrow close to his breastplate; but his hand was unsteady and affected by a

torpid languor from the inflammation of the wound. Accordingly with encouraging words he urged those that were unwounded to take hold and not to be afraid; and he railed at some who were weeping and could not control themselves, others he branded as deserters, since they had not the courage to come to his assistance. And 995 he cried aloud to his Companions, "Let no one be faint-hearted even for my sake! For it will not be believed that I do not fear death, if you fear death for me!"

[http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Fortuna\\_Alexandri\\*/1.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Fortuna_Alexandri*/1.html)

1000 [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Fortuna\\_Alexandri\\*/2.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Fortuna_Alexandri*/2.html)