

Plutarch's Use of λέγεται: Narrative Design and Source in *Alexander*

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IN PLUTARCHAN STUDIES it has become popular to assume that Plutarch used λέγεται, “he/she/it is said,” and similar vague source references to signal his doubt or suspicion about the veracity of a text.¹ Though earlier and contemporary Greek historians employed λέγεται and related words in this way generally, Plutarch's use differed, as did his methods and goals.² Plutarch used λέγεται, I argue, to introduce traditional material with which he illustrates key themes in the *Parallel Lives*; for these important, illustrative passages Plutarch uses

¹E.g., T. Duff, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford 1999) 186 n.106; D. Shipley, *Plutarch's Life of Agesilaos: Response to Sources in the Presentation of Character* (Oxford 1997) 3, 53–54, 77, 213; M. Henry, *Prisoner of History: Aspasia of Miletus and Her Biographical Tradition* (New York/Oxford 1995) 67–72; N. G. L. Hammond, *Sources for Alexander the Great: An Analysis of Plutarch's Life and Arrian's Anabasis Alexandrou* (Cambridge 1993) 6 and *passim*; C. Pelling, “Plutarch and Thucydides,” in Philip A. Stadter, ed., *Plutarch and the Historical Tradition* (London 1992: hereafter “Pelling 2002”) 11 [revised C. PELLING, *Plutarch and History: Eighteen Studies* (London 2002) 118]; P. Stadter, *A Commentary on Plutarch's Pericles* (Chapel Hill 1989) 320–321; J. Moles, *Plutarch, The Life of Cicero* (Warminster 1988) 35–36, 147, 153, 188, 190, 198, 200; R. Flacelière and E. Chambry, *Plutarque, Vies, Démosthène-Cicéron* (Paris 1976) e.g. 137. Moles and Shipley, esp. 53–54, to some extent break with this position; see esp. Shipley's annotated catalogue of relevant passages in *Ages.*, which is quite useful.

²On Herodotos see D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto 1989) 22; but see also H. D. Westlake, “ΛΕΓΕΤΑΙ in Thucydides,” *Mnemosyne* SER. IV 30 (1977) 362, and G. Shrimpton, *History and Memory in Ancient Greece* (Montreal/Kingston 1997) esp. 64–66. On Thucydides see Westlake 346, 356; cf. A. Andrewes in A. W. Gomme, A. Andrewes, and K. J. Dover, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* V (Oxford 1981) 118. On Xenophon see Westlake 346. On Arrian see P. Stadter, *Arrian of Nicomedia* (Chapel Hill 1980) esp. 72–76, 216 n.51, and A. B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander* (Oxford 1988) 39–40, 62–63.

λέγεται to assure his readers that he was employing information from the tradition about the individual under consideration.³ This interpretation more fully appreciates both how Plutarch analyzed his sources and how he used them in his narrative.⁴ I will first consider how Plutarch cited sources, second, how he assessed these sources, third, how he used these sources and λέγεται passages in particular in his *Lives*, and, lastly, I will examine some of the λέγεται passages in his *Life of Alexander*.⁵ This *Life* has been chosen both because of its length and the number of named and unnamed source citations in it, and because of the importance of this text in the Alexander tradition and in scholarship on Alexander. The conclusions reached for *Alexander* can be applied to all the Greek *Lives* and the entire corpus of Plutarch.

³Plutarch nearly always uses λέγεται to report information, whether details, sayings, or longer anecdotes; only once in the Greek *Lives* does λέγεται mean "is called," *Lyc.* 6.3. Plutarch normally uses forms of καλέω, ὀνομάζω, or προσγορεύω for such situations.

⁴On Plutarch's use of anecdotes, see, e.g., D. A. Russell, "Plutarch, 'Alcibiades' 1–16," *PCPS* 12 (1966) 37–47 [repr. B. Scardigli, ed., *Essays on Plutarch's Lives* (Oxford 1995: hereafter SCARDIGLI) 191–207], and *Plutarch* (London 1973: hereafter RUSSELL) 117–129; P. Stadter, "Anecdotes and the Thematic Structure of Plutarchan Biography," in J. A. Fernández Delgado and F. Prodomingo Pardo, edd., *Estudios sobre Plutarco: Aspectos formales* (Madrid 1996) 291–303.

⁵Because it is often cited, e.g., Duff (*supra* n.1) 186 n.106, Shipley (*supra* n.1) 53 n.160, B. Scardigli, "Introduction," in Scardigli 18 n.127, mention should be made of the article by D. Pauw, "Impersonal Expressions and Unidentified Spokesmen in Greek and Roman Historiography and Biography," *AClass* 23 (1980) 83–95; Pauw considers the use of λέγεται in Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Tacitus, Plutarch, and Suetonius with three possible answers in mind (84): "Is it merely because specific sources are lacking, or is it because of uncertainty about varying accounts, or may his aim perhaps be the subtle defamation of a character?" For Plutarch he looks at two sets of *Lives*, *Ant.-Dem.* and *Alex.-Caes.* His technique is to label texts with unnamed citations as positive, neutral, or negative, revealing, it seems, that he is most interested in the third of his questions, subtle defamation of character. For Plutarch (and Suetonius) he concludes (92) that "both are inclined to yield to the temptation of portraying a person of questionable reputation in even darker colors than those for which they are prepared or able to accept responsibility." This is an interesting approach that may deserve further investigation, but Pauw does not sufficiently investigate the meaning of λέγεται, and related terms, before labeling the character of the λέγεται text.

1. *How Plutarch cites sources, named and unnamed*

Plutarch drew on a host of sources when he wrote. Since childhood he had been exposed to a wide variety of stories and authors and through the years had heard, read, researched, and collected many notes and memories.⁶ When, in his 50s, he began to write his *Parallel Lives*, he drew upon this vast store of readings and recollections. Quotations from this amalgam of memory and notes are in the thousands.⁷ Many of these quotations are presented without any sort of citation, but many are marked with a source citation, both named and unnamed. For this study I have examined the Greek *Lives*,⁸ where there are just over a thousand passages marked with source citations: 521 passages are cited with a named source and 492 with an unnamed source. Of the 492 nameless source references in these *Lives*, 311 passages are introduced with “they,” “some,” “others,” “many,” “most,” etc., 16 with λέγεται equivalents,⁹ and 165 with λέγεται, of which 79 are by personal λέγεται and 86 by impersonal λέγεται.

The sheer volume of these passages precludes any assumption that Plutarch would go to so much trouble to include all this material only to cast doubt on it; it would be contrary to his

⁶ Stadter (*supra* n.1) esp. xlv–lii, lviii–lx; C. Pelling, *Plutarch: Life of Antony* (Cambridge 1988) 29.

⁷ Russell 46; K. Ziegler, “Plutarchos von Chaironeia,” *RE* 21 (1951) 928 [originally printed *Plutarchos von Chaironeia* (Stuttgart (1949), reprinted with ten columns of Nachträge (Stuttgart 1964) 290].

⁸ The focus is on the Greek *Lives* in part because the composition of the Roman *Lives* is different from the Greek *Lives*; Plutarch’s research and compilation of material for the Roman *Lives* was another matter. See, e.g., Wilamowitz, “Plutarch als Biographe,” in *Reden und Vorträge*⁴ II (Berlin 1926) 270 [transl. in Scardigli 67]; C. Pelling, “Plutarch’s Method of Work in the Roman *Lives*,” *JHS* 99 (1979) 74–96 [= Scardigli 265–318 with postscript; revised Pelling 2002, 1–44], and C. Pelling, “Plutarch’s Adaption of his Source Material,” *JHS* 100 (1980) 127–140 [= Scardigli 125–154; revised Pelling 2002, 91–115].

⁹ E.g., ἀπομνημονεύεται, διαμνημονεύεται, ιστορεῖται/ιστόρηται, μνημονεύεται, ὁμολογείται.

character.¹⁰ If the λέγεται passages should still be suspected by some because they are passive and thereby distanced from an author or source, why then does Plutarch cite himself so often in the *Parallel Lives* with such terms as εἴρηται, ιστόρηται, or γέγραπται?¹¹ Just as we should not make any a priori assumptions about why Plutarch cites himself, so, until these innumerable passages with unnamed source citations are examined in context, we should shun skepticism. As λέγεται passages have been the most frequent object of these skeptical assumptions, I focus on them, but my conclusions for λέγεται passages apply to the less vague “they,” “some,” and “others.”

Those who assume that Plutarch implies skepticism about the veracity of a text may appear to have a strong case, *prima facie*. Such phrases as “it is said” and “they say” in the English language are today regularly viewed with suspicion. Pauw, in 1980, began his assessment of such terms in ancient authors by citing contemporary newspaper usage of these terms for “allegations” and “negative and undermining purport” on such figures as Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter.¹² At the other end of the time-line, we find the father of history, and the first field reporter, saying things like “Whether these things are true, I don’t know; I write what is said (λέγεται).”¹³ But Plutarch is not subject to these methods, standards, or goals, though he under-

¹⁰See, e.g., Russell 61–62 and C. Pelling, “Truth and Fiction in Plutarch’s *Lives*,” in D. A. Russell, ed., *Antonine Literature* (Oxford 1990) 19–52 [revised Pelling 2002, 143–170].

¹¹In all *Parallel Lives* there are 49 “inter” *Life* self-citations (20 Greek, 29 Roman), using generally the passives γέγραπται and ιστόρηται, with a few active forms, such as γεγράφαμεν; there are 48 “intra” *Life* self-citations (26 Greek, 17 Roman, 5 *Syn.*), 45 with εἴρηται, 3 with προεἴρηται, and another 29 uses of the participle, 27 of some form of εἰρημεν-, and 2 of some form of προεἰρημεν- that refer back to an earlier passage in the particular *Life*. There are only 2 uses of εἰρήσεται in the *Lives*, one of which refers to itself, *Thes.* 29.2 referring to *Thes.* 35.4–7; the other εἰρήσεται appears in *Mar.* 29.12 and refers, it seems, to an unwritten *Life* of Metellus (Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus); see Ziegler (*supra* n.7) 896–897 [= 1964, 259].

¹²Pauw (*supra* n.5) 83.

¹³Hdt. 4.195.2, cf. 2.123.1, 130.2, 4.174, 6.137.1, and esp. 7.152.3.

stands them. Herodotos's inclusive yet manipulative device, as Plutarch sees it, of reporting something, especially something damning, is explicitly condemned in *De Herodoti malignitate* and presented as evidence of Herodotos's malicious ways.¹⁴ Plutarch instances Herodotos's "litotic" defense of the Argives—"the *most shameful* things have not been done by the Argives"—which is undercut by a far more powerful, and damning, account that Herodotos finds himself "obliged to report, but not obliged to believe," namely that the Persian king invaded Hellas at the invitation of the Argives (Hdt. 7.152.3 in Plut. 863C–D). This by Plutarch's standards is underhanded manipulation of material, and of the reader. Plutarch posits that the opposite of a malicious narrative is a clear (καθαρά) and a well-meaning (εὐμένης) narrative (855B).¹⁵ Plutarch believed that "this is how the good man ought to write" and this is how he himself wrote.¹⁶

Plutarch often follows this principle of being clear and therefore names his sources. That is not to say that he is effusive about who his sources are. Some Greek *Lives* have very few citations, named or unnamed, such as his *Timoleon* and *Eumenes*.¹⁷ Consider Plutarch's *Demosthenes*: it has a very high citation-to-page ratio, 2.06, which is twice the average (and second only to *Theseus* at 2.37). On his sources for this *Life*, Plutarch says in general, at the end, "You have then, O Sosios,

¹⁴See L. Pearson, *Plutarch, Moralia XI* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1965) 2–6; Russell 60–62; and especially J. Hershbell, "Plutarch and Herodotus—The Beetle in the Rose," *RhM* 136 (1993) 143–163, on Plutarch's overall opinion of Herodotos.

¹⁵Pelling 1990 (*supra* n.10) 35 [revised Pelling 2002, 152].

¹⁶Russell 61; *cf.* Duff (*supra* n.1) 58.

¹⁷*Timoleon* has 9 source citations and *Eumenes* 4, though *Eumenes* is very short, 21 Teubner pages compared to the average of 44 for the Greek *Lives*. For the 965 Teubner pages of all 22 Greek *Lives* there are 1,013 citations (521 named, 492 unnamed), which gives about one citation per Teubner page. Source citations, however, especially named ones, are frequently clustered, *e.g.* *Alex.* 46.1–2, where 14 named sources appear, 15 when we add the citation of Alexander himself.

the life of Demosthenes based on what we read or heard" (*Dem.* 31.7), and in the *synkrisis*, "These then are the things which are worth remembering of the things reported about Demosthenes and Cicero that have come to our notice" (*Syn.Dem.-Cic.* 1.1).¹⁸ His named citations in *Demosthenes* are typical: he cites contemporary sources for the most part,¹⁹ but later authors, here of the third and second century B.C., are cited as well;²⁰ personal examination of relevant sites and monuments is another source;²¹ and his phrase "what we heard" refers to material that comes from unnamed living people, the oral tradition. A third of the citations in *Demosthenes* are nameless, with 18 uses of "they" or "some" and 8 of λέγεται.

The character and function of the passages marked by named or unnamed citations do not differ. At *Demosthenes* 27.4, for example, Plutarch says that Phylarchos "said" that Demosthenes, then in exile, confronted Pytheas in Arkadia; "and," Plutarch continues, "it is said" (λέγεται) that Pytheas then employed a metaphor in which Demosthenes was compared to ass's milk which Demosthenes managed to turn effectively to good use. λέγεται appears to report the anecdote that Plutarch has on Phylarchos's authority. The reverse of this relationship between a named and an unnamed source appears, for example, in *Alexander* 61.3, where the λέγεται passage is

¹⁸See, e.g., Pelling 1979 (*supra* n.8) 90 [= Scardigli 299–300, and revised Pelling 2002, 18].

¹⁹Antiphanes (*Dem.* 9.6), Aischines (4.2, 9.1, 12.8, 22.3), Hypereides (12.8), Pytheas (20.2), Theopompos (4.1, 13.1, 14.4, 18.2, 18.3, 21.1), Theophrastos (17.4, 25.8), Marsyas (18.2), Demochares (30.4), Aristoboulos (23.6), Demetrios of Phaleron (9.4, 11.1, 11.3, 14.2, 28.3).

²⁰Douris of Samos (*Dem.* 19.3, 23.4), Idomeneus of Lampsacus (15.5, 23.4), Ariston of Chios (10.2, 10.3, 30.1), Eratosthenes of Cyrene (9.4, 30.3), Hermippos of Smyrna (5.7, 11.4, 28.3, 30.1), Phylarchos of Athens (or Naucratis) (27.4), and Panaitios of Rhodes (13.5); he also quotes the first-century writer Demetrios of Magnesia (15.4, 27.7), and cites Demosthenes directly twice (12.1, 15.3).

²¹*Dem.* 7.6 (Demosthenes' practice chamber), 31.1–3 (his statue). See C. Theander, *Plutarch und die Geschichte* (Lund 1951) 16; J. Buckler, "Plutarch and Autopsy," *ANRW* II.33.6 (1992) 4788–4830.

reported, an anecdote about Alexander founding a city in honor of his dead dog. At the end of the passage Plutarch gives the name of his source, in this case Sotion who, Plutarch adds, said that he heard the story from Potamon. This pattern is more common with “they say” and its variants; e.g., in *Pericles* Plutarch says that “some reported, among whom is even Theophrastos the philosopher, that ...” (*Per.* 23.2).²² Whether we attribute this appendage of the name of his source, and, in *Alexander* 61.3, that of his source’s source, to recent reading, rereading, thorough notes, superb memory, and any one or more desires,²³ λέγεται or λέγουσι serves to introduce syntactically the anecdote and to mark reliance on a source, which, in these cases, is subsequently named.

2. How Plutarch assesses his sources

Plutarch adheres to this principle of being clear and well-meaning throughout his writings, and we find him frequently assessing the data provided by his sources. It is necessary to review his methods here in order to establish firmly the character of his handling of sources and to dispel the notion that he would surreptitiously mark hundreds of passages with doubt or suspicion in direct contradiction to his explicit insistence on clear and honest writing. When he does disagree with a particular claim of an author or the character of an author’s

²²*Thes.* 20.2, 26.1, *Sol.* 15.3, 15.9, *Alc.* 20.6, *Pel.* 17.4, *Alex.* 46.1, *Lyc.* 1.2, 1.3, 11.9. Some scholars question whether the plurals “they,” “some,” “others,” “many,” or “more” in fact stand for more than one author, though this suspicion may arise from the paucity of our sources rather than Plutarch’s: Russell 112 n.24, Stadter (*supra* n.1) 230, but see J. R. HAMILTON, *Plutarch, Alexander* (Oxford 1969: hereafter “Hamilton”) esp. lii n.4 [reprinted 1999 with foreword and new bibliography by P. Stadter (London 1999) lviii n.4].

²³E.g., “merely to authenticate his statement” as R. Barrow, *Plutarch and His Time* (Bloomington 1967) 153; “learned detachment” as C. Pelling, “Is death the end? Closure in Plutarch’s *Lives*,” in D. H. Roberts, F. M. Dunn, and D. Fowler, edd., *Classical Closure: Endings in Ancient Literature* (Princeton 1997) [revision of Pelling 2002, 367–368]; or to “win the narratee’s confidence” as C. Pelling, “‘You for Me and Me for You ...’: Narrator and Narratee in Plutarch’s *Lives*,” in Pelling 2002, 268.

statements in general, Plutarch assesses the text or author in a clear and open manner. In judging his sources, he employs criteria that fall into the following categories:²⁴ logic, probability (εἰκός), relative date, authorial intent, authorial character, majority opinion. When he chooses to assess a source or version, he is able to express his acceptance, rejection, or hesitation clearly and openly.²⁵

Plutarch can analyze the logical consistency of a text. He may compare the text to an external standard that is considered fixed and certain, such as chronology or physical evidence. He rejects Stesimbrotos's claim that Themistokles studied under Anaxagoras and was a great admirer of Melissos, because the chronology does not fit (*Them.* 2.5). He explains that both Anaxagoras and Melissos were contemporaries of Perikles and, since Perikles was much younger than Themistokles, so too were these two philosophers.²⁶

Plutarch can analyze an account by comparing it to reason or probability (εἰκός), accepting or rejecting it on this criterion.²⁷ He cites Stesimbrotos for an account that puts Themistokles in

²⁴Cf. Hamilton xlvi–xlix [= 1999, lii–lv]; Russell 42–62; F. Frost, *Plutarch's Themistocles, A Historical Commentary* (Princeton 1980) 40–59; Pelling (*supra* n.6) 35–36; Stadter 1989 (*supra* n.1) esp. xxviii–lii; Pelling 1990 (*supra* n.10) [revision Pelling 2002, esp. 144–150].

²⁵I do not assume that Plutarch always applied these criteria; he is able, on occasion, to reject such criteria, e.g., in the meeting of Solon and Kroisos (*Sol.* 27.1). See on the introduction to *Thes.-Rom.* C. Pelling, "Making Myth Look Like History": Plutarch's *Theseus-Romulus*," in Pelling 2002, 171–195 [a shorter version appeared in A. Pérez Jiménez *et al.*, edd., *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles* (Madrid 1999) 431–443]. In general, Pelling 1980 (*supra* n.8) 139 [= Scardigli 151 and revision in Pelling 2002, 107].

²⁶A. Podlecki, *The Life of Themistocles: A Critical Survey of the Literary and Archaeological Evidence* (Montreal 1975) 56–57. Cf. *Them.* 27.2 where Plutarch checks οἱ χρονικοί to support the version in Thucydides (and Charon of Lampsacus), but compare the only other reference to οἱ χρονικοί, *Sol.* 27.1. See Russell 57–58 on both passages, and, in general, F. Frost, "Plutarch and Theseus," *CB* 60 (1984) 70.

²⁷E.g., *Alc.* 32.2, *Ant.* 2.3, 6.1–2; cf. A. E. Wardman, "Myth in Greek Historiography," *Historia* 9 (1960) 410; Pelling (*supra* n.10) [revision Pelling 2002, 176].

Sicily at the court of Hieron but immediately rejects Stesimbrotos's claim (*Them.* 24.7). Plutarch argues that the story makes no sense, is improbable, in light of another story that Plutarch now gives for no other reason than to counter Stesimbrotos (25.1): Theophrastos reports that Themistokles once gave a speech at the Olympic games inciting the Greeks to destroy the tent of the Syracusan tyrant and to block his horses from competing. It is improbable, Plutarch implies, that the man of the second account, which is accepted as historical, would later do just the opposite and court the tyrant of Syracuse.²⁸ Continuity in the figure's personality or character is assumed, or, in other cases, continuity in custom or tradition.

Plutarch can judge competing sources by comparing their relative proximity to the original event. At *Dion* 31.3 he rejects Timaios's claim that Dion's son was named Aretaios, supposedly after his mother Arete, because he accepts Timonides' account in which the son's name is Hipparinos, which version Plutarch prefers because Timonides was a "close friend and comrade of Dion." The silence of an eyewitness or otherwise preferred source may also move Plutarch to reject later, presumably fabricated versions, as in *Alexander* where he values most highly what he considers to be genuine letters of Alexander (e.g., *Alex.* 17.6–8, 46.3).²⁹

Plutarch can also take into consideration the authorial intent, or motives, of competing sources.³⁰ Authors he regards as prejudiced one way or another may be rejected in preference for a contemporary eyewitness report or an otherwise unprejudiced source. At *Dion* 35, recounting how the Syracusans treated

²⁸See M. Marr, *Plutarch, Life of Themistocles* (Warminster 1998) 143–144.

²⁹On modern opinion on the letters, see Hamilton lix–lx [= 1999, lxx–lxvi]; J. R. Hamilton, "The Letters in Plutarch's *Alexander*," *PACA* 4 (1961) 9–20; and L. Pearson, "The Diary and Letters of Alexander the Great," *Historia* 4 (1954–5) 429–455.

³⁰E.g., *Alc.* 3.2, *Arat.* 38.2.

Philistos, Plutarch again prefers Timonides because he was "present with Dion at these events from the beginning," and in so doing Plutarch explicitly rejects two other versions: (1) Ephoros's version in which Philistos kills himself before the mob can torture him (*Dion* 35.4), which version he rejects because Ephoros is nothing but a tyrant-lover, struggling in vain to invent some sort of praise for Philistos (36.3–4); and (2) Timaios's version in which Philistos is treated with far greater cruelty than in Timonides' version, a degree of cruelty which Plutarch calls slander and for which he rebukes Timaios for attacking so outrageously and coarsely one who did not personally harm Timaios and whom Timaios used as a source for his own work (36.1–2). These same twisted motives may be found in contemporary authors, for the very reason that they have personal grievances and dislikes (*Per.* 13.16). When Andokides says that the people vandalized the tomb of Themistokles and mistreated his remains, Plutarch explains it away as a falsehood arising out of Andokides' oligarchic motives (*Them.* 32.4).

In the case of some authors, Plutarch finds authorial intent affecting more than one passage. In such cases perhaps we should speak of authorial character. For example, he complains that Theopompos has a penchant for finding fault with people; Plutarch is accordingly more likely to question Theopompos's criticisms and, alternatively, to believe any praise that Theopompos offers (*Lys.* 30.2).³¹ Plutarch complains that Ktesias is always abandoning "the truth" for unbelievable and dramatic stories (*Artax.* 1.4, 6.9), a frequent failing in Plutarch's eyes.³² He also complains of the "rhetoric and periods" of Theopompos and Ephoros (*Praec.ger.rep.* 803B). But Plutarch also finds

³¹Cf. *Ages.* 32.14–33.1, *Dem.* 13.1.

³²Of Douris, *Alc.* 32.2 and *Per.* 28.3; of Phylarchos, *Them.* 32.4; of "many," *Alex.* 17.6; of "some," *Alex.* 75.5.

that the authorial character of some authors leads him to label them as trustworthy: he speaks of the best, the most persuasive, or the most trusted author(s).³³

At times Plutarch relies on majority opinion, what οἱ πλείστοι or οἱ πλείονες say, though his support for the majority opinion may also be based on additional evidence, including persuasiveness and trustworthiness.³⁴ In an extraordinary passage where Plutarch considers the visit of the queen of the Amazons to Alexander, he names five authors who report the visit. In response, he lists nine other authors who say that the account is fiction (*Alex.* 46.1–2). He sides with the second group and supports them with two details: (1) he observes that Alexander does not mention the visit in his letter to Antipater, though he talks about the offer to marry a daughter of the Skythian king (46.3); (2) he reports an anecdote that Onesikritos, whom he includes in his first list of five authors, “is said” (λέγεται) to have read to Lysimachos, years later, his account of the visit, to which Lysimachos is said to have wryly commented “And where then was I?” (46.4). Though Plutarch concludes his analysis, “one disbelieving these things would not marvel at Alexander any less nor would one believing them marvel at him the more” (46.5), he has expressed his own opinion of these numerous competing sources by invoking the trustworthiness of Alexander’s silence and of Lysimachos’s sarcasm.

Plutarch brings nearly all these criteria together in the opening of *Aristeides* and applies them to the question whether Aristeides was poor or not.³⁵ He speaks of λόγοι διάφοροι, which are represented by two camps, Demetrios of Phaleron, who argued that Aristeides was wealthy, and οἱ πολλοί, who claim that Aristeides was poor and against whom Demetrios “has set

³³E.g., *Thes.* 10.1, 26.1, *Them.* 31.6, *Dem.* 1.1, 23.4, *Alex.* 2.1, 26.2.

³⁴E.g., *Thes.* 26.1, 29.4, 31.2, *Sol.* 15.5, *Per.* 4.1, 26.1, *Nic.* 11.10, *Dem.* 23.4.

³⁵Hamilton xlvii [= 1999, liv], Russell 55–57, Pelling (*supra* n.10) 22 [revision in Pelling 2002, 144].

himself in opposition" (*Arist.* 1.1–2). The numerically superior "many" will win the debate, in Plutarch's analysis, but Demetrios presents many sound arguments. Like Plutarch, Demetrios looks for proof in physical evidence and unquestioned fact, which Plutarch then analyzes for all of a long chapter: a plot of land at Phaleron said to be Aristeides' and where he is buried;³⁶ Aristeides' name in the list of archons at Athens;³⁷ his ostracism; and a choregic tripod in the sanctuary of Dionysos inscribed with Aristeides' name (1.2–3). Starting with the last, the seemingly strongest evidence but in fact the weakest (1.4), Plutarch argues that we cannot assume that Aristeides used his own money for the choregic liturgy, drawing parallels to Plato and Epaminondas. As for the tripod, he cites Panaitios for an argument based on an incompatibility with accepted chronology. Plutarch himself questions the value of ostracism as evidence of wealth by comparing the ostracism of Damon, whom as a mere διδάσκαλος, it seems, he assumes to be not of a "great house," thereby disproving Demetrios's theory that only the rich and powerful are the objects of ostracism.³⁸ And, lastly, Aristeides' year as archon came about not by lot from a preselected group of aristocrats, but, as Plutarch reports on Idomeneus's authority, by the vote of the people; it is "most persuasive," then, that his archonship is the result of his virtue rather than wealth, as in the case of others (1.8). Having dealt with all the particulars, Plutarch explains that this complex of arguments arose from Demetrios's misguided desire to shield Aristeides from "the great evil" of poverty (1.9). Whether or not we agree with all his arguments,

³⁶ Though Plutarch saves this point to the end of the *Life*, he informs us that the tomb at Phaleron was, "they say," paid for by the people of Athens, as were the many subsequent monetary gifts bestowed upon his descendants by the people, all implicit proof of the poverty of Aristeides' house (*Arist.* 27.1–5).

³⁷ See as well *Arist.* 5.7.

³⁸ Cf. *Per.* 4 and Stadter (*supra* n.1) 69–70.

Plutarch has expressed his criticisms and analysis in an open and clear manner.

At times, it is true, Plutarch employs no criterion whatsoever. For example, he rejects the report that Demosthenes wrote, moments before his death, the epigram that would later appear on his statue, by simply claiming that such sources “speak utter nonsense” (*Dem.* 30.6). He is also willing to admit at times that he has been unable to resolve a conflict in the tradition. He freely admits his frustration to his reader and even offers the matter up for others to resolve. In a most entangled example in *Solon* 19, Plutarch relies on majority opinion and logic, counters with logic, then ends the debate by handing it over to the reader. He initially recounts how Solon established the Areopagos council, and that of the Four Hundred; he appears to close this section by saying that “most” say that Solon founded the Areopagos, “as has been said, ὅσπερ εἴρηται,” by which Plutarch refers to what he has just said in 19.1. But to bolster the report of “most,” he reasons that the fact that Drakon nowhere mentions the Areopagos “greatly seems to support” what “most” have said (19.3). Plutarch, however, counters all this by pointing out that the thirteenth axon of Solon proves (ἐνδείκνυται) that the Areopagos council existed before Solon’s legislation, “unless, by Zeus, some uncertainty or defect in the text has arisen” (19.4–5). Having brought himself to this impasse, Plutarch refers the matter to the reader: “and so let even the reader himself examine these things” (19.5).³⁹ Even in such cases, Plutarch remains true to his habit of being open and clear in his opinion of his sources and the truth—there is no indirect or ironic manipulation of the text or reader.⁴⁰ Since he is so frank about the challenges and difficulties of assessing sources, when he simply, openly, and clearly, without qualification re-

³⁹Cf., e.g., *Dem.* 15.5–6, *Ant.* 86.4, and *Dem.* 30.4.

⁴⁰Plutarch is not Tacitus; see Russell 105.

ports information from a source, named or unnamed, we should accept the text as presenting the truth, as Plutarch understands it. What Plutarch is doing, in fact, is assuring the reader that the material comes from the tradition, whether he supplies a name or an unnamed source marker such as λέγεται.

3. *How Plutarch uses his sources*

Plutarch assembled all these sources, cited or not, named or unnamed, because he was searching for the truth.⁴¹ This truth that he sought had more to do with morals and character than historical fact. "Character truth" is what Gomme called it.⁴² In portraying this character truth, Plutarch develops character themes, *e.g.*, the ambition, arrogance, the low deceitfulness of Alkibiades, or the unwavering bravery and selflessness of Phokion. He introduces, exemplifies, and develops these themes through anecdotes, self-contained, usually short, historical scenes that invariably reveal a person's character.⁴³ Anecdotes are the "little thing" (πρᾶγμα βραχύ), the "off-handed remark" (ῥῆμα), and "jest or joke" (παιδιά τις) of the oft-quoted introduction to *Alexander-Caesar* (*Alex.* 1.2), where Plutarch stresses how anecdotes often give a better impression of a person's character than famous events.⁴⁴ These anecdotes are frequently presented with source citations, many named but far more unnamed, and λέγεται very often introduces the unnamed anecdotes. In *Alexander*, for example, 23 of the 26 uses of

⁴¹Plutarch's concern for ἡ ἀλήθεια or τὸ ἀληθές: *e.g.*, *Cim.* 2.4, *Per.* 13.16, *Artax.* 6.9. See W. Helmbold and E. O'Neil, *Plutarch's Quotations* (Baltimore 1959) ix; Russell 61–62; Pelling (*supra* n.24) 36; and Pelling (*supra* n.10).

⁴²A. W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides I* (Oxford 1945) 58. On Gomme's criticism of Plutarch's "inability to value his authorities" see Hamilton xlvi–xlix [= 1999, liii–lv].

⁴³See, *e.g.*, Hamilton xl–xli [= 1999, xlvi–xlvii], Stadter (*supra* n.4).

⁴⁴For the one of the latest discussions, among many, of this passage see Duff (*supra* n.1) 14–22.

λέγεται introduce anecdotes.⁴⁵ Plutarch uses these anecdotes, introduced by named authors, by λέγεται, or by other words, to substantiate an individual's character, the truth about his character, throughout the *Parallel Lives*, and in *Alexander*.

4. *Plutarch's Alexander*

In accordance with these principles Plutarch carefully employed a host of sources for his complex portrait of Alexander.⁴⁶ He channeled these sources into themes that interested him, such as Alexander's "divine birth and honours, his fiery nature, his imitation of Achilles, and relation to his friends."⁴⁷ Plutarch defined and illustrated these themes through grand, famous, historical scenes and through little things, anecdotes, and offhand remarks—*petite histoire* (*Alex.* 1.2). He most frequently relies on *petite histoire* to develop his focused examination of these themes. Some of the little things and anecdotes appear on the authority of a specific person. On the theme of Alexander's emulation of Homer's Achilles, we are told that he kept his *Iliad* under his pillow, and this anecdote is cited from Onesikritos (8.2). More often, however, Plutarch reports these anecdotes and remarks with one of his vague reference markers, and λέγεται is by far the most common; and the repeated use of λέγεται, in fact, supplies much of the evidence for the themes of the *Life*. λέγεται supports two overarching themes in *Alexander*, that of Alexander's extra-

⁴⁵The 3 remaining uses of λέγεται introduce historical details: *Alex.* 39.10, 57.7, and 63.12; such details, though "simply" historical, are important to the themes that Plutarch is developing in each section where these details appear.

⁴⁶*Alex.* contains a total of 147 citations, consisting of 74 named citations (43 authors + 31 letters, 29 of which were attributed to the hand of Alexander) and 73 unnamed sources (44 "they," "some," etc.; 28 λέγεται, of which two are plural, 19 are personal, 9 impersonal; and 1 λέγεται equivalent [ὁμολογείται]). On sources and design, see Hamilton lxiv [= 1999, lxx], and, on Plutarch's sources, xliv–lxii [= 1999, lv–lxviii]; see also P. Stadter, "Alexander: Introduction," in R. Waterfield, transl., and P. Stadter, intro. and notes, *Plutarch, Greek Lives* (Oxford 1998) 306–310. Pace W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1948), esp. II 300.

⁴⁷P. Stadter, "Foreword" to reprint of Hamilton vii.

ordinary greatness in strength and daring and that of the greatness of his character.⁴⁸ A survey of these two themes will show that Plutarch uses λέγεται to mark his reliance on valid sources for these key themes of his biography.

Plutarch illustrates the greatness of Alexander, his bravery and daring, with many famous scenes. One of the earliest is Alexander's taming of Bucephalus, which illustrates his greatness in both prudence and daring.⁴⁹ Plutarch has been discussing how Alexander as a young man already possesses both σωφροσύνη and φιλοτιμία (*Alex.* 4.8). When Philip gives up on taming the horse, Alexander mocks the handlers for their inexperience and cowardice, ἀπειρία and μαλακία (6.2). When Alexander proves his superiority by rising to and completing the challenge, both intellectual and physical, Philip, who was at first outraged by his son's youthful arrogance, is visibly overjoyed: "His father is said even to have cried a bit, for joy, and, having kissed the head of his son when he dismounted, to have said, 'O son, seek a kingdom equal to yourself, for Macedonia is not enough for you'" (6.8). Plutarch's language, ὁ δὲ πατὴρ καὶ δακρῦσαί τι λέγεται, is emphatic, the καὶ stressing that Philip did burst into tears (of fearful joy), though rather (τι) restrained, or quickly cut short. The prophetic advice, "seek a kingdom ...," which also relies syntactically on λέγεται, performs precisely the same role, to confirm and continue the theme, addressed

⁴⁸On the themes of Alexander and also on the function of anecdotes see A. E. Wardman, "Plutarch and Alexander," *CQ* n.s. 5 (1955) 96–107; B. F. Harris, "The Portrayal of Autocratic Power in Plutarch's *Lives*," in B. F. Harris, ed., *Auckland Classical Essays Presented to E. M. Blaiklock* (Dunedin 1970) 194–195; D. Sansone, "Plutarch, Alexander, and the Discovery of Naphtha," *GRBS* 21 (1980) 63–74; J. M. Mossman, "Tragedy and Epic in Plutarch's *Alexander*," *JHS* 108 (1988) 83–93 [= Scardigli 209–228]; Stadter (*supra* n.4); Stadter (*supra* n.46) 306–310; Duff (*supra* n.1) 85–87.

⁴⁹A. R. Anderson, "Bucephalus and His Legend," *AJP* 51 (1930) 1–21; F. Frazier, "Contribution à l'étude de la composition des 'Vies' de Plutarque: l'élaboration des grandes scènes," *ANRW* II.33.6 (1992) esp. 4496–99; Stadter (*supra* n.4) esp. 291–294.

in the previous chapters, of Alexander's innate, burgeoning greatness.⁵⁰

Plutarch presents Alexander's daring and boldness not just in taming a horse but also on the battlefield. When Philip is away besieging Byzantium in 340 B.C., Alexander is left in charge of "matters in Macedonia and the sea," at the age of sixteen (9.1). When the Madoi rebel, Alexander does not merely defeat them, he drives them from their land and founds his first eponymous city, Alexandropolis. At Chaironeia, Plutarch continues, "as he was present, he participated in the battle against the Hellenes, and he is said (λέγεται) to have rushed against the Sacred Band of the Thebans first" (9.2). Plutarch has shown Alexander tame a wild horse, defeat and drive out barbarians, and, now, rush out against the most powerful contingent of a great hoplite army. Plutarch stresses that Alexander was the first, λέγεται πρῶτος, to attack the Sacred Band, and he reinforces this daring onslaught by describing the topography of the battlefield and calling to mind that "still even in our day" (ἔτι δὲ καὶ καθ' ἡμᾶς) an old oak stands along the Kephisos river that is called Alexander's oak, and the *polyandrion* of the Macedonians is not far off—an added detail that completes the scene, but may also underline the great risk, and cost, of attacking the Sacred Band (9.3–4). Plutarch explains that all this brave daring leads Philip, as is reasonable (ὡς εἰκός), to love his son so much that he is delighted with the mere title of general while his people call Alexander "king" (9.4). Plutarch assures us with his λέγεται that it is recorded that Alexander did rush out like this, as he will do so often in the future, and prove his bravery and his right, once again, to succeed Philip.

Having established Alexander's greatness in the face of animals and enemies, Plutarch illustrates his greatness in the face of the power of nature. After reaching Egypt and founding

⁵⁰ Contra Hammond (*supra* n.1) 22.

Alexandria, Alexander sets out for the shrine of Ammon, deep in the desert. Plutarch describes at length the difficulties and dangers of such a journey (26.11–27.4). He points out two specific dangers: dying of thirst, because this trip goes through a desert for “not a few days,” and dying in a sand storm. To illustrate the magnitude of this second risk, Plutarch reports that a south wind “somewhere even long ago is said (που καὶ πάλαι λέγεται) to have raised up a great dune around the army of Cambyses and turned the desert into a sea of waves and to have swallowed up and destroyed 50,000 men” (26.12). In contrast to this ominous manifestation of the power of nature, he describes how nature herself provided Alexander with every aid: “from Zeus” came rain which not only raised the level of humidity in the desert but also packed the sand down, making it easier to travel; ravens guided them when their human guides failed, both visually during the day and by their cawing at night (27.2–4). The account of the annihilation of Cambyses’ army is a dramatic foil to Plutarch’s presentation of Alexander’s success. He assures the reader with λέγεται that he relies on preserved sources; που in που λέγεται signals that his memory is trying to give him a name, but he chooses to move ahead and leaves που λέγεται as a sufficient source-marker.⁵¹

When Plutarch reaches Alexander’s greatest military challenge, the battle at Gaugamela, he emphasizes important elements with references to sources, both named and unnamed.⁵²

⁵¹ His memory may have been looking for Herodotos 3.26; verbal parallels are minor (νότος, θίνα, καταχῶσαι); the number 50,000 appears in 3.25. Strabo (17.1.54) mentions τοὺς θίνας, ἐν οἷς ὁ Καμβύσου κατεχόσθη στρατὸς ἐμπεσόντος ἀνέμου. Justin (1.9) reports the event briefly. Plutarch frequently uses που in this way, especially when quoting poets, e.g., *Sol.* 25.2, *Per.* 4.5 (and *Nic.* 11.6, for the same quote), *Alc.* 13.9, *Lyc.* 6.9, and frequently in the *Moralia*, esp. *De soll. animal.* 970E, where εἴρηται is used for a passage from Homer, though he is not cited by name.

⁵² Five citations appear in this section: (1) τὸ μνημονεύομενον, οὐ κλέπτω τὴν νίκην, for Alexander’s insistence on a face-to-face battle (*Alex.* 31.12); (2) λέγεται, on his confidence (32.1); (3) ὡς Καλλισθένης φησίν, for a public use of his divine birth (33.1), about which see Hamilton 87 and E. Badian, “The

The most important element in this scene is the contrast between the nervousness of Alexander's generals and his own extraordinary confidence. The night before the battle, with Darius keeping his troops at the ready and even inspecting the ranks in the dark, Plutarch presents Alexander performing "certain unmentionable rituals" and making a blood sacrifice to Fear (31.9). At this moment, Alexander's generals come to express their anxiety and fear about the approaching battle and suggest that Alexander lead the attack at night, in part "to hide with darkness the most fearful part of the expected contest" (31.11–12). Plutarch quotes the "remembered" response, τὸ μνημονεύομενον, "I do not steal victory!" and thereby reveals the difference between the generals' fear and Alexander's: the generals are afraid of Darius's army and fear for the bravery of their own troops, but Alexander is afraid of disgrace and of winning by any means other than a clear and visible victory. The sacrifice to Fear fits perfectly with this contrast whether we recognize that the Fear to which Alexander sacrifices is the Fear who yokes Ares' chariot (Hom. *Il.* 15.119) and will send the Persians packing or the Fear that Plutarch says was worshipped in Sparta.⁵³ Of the latter Fear Plutarch elsewhere says that "the ancients seem to me to consider bravery not to be fearlessness but fear of blame and of disgrace" and that "those least fear suffering [*i.e.*, in battle] who most fear a bad reputation" (*Agis & Cleom.* 30.4–5). In Alexander's case this fear of disgrace, that is, of not winning in broad daylight, seems to some, Plutarch says, quite rational, for otherwise Darius could

Deification of Alexander the Great," in Harry J. Dell, ed., *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson* (Thessaloniki 1981) 63 n.61, but note that Alexander only says Διόθεν and does not specify immediate or far distant descent; (4) ὡς φασι, for the type of horse on which Darius fled (33.9); (5) ὡς Καλλιस्थένης φησίν, for one explanation of Parmenion's call for support on the battlefield that stopped Alexander from pursuing, and presumably catching, Darius (33.10).

⁵³ No other extant source on Alexander mentions a sacrifice to Fear: Hamilton 81.

have an excuse for continuing his opposition to Alexander (*Alex.* 31.13–14). Alexander's daring confidence, then, serves both to magnify his greatness and to bring an end to Darius's.

According to Plutarch's version of events, Alexander went to bed after his generals left and slept more soundly than normal, "it is said" (λέγεται)—so soundly that he slept through breakfast and had to be awakened by Parmenion. When Parmenion expressed shock at Alexander's overly relaxed state, Alexander smiled and claimed victory in that they would no longer need to go chasing after Darius (32.1–3). Plutarch continues this comparison between the anxiety of Parmenion, the greatest of Alexander's generals, and the confidence of Alexander by looking forward to a crucial moment in the battle,⁵⁴ but he explains his purpose in focusing on these reports: "not only before the battle but even during the danger itself he showed himself to be great and confident in his reasoning and bravery" (32.4). Another chapter and a half follows that becomes epic in its glorification of this greatness. This section of the *Life* has been carefully staged by Plutarch to emphasize the superhuman confidence and daring of Alexander. In the night before Gaugamela his ability to sleep more soundly "than accustomed" stresses this greatness. Not only this detail is introduced by λέγεται: the rest of the scene with the generals anxiously fidgeting and Parmenion finally waking Alexander and Alexander grinningly claiming victory depends on the introductory λέγεται. Plutarch assures us that this scene, and the key detail of Alexander's restful sleep, is preserved in his sources.⁵⁵

With the victory at Gaugamela, Plutarch presents another aspect of Alexander's greatness and success in the face of all

⁵⁴ See Hamilton 83.

⁵⁵ This passage, more than those above, allows us to see Plutarch employing traditional material but laying stress on Alexander's confidence to such a degree that we hear nothing of the anxious strategizing that kept him up for many hours, as Diod. 17.56, Curt. 4.13.2, and Just. 11.13.1.

odds. Alexander has overcome such immense challenges through daring and boldness, not for his own glory, but, as Plutarch portrays him, for the glory of Hellas. Alexander's success is as the avenger of Hellas, all Hellas, against the Persians. Plutarch has Alexander proclaim his success in destroying all tyrannies and establishing self-rule, presumably in Ionia, plan the rebuilding of Plataia in commemoration of the victory over the Persians in 479, and repay the Crotoniates for having the one leader who brought aid from Magna Graecia to fight at Salamis (34.2–3). Plutarch explains that “thus he was rather favorable to all virtue and a protector and friend of all noble deeds” (34.4). By commemorating the efforts of all Hellenes, from east to west, against Persia, Alexander appears in Plutarch's account as the greatest of heroes, placing himself at the end of a long line of defenders of Hellas. When he passes the toppled statue of Xerxes and chooses to leave it toppled “because of the expedition against the Hellenes,” vengeance is nearly complete (37.5). Then, when, for the first time,⁵⁶ Alexander sits on the Persian throne, “it is said” that Demaratos the Corinthian wept and said “those Hellenes who died before they saw Alexander sitting on the throne of Darius were deprived of a great delight” (37.7). This passage completes this phase of Alexander's campaign. He has manifested extraordinary greatness in getting to this goal and in fulfilling the role of avenger for the glory of Hellas. The throne anecdote is the crowning touch, and Plutarch most certainly believes it, in every sense possible; he uses λέγεται to mark the anecdote as an established fact.⁵⁷

Plutarch is interested in illustrating Alexander's greatness in the face of physical challenges, but he is more interested in

⁵⁶ At Persepolis; at Susa, Plutarch *De. Alex. fort.* 329D (and Diod. 17.66.3 and Curt. 5.2.13).

⁵⁷ Plutarch's use of λέγεται here is seen to be all the more marked in this way when we read the three other passages where he matter-of-factly reports this anecdote without stressing his reliance on the tradition, *Alex.* 56.1, *Ages.* 15.4, *De Alex. fort.* 329D.

illustrating Alexander's greatness in the face of moral challenges. These challenges to his soul and character, rather than to his body and courage, are numerous, and many of the key passages to these struggles between his σωφροσύνη and ἐγκράτεια and his θυμός and ὀργή are introduced by λέγεται. I will consider four such episodes: Alexander's response to his destruction of Thebes (13.3), his visit to Diogenes the Cynic (14.5), Alexander and the Persian royal women (21.6), and Alexander on his supposed divinity (27.10–28.5).

Alexander's first military challenge as Philip's heir is also a challenge to his character. Plutarch, describing dramatically a rule beset by "great resentment and fierce hatred and dangers," portrays the peoples to the north and the Hellenes to the south rising eagerly in revolt. The Macedonians advising Alexander urge him to forget about Hellas and to talk mildly with the revolting "barbarians," but in stark contrast he does the opposite and hastens "with daring and determination," considering any appearance of hesitation to be ruinous (11.1–4). To emphasize the contrast between "the Macedonians" and Alexander, Plutarch ignores Alexander's first bloodless march through Thessaly to Corinth in the fall of 336 and compresses his campaigns in the north to a sentence of only a few lines (11.5). This design allows Plutarch to focus on the heroic but futile resistance of Thebes and Alexander's destruction of the city, enslavement of some 30,000 people, and the death of some 6,000 (11.7–12). Plutarch pauses to illustrate the horror of Theban suffering with the example of a single individual. Timokleia, "a well-respected and prudent woman," saw her house looted by a contingent of Thracians before she was raped and disgraced by the commander (ὁ ἡγεμὼν) of these troops. She then managed to stone this same commander to death in the well of her own garden into which the commander had jumped expecting to find the gold and silver which he had demanded of

Timokleia and which she had assured him she had thrown down there to hide it from the besiegers. When she is brought before Alexander and identifies herself as the sister of Theagenes who died fighting at Chaironeia against Philip for the freedom of the Hellenes, Alexander marvels both at how she chooses to identify herself and what she did in her garden. He lets Timokleia and her children go free (12.1–6).

Plutarch has spent as much time recounting Timokleia's story as the general resistance and destruction of Thebes. His reason for this becomes clear as he moves south with Alexander to Athens, which Alexander spares, even though the Athenians were openly distressed at the destruction of Thebes (13.1). Plutarch interprets Alexander's extraordinary change of procedure as evidence that Alexander found his fury satiated by the slaughter at Thebes or that he became filled with remorse at what Plutarch calls a "most savage and most grim deed" (13.2). The long passage on Timokleia, by replaying the sack of Thebes, reveals Plutarch's hand moving Alexander to remorse. Plutarch here develops this interpretation: "later on, on many occasions, the destruction of Thebes is said (λέγεται) to have grieved him and to have made him more mild to not a few" (13.3). If Alexander recognized that his destruction of Thebes was excessive, then attempted to compensate for his actions, he must have recognized that his fury had overpowered his self-control and prudence.

To prove that Alexander recognized the seriousness of his deed, Plutarch adds: "and, what is more,"⁵⁸ Alexander attributed both his murder of Kleitos, as "it occurred under the influence of wine, and the cowardice of the Macedonians before the Indians, as they [the Macedonians] had abandoned the campaign and his glory unfinished, to the wrath of Dionysos and

⁵⁸ ὅλωσ δέ "at any rate" (Waterfield [*supra* n.46]), "prorsus vero" (Reiske).

his divine retribution" (13.4).⁵⁹ Plutarch, unexpectedly, perhaps, looks ahead to when Alexander's fury again overpowers his prudence and he acts against a friend; then his grief and remorse will be even greater, as in *Alexander* 52.1, and he again will have himself to blame, but also the wrath of the god, as Plutarch explains here in 13.4. Then, with Kleitos's blood all over him, it will be too late for Alexander to correct the situation at all, but, now, in response to his guilt over Thebes, he will try to help any Theban survivors—some got away (13.1)—and treat Athens in a surprising, and mild, manner. Plutarch closes this section by reiterating the point about Alexander being more mild to "not a few" (13.3) with the observation that any Theban survivor who subsequently asked anything of Alexander received it (13.5). Alexander's philanthropy serves to mitigate, somewhat, his savagery.⁶⁰ Plutarch has designed these carefully woven chapters, *Alexander* 11 through 13, to illustrate the tension in Alexander's character and the current and future challenges facing him. If his spirit, his θυμός, is not

⁵⁹ Hamilton (33) takes the cowardice to refer to the Macedonians' revolt at the Hyphasis, as we call it, which corresponds to *Alex.* 62. Stadter (*supra* n.46: 451) refers this cowardice to the troops' reluctance before the river running near Nysa in *Alex.* 58.6, because Nysa, as Stadter, but not Plutarch, points out, was founded by Dionysos; the hesitance of the troops at Nysa, however, does not force the campaign and Alexander's glory to end; in fact Plutarch's presentation of the Nysa episode glorifies Alexander all the more and completes a trio of examples in *Alex.* 58 that show how Alexander overcame fortune and force with daring and courage (58.2). Hammond (*supra* n.1: 27) interprets Plutarch's decision not to return to this observation about Dionysos when he gets to Kleitos's murder (*Alex.* 50–52) and the revolt at the Hyphasis (62) as evidence that Plutarch is merely copying some source for the current chapter and a different source for the subsequent chapter; on his understanding of how Plutarch works, see his 151–162.

⁶⁰ The narrative technique that Stadter (*supra* n.4: 298–301) describes is I believe the same; but, where Stadter speaks of this technique "neutralizing" negative elements (298), I think that Plutarch is insisting rather on tension among Alexander's various characteristics and abilities; I fully agree with his later observation (299) that "Plutarch does not admit that these [negative] actions represent the whole picture of Alexander, and reports other incidents indicating another side of his character." Cf. Plutarch's rhetorical balancing in *De Alex. fort.* 332D.

restrained or kept in balance, great destruction will ensue.⁶¹ For the present, Plutarch emphasizes Alexander's compensatory mildness, both with the λέγεται sentence of 13.3 and its unmarked reiteration and application to surviving Thebans in 13.5. λέγεται assures his readers that his facts for this very important topic are drawn from the ancient tradition about Alexander.

Plutarch has shown Alexander humbled by his fury at Thebes. In the face of his resulting deed, and of such people as Timokleia, and other survivors, Alexander feels remorse and acknowledges the act as most savage. This recognition and his attempts to repair the damage by helping Theban survivors appear to be noble in Plutarch's eyes. In the visit to Corinth that follows, Plutarch constructs a scene in which Alexander reveals a similar humility. Having come to the Isthmus and having been declared *hegemon* against the Persians, in one sentence (14.1), Alexander finds himself distressed at the absence of one particular person from the thronging noteworthies and goes looking for Diogenes the Cynic. The confrontation is oddly similar to the meeting with Timokleia. Alexander is all-powerful and stands facing someone who has no visible power or possessions. Before Timokleia, he is judge and finds himself facing someone of noble bearing who has undying confidence in freedom. Now, before Diogenes, he is the ruler of all Hellas and finds himself facing someone who has the utmost disregard for worldly success. Alexander asks Diogenes whether he is in need of anything; Diogenes asks to have back the sunshine that Alexander's arrival has blocked (14.4).

Diogenes' request is given in direct speech: ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου μετάστηθι. Plutarch follows with λέγεται and indirect state-

⁶¹ See on θυμός in Plutarch Stadter (*supra* n.4) 293; Shipley (*supra* n.1) 303; Mossman (*supra* n.48) [= Scardigli 213 n.9]; glossed by H. A. Holden, *Plutarch's Life of Timoleon* (Cambridge 1889) 231, as "animus commotus" and "iracundia."

ment: "In response it is said that Alexander, having been despised, was so struck and amazed at the haughtiness and greatness of the man that he said, when those around him were laughing and mocking [Diogenes] as they went away, 'But indeed I, if I were not Alexander, would be Diogenes'" (14.5). Plutarch shows that Alexander, surrounded by worldly success, recognized and praised, as at Thebes, a greatness of character that differed from his own in context but to which he felt an affinity. Here, at Corinth, before an apparently sincere philosopher, Alexander reveals that true love of philosophy that Plutarch makes much of in the *Life* (7–8, 64–65). Plutarch proves that Alexander is able to see beyond the circumstances of worldly station and understands that he is more like Diogenes than his own companions who are mocking the philosopher. The importance of this episode to his portrait of Alexander moves Plutarch again to signal the established presence of this anecdote in his sources with the introductory λέγεται.⁶²

Plutarch uses another scene between Alexander and someone outside his regular circle to illustrate another aspect of his character, and a λέγεται passage is again employed. After the battle near Issus, Alexander is informed of the grieving of the mother, wife, and two daughters of Darius (21.1). Plutarch says that Alexander was "in touch" (συμπαθής) with their fortunes more than his own. With Darius on the run, they were captives, while Alexander was celebrating a great victory. Alexander

⁶² Cf. Hamilton xlii [= 1999, xlvi]. Plutarch's belief in the historicity of this event should not be questioned; it is recounted among the "genuine sayings" of Alexander in *De Alex. fort.* 331D–F, where Plutarch paraphrases and interprets the compact utterance, εἰ μὴ Ἀλέξανδρος ἦμην, Διογένης ἂν ἦμην. In *Ad princ. inerud.* 782A the episode reappears in similar language, and Plutarch again provides an unpacking of the utterance, though there with some change of emphasis. The episode also appears in his dialogue on exile, *De exil.* 605D. For modern opinion on its historicity, see Hamilton 34; K. von Fritz, *Quellen-Untersuchungen zur Leben und Philosophie des Diogenes von Sinope* (*Philologus* Suppl. 18.2 [1926]), esp. 27.

assures them that they will be treated as they have always been treated, that Darius is not dead, and that they may bury whomever of the Persian dead that they wish (21.2–3). But, Plutarch adds, “the most noble and kingly gift from him” was that he protected them from “hearing, imagining, or suspecting” anything disgraceful (21.5). He protected them as if they were in a temple and not in the “camp of the enemy.”

Alexander’s thoughtfulness for these captive royal women may seem extraordinary, but Plutarch has more of Alexander’s greatness to reveal. He continues: “and yet, in fact, it is said that the wife of Darius was far the most beautiful of all the queens” (21.6).⁶³ Plutarch interprets Alexander’s kind treatment not just as proof of his respect for noble individuals, and women, but also as proof of his sexual self-restraint; we need only remember the Thracian commander at Thebes to lament that such self-restraint is something that has historically been lacking in conquerors. Plutarch clearly marks his interpretation with “as it seems” (ὡς ἔοικε), with “to me” being implied: “but Alexander, as it seems, considering it more kingly to rule himself than to conquer his enemies, neither touched them nor did he know any other woman before marriage except Barsine” (21.7). After explaining who Barsine was and, implicitly, why she was an excusable exception,⁶⁴ Plutarch observes that Alexander employed this self-restraint in general, juxtaposing the external beauty (ιδέα) of any captive women to his own inner beauty (κάλλος) of self-control and prudence (21.9–11). Maintaining

⁶³ For “and yet, in fact, it is said,” καίτοι λέγεταί γε, the γε stressing καίτοι, see J. D. Denniston, *Greek Particles*² (Oxford 1954) 564 and 150–151; Hamilton (55) seems to take γε with λέγεταί.

⁶⁴ She had, Plutarch says, been raised with a Hellenic education, was fine in manner, and was daughter of Artabazus, thus royal (as the great-granddaughter of Artaxerxes II); for the text as I have paraphrased it, contra Ziegler, see Hamilton 55–56 and Stadter (*supra* n.46) 465, in support of Stephanus’s emendation. Barsine’s identity is disputed by modern scholars: see A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1988) 64, and Hamilton 55.

this balance is Alexander's great challenge. Plutarch has offered one more example of how his success and consequent greatness, and a key detail in the episode, the queen's beauty, are drawn from the tradition.

As his worldly status and power grew even greater, Alexander was faced with greater challenges to his character. For Plutarch perhaps the most telling of these challenges was the issue of Alexander's divinity. The visit to the shrine of Ammon in *Alexander* 27–28 provides Plutarch an opportunity to consider this issue's difficulty and significance. He draws on a variety of sources to examine the complexity of accounts and their meanings for Alexander. He reports three accounts. First he gives the version attributed to "most" (οἱ πλεῖστοι), that the prophet of Ammon gave Alexander greetings from the god "as if from a father," by which Plutarch must mean, as other sources record, that the prophet simply called Alexander "son."⁶⁵ If that was not clear enough, Alexander was told by the prophet of the oracle to ask not about the murderers of his father but about the murderers of Philip, since his father was not mortal; the prophet obliquely informs him that his procreator was divine (27.5–7). Plutarch's second account comes from Alexander's letters, which he considers genuine.⁶⁶ We learn that Alexander received certain "secret" oracles that he will only share with his mother;⁶⁷ since Alexander never again saw his mother, we are left to conclude that these secret oracles are still secret and were never employed by Alexander in any public way (27.8). Plutarch offers a third account according to what "some say," ἔνιοι δέ φασι. The prophet of Ammon, whose Greek was not perfect, accidentally greeted Alexander as ὦ παῖδίος,

⁶⁵ Cf. Curt. 4.7.25, Arr. *Anab.* 3.4.5.

⁶⁶ See *supra* n.29.

⁶⁷ Plutarch's language recalls the "secret" of his birth that Olympias told Alexander as he set out for Persia, according to Eratosthenes (*Alex.* 3.3); the technique of piling up different accounts is also used there.

rather than ὁ παιδίον, which “slip of the tongue” Alexander heard as ὁ παῖ Διός, with delight; the story (λόγος) was spread about that he was the son of Zeus—the god had addressed him as such (27.9).⁶⁸ Plutarch carefully arranges the three accounts so as to move the evidence for the oracular confirmation of Alexander’s divine parentage from explicit to implied to accidental.

Plutarch has already compiled more than enough details about Alexander’s difficult march to the shrine to suggest strongly that Alexander was being given divine support (26.11–27.4, esp. 27.1). Once Alexander is at the oracular shrine, Plutarch piles up more evidence for his relation to the divine, but he does the piling with precision in selection and arrangement. Plutarch, who is attentive to religious matters in his own life and writings, handles these complicated accounts with care. He refines the question of divine parentage and asks what might be the nature of this parentage. He answers this question through an additional scene, one that is introduced by λέγεται. Plutarch recounts that Alexander “is also said” to have been listening to an otherwise unknown philosopher Psammon in Egypt who said that “all humans are ruled by god, in that the motive and governing principle in each person is divine” (27.9), an idea that would not sound odd in the mouth of a Greek philosopher.⁶⁹ Alexander not only agreed with this observation, but, λέγεται still governing, “he himself is said to think still yet more philosophically” about the divinity of humans that god is the father of all humans but that he makes the best people his own special offspring, ἰδίους δὲ ποιοῦμενον ἑαυτοῦ τοὺς ἀριστούς (27.11). This extension of the idea gives Alexander a demythologized explanation that would seem less unpalatable to contemporary Hellenes, but it also allows him to accept, and

⁶⁸ Bosworth (*supra* n.64) 73 and 282–283.

⁶⁹ Hamilton (73) takes the name to be an invention based on the name Ammon.

use, the utterances from Ammon as true, whether they were spoken through divine inspiration or grammatical error.⁷⁰

Plutarch explains to his reader how Alexander viewed his divinity.⁷¹ Alexander was “like” (ὅμοιος) someone who was very confident in his divine birth and parentage “before the barbarians,” but before the Hellenes he “moderately and rather sparingly deified himself” (μετρίως καὶ ὑποφειδομένως ἑαυτὸν ἐξεθείαζε, 28.1). To prove the latter, Plutarch provides three examples from future events, and his closing example is, again, introduced with λέγεται. The first example, Plutarch admits and allows, is an exception to what he just said, but he quotes a letter to the Athenians in which Alexander speaks of Philip as the Athenians’ ruler and the man “called” his father (πατρὸς ἐμοῦ προσαγορευομένου, 28.2). Plutarch adds two statements from Alexander in which he assures his companions that: (1) he is mortal because blood flows in his veins, not ichor, saying this while blood is pouring from an arrow wound, and (2) he would not want to scare his friends with thunder or, as has been suggested, a banquet table piled with the heads of Persian satraps (28.4). Plutarch explains this last anecdote: “for, in fact, it is said” (τῷ γὰρ ὄντι λέγεται) that Anaxarchos had suggested just such a thing.

Plutarch’s three examples of how Alexander spoke of his supposed divinity to Hellenes are either ambiguous, in the letter to the Athenians, or light-hearted and, it seems, sarcastic, in the other examples. Plutarch, as at the beginning of the chapter, so at the end supplies his interpretation: “And so Alexander, even from the quoted examples (καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν εἰρημένων),⁷² clearly

⁷⁰ Note Badian (*supra* n.52) 47; Hamilton 73, though he rejects the historicity of this account, recognizes, with regard to the purpose of chapter 28, that Plutarch thought that he was presenting Alexander’s true belief concerning his supposed divinity.

⁷¹ Hamilton xli [= 1999, xlvii].

⁷² On Plutarch’s use of εἰρήμενον of himself, see *supra* n.11.

had not himself been affected nor deluded by belief in his divinity but was enslaving others with it" (28.6). Alexander neither denied nor believed that he was something like a new Herakles, personally engendered by Zeus and supported on earth by him, according to Plutarch. In trying to present this view Plutarch finds himself with an overabundance of anecdotes and views on the subject. To make his case, he selects and arranges his material with care as he recounts in *Alexander* 27 the revelatory visit to Ammon, and Egypt, and then in 28 assesses Alexander's response to the oracle in light of subsequent off-hand utterances. In both cases λέγεται supplies information that Plutarch clearly believes and uses to support his portrait of Alexander, and λέγεται assures, or reminds, the reader that the information comes from the established tradition.

5. Conclusion

In all these passages λέγεται has introduced a piece of information that is significant or key to Plutarch's portrait of Alexander. The same can be said of information attributed to named sources. Plutarch's goal is the same in either case: to tie the information to the great tradition that has been handed down about Alexander. Any hint of skepticism is absent, and has entered the discussion, I believe, either from scholarly assumptions about earlier writers or modern English idiom; neither applies to Plutarch. We should avoid such assumptions in making claims about historicity, and seek to appreciate better Plutarch's narrative design, and his use of sources in this process. For historians of the Alexander tradition, and of any topic or figure that Plutarch considers, Bosworth's learned observation and advice holds true: "Serious work cannot be done on the original histories before the characteristics and methods

of the extant writers are fully appreciated."⁷³ For students of Plutarch, I recall Russell's comment (116): "Plutarch's relation to his sources is complex and varied ... Its nature can hardly be seen except in detail; and the work of commenting on him, though it has been long pursued, has in some senses hardly begun." A better understanding and appreciation of Plutarch's use of λέγεται furthers both these goals.⁷⁴

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⁷³ Bosworth (*supra* n.64) 299–300. Cf. B. Perrin, *Plutarch's Themistocles and Aristides: Newly Translated, with Introduction and Notes* (New York 1901) xi.

⁷⁴ I wish to express my thanks to Kerri J. Hame and Donald Lateiner for their recommendations on many drafts of this article, to Dennis Kehoe for help on a much earlier draft and on a related paper given at CAMWS in April 1999, and to the anonymous reader and the editor of *GRBS*. I wish also to thank Michel de Montaigne, who, when this article was already in proofs, offered his perceptive support to my analysis; see "Défense de Sénèque et de Plutarque" (*Essais* 2.32), where Plutarch's use of vague source references, including a λέγεται passage in *Lyc.* 18.1, is analyzed in the face of the hasty criticism of the otherwise insightful Jean Bodin (*Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* [1st ed., 1566] ch. 4).