Introduction

Antigonos Monophthalmos (the One-Eyed), the greatest of Alexander the Great's successors (the Diadochoi), is not so well known a figure as to need no introduction—certainly not as well known as he ought to be. In modern times, as in ancient, he has been overshadowed by his contemporaries Philip II and Alexander the Great, whose achievements have captured the imagination much more than have those of Antigonos. The reason for this is not far to seek: Antigonos ended his life in defeat, and so is regarded merely as an interesting failure. But he was responsible for important and lasting achievements in spite of his final defeat, which entitle him to more careful historical scrutiny than he has yet been accorded.¹

Antigonos was an exact contemporary of Philip II of Macedon, but outlived that king by thirty-five years and enjoyed his greatest and most prominent period after the death of Philip's son, Alexander, in 323. From 320, when he was sixty-two, until his death aged eighty-one at the battle of Ipsos in 301, Antigonos dominated the eastern Mediterranean region and rose from private station to make himself and his descendants kings. In so doing, he established an administrative system and structure in western Asia that formed the basis for the

¹ In the past twenty or so years a number of works about Antigonos have been published, but none can claim to be a full and thorough biographical treatment: Wehrli's Antigone et Démétrios is quite full on Demetrios, but sketchy on Antigonos, especially before 320; Briant's Antigone le Borgne only deals with Antigonos's career down to 320, stopping just when things begin to get interesting. Admittedly partial treatments of Antigonos's career in monograph form are Engel's Untersuchungen zum Machtaufstieg des Antigonos I Monophthalmos and Müller's Antigonos Monophthalmos und das "Jahr der Könige."
later Seleukid Empire. There are therefore two themes to be covered in this book: the life and activities of Antigonos Monophthalmos (part 1); and the creation, in large part due to Antigonos’s efforts, of a new state system from the wreck of the Persian Empire conquered by Alexander—Hellenistic monarchy, the political milieu of Hellenistic civilization (part 2).

Though the writing of history from a biographical viewpoint is nowadays rather discredited in some circles, to ancient historiographers it seemed a self-evident truism that great leaders were directly and personally responsible for the course of historical events. Consequently our literary sources for the ancient world are written from the viewpoint of what may be called the “great leader theory of history”: we have a great deal of information about the political, military, and cultural leaders of the ancient world, but very little about social and economic conditions except what can be gathered from incidental remarks in the sources and from non-literary evidence (that is, archaeological, epigraphical, and numismatic evidence).

Antigonos dominates the literary sources for the period 323–301, towering like a colossus in the narratives of this period: he is the central character in the narrative of Diodoros of Sicily, our best and fullest surviving source, and he plays a major role likewise in Plutarch’s biographies of his enemy Eumenes and his son Demetrios, as well as in book 4 of Polyainos’s Strategemata. To some extent this prominence is no doubt due to the fact that the most important and influential primary historian of the period was Antigonos’s officer Hieronymos of Kardia, but it is clear that Antigonos was in fact the leading figure of the period, who more than any other leader shaped the course of events in the decades after Alexander’s death.

Since the ancient historian must necessarily use ancient historiography as a major source of information, it is inevitable that many works of ancient history should be strongly oriented towards the leading men of antiquity; and since an exaggerated respect for “great men” was an important feature of the ancient world, the biographical tendency of much work on ancient history should not be considered regrettable. Indeed, in the ancient world, with rather static social and

2. On the extant sources and their relative importance, see app. 1, pp. 341–52.
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economic conditions and societies dominated by small elites, great individuals did have a more profound impact than in today’s mass societies. The absence of an in-depth treatment of Antigonos has long been noted as a major gap in scholarship on the Diadoch period. This absence is the more unfortunate in that it has allowed a wrong perception of Antigonos and his role in the developments of the late fourth century to be perpetuated, a perception based on hindsight value judgments in the ancient sources rather than on the factual information they purvey. It is well known that Hellenistic historiography was influenced by tragic drama, and Antigonos has certainly suffered from this: “Pride goeth before a fall,” and since Antigonos fell at the end of his life, he must have been guilty of hubris.

The ancient sources mostly portray Antigonos as an arrogant man of overweening ambition, driven by a fixed dream of ruling all of Alexander’s empire, and intolerant of any rivals or peers; and this is also the standard view of Antigonos to be found in modern scholarship. In fact, some scholars have even gone so far in the notion of Antigonos as an emulator of Alexander as to describe him as being “of the school of Alexander.” This is absurd. If Antigonos was of anyone’s “school,” it was that of Philip, the great leader and reformer under whom he lived and served for twenty-three years during his early manhood (from the ages of twenty-three to forty-six), rising ultimately to an important position in the state. He was for a few years—336–333—a senior adviser of Alexander, but was left behind by Alexander to govern part of Asia Minor and so played no role in Alexander’s romantic (but foolhardy) exploits in the far east. Far from emulating Alexander, Antigonos never showed any interest in the eastern regions of the Persian Empire that so fascinated Alexander, but concentrated his ambitions instead on the eastern Mediterranean lands, on which Philip’s great general Parmenion is said to have advised Alexander to base his empire. In this Antigonos showed

4. Thus, e.g., Ehrenberg, Greek State, 2d ed., p. 278: “On Antigonos I much has been written, though there is still no comprehensive work”; and cf. the reiteration of this point by Seibert, Zeitalter der Diadochen, p. 196.

5. For the standard view of Antigonos as obsessed with ruling the entire empire of Alexander, it will be sufficient to refer to Will in the CAH (cited in n. 3 above) restating a view already expressed in his Histoire politique.

6. Thus Tarn, Hellenistic Military and Naval Developments, p. 34; cf. also Devine, AncW 12, nos. 3/4 (1985):75–86.

7. Arrian (Anab. II 25,1–2) reports that when Darcios offered to cede Asia west of the Euphrates to Alexander in return for peace, Parmenion urged acceptance. Some scholars believe Parmenion’s advice reflects the aims Philip had in mind in planning to invade Asia (e.g., Ellis, Philip II and Macedonian Imperialism, pp. 227–34).
sound strategic sense, for under ancient conditions of communications, it was obviously unrealistic for a power drawing its strength from the Balkans to attempt long-term domination of regions as distant as Bactria and India, and the attempt to do so was more likely to prove a drain on power and resources than a boost to them.

Instead of accepting the sources’ judgments of Antigonus at face value, it is necessary to scrutinize the evidence carefully and seek to understand the basis for such judgments. Analysis of the course of events shows that Antigonus’s aims and ambitions changed and developed during the years 323–301;\(^8\) that at least as late as 311 he was ready and willing to accept peers as independent rulers of parts of the Macedonian Empire, confining his own interest to western Asia and Greece; and that he never entertained serious ambitions to rule the far east. The charges in the sources of Antigonus’s arrogance and overweening ambition derive in large part from the propaganda of his enemies and from retrospection from his last years, when he did, in a burst of embittered aggressiveness, seek to eliminate his rivals.\(^9\) It needs to be recognized that the sources in fact have an obsession with the idea of the Diadoch period as a scramble for supreme power over all of Alexander’s empire, an aim attributed to Kassandros and Ptolemy as well as Antigonus, and which is obviously a product of hindsight review of the conflicts of the period.\(^10\) A recently published papyrus fragment indicates that this view of the period was already

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8. This was pointed out by Cloché, “Remarques sur les étapes de l’ambition d’Antigone I\(^{er}\) jusqu’en 316 av. J.–C.”

9. Note that the charges of arrogance against Antigonus at Diod. XVIII 52,4; XIX 56,2; and XX 106,3 in each case report the views of his enemies (Arrhidaios, Seleukos, and Kassandros respectively). This is not to say that Antigonus was not at times harsh and arrogant: he was. But it was only his enemies who made this his main characteristic, though they were themselves really no better: see Ptolemy’s seizure of Laomedon’s satrapy of Syria in 319 (Diod. XVIII 43, 1–2; Appian Syr. 52); Lysimachos’s relations with Seuthes (Diod. XVIII 14,2–4; XIX 73,8–9) and later with Kassandros’s son Antipatros (Justin XVI 2,4); and Seleukos’s conquest of the upper satrapies between 307 and 302, involving hostilities with satraps such as Stasanor of Baktria (Justin XV 4,12; Schober, Gesch. Babyloniens, pp. 148–51). See, too, n. 27 below.

10. Diod. XVIII 49,2 reports that Kassandros aimed at supreme power; Diod. XX 37,3–4 has Ptolemy aiming at supreme power by marriage to Alexander’s sister Kleopatra, and accuses Kassandros, Lysimachos, Antigonus, and “in general all the leaders who were important after Alexander’s death” of seeking the same. Plut. Dem. 15,3 says that it was universally accepted that it was supreme power that was at stake at the battle of Salamis between Ptolemy and Demetrios in 306. This last was falsified by the event, and the idea no doubt derives from Antigonus’s assumption of the kingship as a result of Demetrios’s victory. The hindsight nature of this obsession with supreme power is further shown by the premature attribution of such ambition to Antigonus as early as 323 (Plut. Eum. 3,3), when he was merely satrap of Phrygia.
prevalent by the second century B.C., and that the attribution of excessive ambition to Antigonus is probably at least in part due to inimical Rhodian evaluations influenced by (and glorifying) Rhodes’s successful war against Antigonus in 305/4.\textsuperscript{11}

Besides being the first comprehensive treatment of the leader who dominated the last two decades of the fourth century, therefore, my work is a fundamental reappraisal of the aims and significance of Antigonus’s activities. In further pursuance of this, part 2 of this book focuses for the first time on his contribution to the process of state building which began to develop the procedures and institutions characteristic of the Hellenistic monarchies, and of the Seleukid Empire especially.\textsuperscript{12} Antigonus, as the first of the Diadochoi to take the royal title, had a decisive impact on the form and nature of Hellenistic kingship. He was also the leader who established respect for the local autonomy of the Greek poleis as a guiding principle, and so determined the outline of relations between the ruling powers of the Mediterranean world and the Greek city-states throughout the Hellenistic period. Though the evidence is not as full as one might wish, careful analysis shows beyond reasonable doubt that Antigonus established a comprehensive administrative structure in west Asia (especially Asia Minor and Syria/Palestine) which was taken over and completed by Seleukos and his successors, and thus formed the basis of the Seleukid administration in Asia, a fact largely ignored by modern scholarship on the administration of the Seleukid Empire.\textsuperscript{13}

Again, an overestimation of the importance of Alexander lies behind the underestimation of Antigonus. Alexander’s empire is seen as the direct forerunner of the Seleukid Empire, and the intervening twenty-year rule of Antigonus is skipped over except insofar as he is seen as a continuator of Alexander’s aims. But Alexander, for all his romantic career of conquest, was essentially a destroyer, not a crea-

\textsuperscript{11} See app. 1, “Addendum,” and chap. 4 n. 44 below on this.

\textsuperscript{12} Cf. the urging of Ehrenberg, Greek State, p. 141 that “we must not overlook the fact that, between the empire of Alexander and the final establishment of the states of his heirs stood, in point of time, the ephemeral but powerful and important empires of Lysimachus and, above all, of Antigonus Monophthalmus. They formed at once a bridge and a zone of division.”

\textsuperscript{13} Antigonus is scarcely mentioned, e.g., in Bikerman’s Institutions des Séleucides and Musti’s “Lo stato dei Seleucidi” (now available in revised form in CAH, 7.1, chap. 6). For his pioneering role on the form of Hellenistic monarchy, see Müller, Antigonus Monophthalmos; for his decisive influence on the nature of relations between rulers and Greek poleis, see chap. 6 below.
tor. The work of his great father, Philip, gave Alexander an opportunity that he seized with both hands, namely to destroy the old politico-cultural balance of power between the Hellenic world and the Persian Empire. By conquering the Persian Empire, Alexander destroyed a balance that had existed for nearly two centuries and created an opportunity to bring forth something new in its place. This he did not live to exploit, and it may be doubted whether Alexander—the quintessential military man—would have known how to exploit it. 14 It fell to the Diadochoi, especially Antigonos and Seleukos, to try to make something of the opportunity won by Alexander, and what emerged from their efforts is what we call the Hellenistic monarchy and Hellenistic civilization. As to influences on Antigonos’s administrative work, more to the point than Alexander is Antigonos’s service under his contemporary Philip, a great reforming administrator, and his service for twelve years between 333 and 321 as a satrap in Phrygia, functioning essentially under the Persian system of administration. 15 In other words, the sources of ideas and inspiration for Antigonos’s work are more likely to have been the methods and practices of Philip, and of the Persian Achaemenids, than of the brilliant, but unstable, Alexander.

Though centered on the career and work of one man, this book is only in part a biography. Part 1 is a politico-military biography of Antigonos, but also an account of the political and military events of the Diadoch period in general. Part 2, though still focussed on Antigonos, is an account of the creation and running of an administrative system. The appendices deal with the sources for the period generally (appendix 1) and with the forces and aides who helped Antigonos achieve his aims (appendices 2 and 3). The reader will not find any attempt to delve into personality, psychological motivations, and the like, which are normally features of biographies. There are good reasons for this. In the first place it was not my aim to write a book of that sort, and one may doubt generally the validity of any attempt by a twentieth-century historian to reconstruct the personality and mindset of people who lived over two thousand years ago. 16

14. For the view of Alexander adopted here see, e.g., the works of Badian listed in the Bibliography.
15. For this see pp. 46–47 below.
16. The biographies of Alexander the Great and Antigonos Gonatas by W. W. Tarn illustrate the excesses such attempts can lead to. Though they are in many respects excellent books, Tarn’s post-Victorian principles made it necessary for him to maintain, against all the evidence, that Alexander did not have homosexual affairs, for example, and was not given to heavy drinking bouts.
In the second place, the sort of evidence we have for Antigonos is not conducive to a psychological approach: we have politico-military narrative and inscriptions; we do not have a biography by Plutarch, which might have provided the sort of anecdotes useful to a more conventional biographical venture (if Plutarch had written such a work and it had survived).

Nevertheless, some brief remarks on Antigonos's appearance and character traits as they emerge from the sources we do have are in order here to introduce the man Antigonos, the more so in view of a recent attempt to explain Antigonos's ultimate defeat and "failure" by psychological analysis which is one-sided and inappropriate.\(^{17}\) Antigonos was an exceptionally large man. His son Demetrios is described as being of "heroic stature" (Plut. \textit{Dem.} 2,2; Diod. XIX 81,4; XX 92,2–3), meaning no doubt that he was six feet or more tall, but Antigonos was taller even than Demetrios and was big as well as tall—in extreme old age he became rather immobile because of his great size and weight (Plut. \textit{Dem.} 2,2; 19,3). This huge man was made even more formidable in appearance by the fact that he was one-eyed, having lost an eye in battle at some time, possibly at the siege of Perinthos in 340 (see pp. 27–29 below). To his soldiers, the stature and scarred visage of Antigonos must have been impressive, and he evidently understood the psychological benefits of this, for he was in the habit while on campaign of striding about making jokes and laughing in a booming voice to instill confidence in his men (Plut. \textit{Eum.} 15,2; \textit{Dem.} 28,4).

It is a pity that, though a considerable number of portraits and statues of Antigonos are known to have been created during his lifetime, no securely attributable likeness of him has survived.\(^{18}\) There is, however, an ancient work of art which may show us a

\(^{17}\) Hornblower, \textit{Hieronymus of Cardia}, pp. 211–23, makes harshness and arrogance Antigonos's leading characteristics, and suggests that they made him blind to the needs and feelings of others, causing him to drive recklessly to disaster, like such psychologically blind and disastrous British generals as Sir Redvers Buller (1839–1908) and Sir Charles Townshend (1861–1924). But how in this case are we to explain Antigonos's brilliant successes from 320 to 311? The absurdity of such analysis and such comparisons is too obvious to require further argument.

\(^{18}\) We know of statues of Antigonos at Skepsis (\textit{OGIS}, no. 6, lines 21–22), at Rhodes (Diod. XX 93,6), at Athens (Diod. XX 46,2), at Olympia (Paus. VI 11,1; \textit{Syll.}, nos. 349–51), on Delos (I.G XI. 4, 566 and 1056), and at Delphi (Paus. X 10,2); and there were very probably statues elsewhere—for example, at Samos: see \textit{SEG}, 1, no. 362, mentioning a festival of Antigoneia that suggests a cult and hence a cult statue. In addition, there were paintings of Antigonos by Apelles (Pliny \textit{NH} XXXV 90 and 96; Strabo XIV 657) and Protogenes (Pliny \textit{NH} XXXV 106).
contemporary portrait: it has been suggested that one of the Macedonian horsemen depicted on the famous "Alexander Sarcophagus" in the Archaeological Museum at Istanbul could be Antigonus. One of the long relief panels on this sarcophagus depicts a battle between Macedonians and Persians, and at the right and left edges of the scene are two Macedonian horsemen charging into the fray, each in the act of killing a Persian cavalryman with his spear. The Macedonian horseman on the left is Alexander the Great, in a depiction clearly drawing on the head of Herakles with a lion-scalp helmet and Alexander's features shown on Alexander's coinage. The horseman on the right, who is given equal billing (as it were) with Alexander, has been identified as Antigonus Monophthalmos; and though this suggestion has met with a mixed reception, I think it must be correct.\(^{19}\) If so, we get a glimpse here of the face of Antigonus. This horseman has a mature face, with prominent cheekbones and chin. The nose is fairly long and fine, and the cheeks are slightly hollow, suggesting that a portrait of some individual was aimed at.\(^{20}\) Of course, even granted that this horseman is intended to depict Antigonus, one cannot

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19. Charbonneaux, Rev. des Arts 2 (1952):219–23, made the suggestion; Wehrli, Antigone et Démétrios, and (tentatively) Hőlscher, Griechische Historienbilder des 3. und 4. Jahrhunderte v. Chr., pp. 189–90 n. 1183, agree with it. Against the identification see, above all, Graeve, Alexandersarkophag, p. 135, whose own suggestion of Perdikkas is, however, unconvincing (see Hőscher, loc. cit.). The sarcophagus was found in the royal tomb of Sidon in Phoenicia and was evidently the coffin of a Sidonian king of the time of Alexander and the Diadochoi (see Graeve for all questions of style, date, and so on). This monarch is generally believed to be Abdalonymos, who was placed on the throne by Alexander in 332 (Graeve, pp. 123–25). The identity of the horseman must be decided on the basis of historical significance in connection with Abdalonymos and Sidon: the depiction of Alexander and other Macedonian leaders is clearly the result of their relations with Abdalonymos. As ruler of Syria/Palestine from 314 to 301, Antigonus was Abdalonymos's political master, if the latter was still alive (see app. 3, no. 129). Alexander is shown fighting without breastplate or sword, another horseman (Hephaistion?) also lacks a cuirass, and one of the infantrymen is depicted heroically nude. The horseman identified as Antigonus wears full Macedonian battledress, which may indicate that this person—unlike Alexander and Hephaistion—was alive at the time of creation (i.e., that the lack of armor for Alexander and Hephaistion is because of their status as "heroized" dead). If correct this would exclude identification of the right horseman as Parmenion, Perdikkas, or Krateros (all have been suggested; all were dead by 320), and increase the likelihood that this horseman is Antigonus. A final and in my view clinching argument is that unlike those of the other horsemen, the head of the one on the right is depicted in strict profile, even turned in a little towards the back wall of the frieze; and we know that it was precisely Antigonus who liked to be depicted in profile, thus hiding the unsightly scar of his missing eye (see, e.g., Pliny NH XXXV 90).

20. Hőscher argues that the heads (other than Alexander's) are not portraits (Griechische Historienbilder, p. 190), as does Smith in Hellenistic Royal Portraits, p. 63 (taking a very skeptical position). But in fact the unusual features of the rider on the right at least—deep-set eyes, prominent cheekbones, hollow cheeks, and jutting chin—show that this was indeed intended to be a portrait of someone.
assume that the face is a true, realistic likeness. The sculptor has evidently been at pains to present this horseman as one kind of archetype of a military man of fierce energy and willpower. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that in looking at this Macedonian cavalryman, we get some idea of what Antigonos actually looked like (see frontispiece).\textsuperscript{21}

An attractive feature of Antigonos’s character is that he was very much a family man. He married his wife, Stratonike, when he was in his early forties, and remained married to her for the rest of his life, so far as we know never even having affairs with other women, in sharp contradistinction to many contemporaries.\textsuperscript{22} As dynast and king he gave advancement to various nephews and to his half-brother Marsyas (see app. 3, nos. 33, 67, 100, and 111). He brought up his younger son Philippos with care and strictness (see app. 3, no. 92). In particular, there was a genuine devotion between Antigonos and his son Demetrios, which seems to have served as a model in his family in later generations (see Plut. \textit{Dem.} 3, 1–4). Plutarch reports that there was such trust between father and son that Demetrios was allowed free access to Antigonos even with weapons in his hand, and that Antigonos was so proud of this trust (unusual among the powerful in his day) that he called it to the attention of certain ambassadors from his rival dynasts, regarding it as one of the securest props of his power. Elsewhere Plutarch records further anecdotes indicating the affection between Antigonos and Demetrios. Though Antigonos himself disapproved of indulgence in “wine, women and song,” he was tolerant of Demetrios’s weakness for these pursuits: when Demetrios once greeted him with a particularly fond embrace, Antigonos laughed and said, “One would think you were kissing Lamia”

\textsuperscript{21} Hafner, \textit{RDA} 4 (1980):17–25, proposes that a painting found in a villa at Boscoreale near Pompeii, and now kept in the Museum at Naples, depicts Antigonos Monophthalmos and his wife Stratonike. His arguments are utterly unconvincing, however, involving as they do the rejection of the tradition that Antigonos was one-eyed! To this end, Hafner tries to argue away some of the evidence, but he simply ignores the most clear and definite statements of Antigonos’s disfigurement, Pliny \textit{NH} XXXV 90, Plut. \textit{Sert.} 1, 4, and Plut. \textit{Mor.} 11b–c.

\textsuperscript{22} Ptolemy repudiated his wife Eurydice and his son by her in favor of his mistress Berenike and a new family of children. Lysimachos married at least three times, the last two—Amestris and Arsinoë—overlapping, and auesced in the murder of his eldest son, Agathokles, so that Arsinoë’s children might claim the succession. Kassandros seems to have married Alexander’s half-sister Thessalonike by force. Demetrios had a host of wives and mistresses, by many of whom he produced offspring (see for all this, e.g., \textit{RE sub nom.}). Though we have a good number of anecdotes about Antigonos, and the anecdotal sources were very keen on sexual scandal, no evidence links Antigonos to other women, except erroneously in Athenaios (XIII 578a–b): the story in fact concerns Antigonos’s grandson, Antigonos Gonatas (see app. 3, no. 86).
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(Demetrios’s mistress: Plut. Dem. 19,4); on another occasion when Demetrios had been partying hard, he excused his absence from business affairs on grounds of an illness, and Antigonos joked, “So I heard, but did you catch it from Thasos or Chios?” (famous wine-producing islands: Plut. ibid.).

These anecdotes also illustrate another trait that must have helped Antigonos win friends and inspire loyalty in his subordinates, namely his sense of humor. Plutarch, especially, records a number of excellent witticisms of Antigonos’s, which besides a good sense of humor, display a good degree of learning and culture. Antigonos was able to remember and adapt on the spur of the moment a line of Euripides (Plut. Dem. 14,2–3), and could twit a young pupil of the rhetorician/historian Anaximenes for his lack of knowledge of the subject on which he had presumed to give a speech (Apophth. Ant. 13 at Plut. Mor. 182d–e). He could even joke about his deformity, remarking when he received a despatch written in particularly large letters, “Even a blind man can read this” (Plut. Mor. 633c), though he was otherwise rather sensitive about his scarred face and missing eye: the famous artist Apelles for this reason painted him in profile so that only his good side was visible in the portrait (Pliny NH XXXV 90).

The main impression we get of Antigonos during the years 323–310 (when he was in his sixties and early seventies) is one of immense physical and mental vigor and energy. The campaigns he undertook in these years would have taxed the energy of most much younger men, and Antigonos did not spare himself during these campaigns, taking a personal part in the battles and sharing in the work and hardships of his soldiers (Diod. XIX 26,6–7; 30,7–10; 42,4–6; Seneca De ira III 22,3). This physical and mental energy may be considered his outstanding characteristic, making him the successful general, statesman, and administrator that he was. The ancients already recognized this: Diodorus called him the most active or effective (πρακτικότατος) of the Macedonian leaders, and described him as outstanding in daring and intelligence (XVIII 23,3–4); Plu-

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23. Another amusing instance of this humorous tolerance is Plutarch’s story (Dem. 19,5) that Antigonos visited Demetrios once when he was supposed to be sick and met a beautiful girl just leaving his son’s room. Antigonos went in, sat down, and took Demetrios’s hand. Demetrios then said that the fever had already left him, and Antigonos replied, “Indeed, my boy, I just met it at the door as it was going.”

24. Other witticisms or examples of Antigonos’s sense of humor are recorded by Plut. Dem. 23,4; 28,2–4; Eum. 15,2; and Apophth. Ant. 1,5,10, and 11 at Plut. Mor. 182a–d. Though one cannot be sure that these anecdotes actually preserve Antigonos’s own words, it does seem that he was noted for his humor and wit.
tarch used him as a classic example of a robust and powerful old man (*Mor. 791e*). But more even than his vigor or energy, the ancient sources characterize Antigonos by the love of power (*philarchia*) in the pursuit of which he displayed his energy and daring. His pride and his love of power are repeatedly noted by the sources (e.g., Diod. XVIII 50,1; XXI 1,1; Plut. *Dem.* 28,2; Aelian *VH* XII 16), and the criticism is expressed that this led him at times to be harsh and arrogant (Plut. *Dem.* 28,2). Some modern scholars have seized on this aspect of Antigonos and made harshness and arrogance his leading characteristics, blaming them for what they consider his ultimate failure—though, to be sure, in this they are merely following Plutarch’s judgment at *Dem.* 28,2. 25 However, this is a simplistic and inaccurate view both of Antigonos’s character and of the sources: Antigonos was a complex man, and the sources make a variety of pronouncements and judgments on his character and disposition, depending on the occasion they comment on.

There is no doubt that Antigonos was at times ruthless and even harsh, but being occasionally harsh and ruthless was inherent in the career of command he followed and the times in which he lived, and mostly when Antigonos was ruthless it was a matter of policy rather than of personal spite. 26 The other Diadochoi were no better than Antigonos in this respect: it was not by being mild and tolerant that the Macedonians had conquered a great empire, and it was not by mildness and tolerance that the dynasts who succeeded Alexander secured parts of that empire as private domains. At least Antigonos displayed no such horrific cruelty as Lysimachos. 27 The fact is that


26. Examples are Antigonos’s ruthless treatment of would-be deserters in Egypt, which was intended to give pause to any other soldiers who had ideas of defecting and thus damaging his military position (Diod. XX 75,2–3); further, the execution of Peithon Krateua in 315 (Diod. XIX 46,1–4) and the order for Alexander’s sister to be murdered in 309/8 (Diod. XX 37,3–6): Antigonos could not afford to leave Peithon to make trouble for him in the east or contemplate with equanimity the prospect of Kleopatra marrying his rival Ptolemy.

27. Lysimachos inflicted a horrifyingly cruel punishment on a friend for a jest at the expense of his wife Arsinoë (Athenaios XIV 616c; Seneca *De ira* III 27,2–4; Plut. *Mor.* 660b). Kassandros murdered a friend and benefactor on the merest suspicion of excessive ambition (Diod. XIX 105,2–3; XX 28,1–3). Ptolemy was a cruel tyrant to the Jews of Jerusalem (Josephus *Contra Apionem* I 210; cf. Appian *Syr.* 50) and treacherously murdered his ally Polemaios in 309/8 (Diod. XX 27,3). Likewise the “plausible and insinuating” Eumenes (Plut. *Eum.* 11,2) was ruthless towards the traitor Apollonides (Diod. XVIII 40,7–8; Plut. *Eum.* 9,1–2) and towards Sibyrtios for supporting his rival Peukes (Diod. XIX 23,4). Even Seleukos, of whom the sources have very little to relate that is adverse, apparently joined Antigenes in the murder of Perdikkas (Nepos *Eum.* 5,1), who had promoted him to the highest cavalry command in the empire (Diod. XVIII 3,4).
Antigonos lived in a ruthless age, and actually had a reputation for being relatively mild and forgiving, especially towards the end of his life: he behaved kindly (φιλανθρωπός) to captured enemy soldiers (Diod. XVIII 45,4), and to his own men (Diod. XIX 20,1); when he captured a number of enemy leaders at the battle of Kretopolis in 319, he merely imprisoned them (Diod. XVIII 45,3; XIX 16,1–5) rather than killing them, and he later took one of them—Dokimos—into his service (Diod. XIX 75,3; XX 107,4); Seneca’s pamphlet concerning the evil effects of anger cites Antigonos as a shining example of a king who controlled his temper and refrained from punishing insults (De ira III 22,2–3); and Plutarch reports that mildness and gentleness characterized his rule towards the end of his life (Mor. 182b = Apophth. Ant. 3). In general Antigonos’s posthumous reputation, unlike those of Lysimachos and Kassandros, was fairly good (see, for example, Plut. Phok. 29,1), especially for such a proud and ambitious man.

Basically, the picture of Antigonos in the sources is inconsistent: he was harsh and kind, arrogant and mild, haughty yet just, grasping and generous. Nor is this in my opinion in any way an unrealistic picture: the characteristics displayed by Antigonos depend on the circumstances of any particular occasion, and the truth is that he was neither especially harsh nor especially kind, but capable of displaying either trait as the occasion arose; and so with the rest of these good and bad qualities attributed to him. The keys to his personality are, I believe, ambition and intelligence. Ambition caused him to seem harsh and arrogant to those who stood in his way, while intelligence caused him to be just, and even at times kind and generous, to his friends and subordinates, and mild towards defeated foes who were willing to give up opposition and join him, since he understood that lasting power must be based upon loyalty and good repute, which can only be won by showing justice and generosity. This is really as much as can plausibly be said about Antigonos’s character. Perhaps I should emphasize that while I reject those interpretations which depict Antigonos as a man fatally flawed and brought to ruin by excessive arrogance—a notion with obvious roots in ancient tragedy—this in no way means that I wish to whitewash Antigonos. To portray him as a bundle of virtues with scarcely a flaw or vice would be even more unjustified than is the hubristic view of him. But the sources primarily concern themselves with Antigonos’s deeds, not his character; and his deeds likewise form the main subject matter of this book.