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## Alexander's Philosophical παιδεία and θυμός: the Case of Plutarch

*Plutarch wrote two works that refer to Alexander: The Life of Alexander and the two treatises On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander I–II. Specifically, the treatises describe Alexander positively: through the antithesis between ἔργον and λόγος, Alexander is idealized prima facie and presented as a philosopher in arms (328a), and via the distinction between ἀρετή and τύχη, he is introduced as a virtuous general. On the contrary, Life depicts Alexander as an ἀνὴρ θυμοειδής, both in good (φιλότιμος) and bad sense (rageful). At first, he is praised for his kindness and generosity (12, 1; 15, 5; 24, 6; 27, 7). However, after the account of Persepolis (38), Alexander succumbs to his anger (62, 3). The question that arises, and we aspire to answer is to what extent the presentation of Alexander is disparate between these two works. Are there two different portraits of Alexander?*

**Keywords:** Philosophical education, anger, Plutarch, Alexander the Great, *Life of Alexander*, *On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander I–II*, paradoxical encomium

### 1. Introduction

Since antiquity, Alexander the Great has been a beacon of inspiration for many writers. The sources on Alexander fall into two categories: primary and secondary. Primary sources are those that were written in Alexander's era or shortly thereafter and have survived today only in fragments.<sup>1</sup> In particular, Alexander's campaign was first recorded in

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed presentation of the historians of Alexander the Great, see ZAMBRINI (2007: 210–220).

the *Royal Ephemerides*, an official journal, which is now lost. Ptolemy, the general of Alexander, relied on the *Royal Ephemerides* and on his personal experience. Also, Aristobulus, Alexander's engineer, wrote about the course of the great general. Other authors, whose work has been lost, are Callisthenes, Cleitarchus, Onesicritus, and Nearchus.<sup>2</sup>

Secondary sources are those that were written centuries after Alexander's death (specifically in the Roman period) and provide more comprehensive narratives of his reign. The historians of the Roman period relied on the primary sources to narrate the achievements of Alexander. Particularly, Plutarch, Quintus Curtius Rufus, and Arrian provide us with the most detailed description of the course and ethos of Alexander, while scattered information can be found in the works of Strabo, Josephus, Diodorus, and Dio Cassius.

In this paper, I will focus on Plutarch's presentation of Alexander's philosophical education and anger. I would like to shed some light on the way he constructs the image of Alexander in two of his works (*Life of Alexander* and *On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander I-II*) in relation to the aforementioned parameters: παιδεία and θυμός. As we will see below, the portrait of Alexander differs between these two works: both positive and negative in the *Life* and ideal in the treatises. However, a more thorough look at the texts will reveal that this is not the case.

## 2. Plutarch

Plutarch, born in Chaeronia of Boeotia, lived in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and was a Greek biographer and historian. The works that refer to Alexander are the *Life of Alexander*, which describes the life of the great general from his birth to his death, and the two treatises *On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander I-II*, where Plutarch tries to convince his readers that

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<sup>2</sup>BOSWORTH (2000: 2–3).

Alexander was a philosopher, and his success was a consequence of his virtue and not of luck.<sup>3</sup>

*Life of Alexander*<sup>4</sup>

In the *Life*, Alexander is presented as an ἀνὴρ θυμοειδής, both in good (φιλότιμος) and bad sense (rageful). At first, he is praised for his respect of women (12, 1), his generosity towards prisoners, his prudence (27, 7), his magnanimity (15, 5), and his piety (24, 6). However, after the account of Persepolis (38), Alexander becomes harsh and vindictive (57, 2: φοβερός καὶ ἀπαράιτητος κολαστὴς τῶν πλημμελούντων) and acts sullen and angry (62, 3: ὑπὸ δυσθυμίας καὶ ὀργῆς).<sup>5</sup>

Τύχη (fortune) is defined as an unexpected or uncontrollable situation: it gave the advantage of terrain in the battle of Issus (20, 4) and assisted Alexander in the Malli town (63, 2). Furthermore, the murder of Cleitus was attributed to misfortune (50, 2: δυστυχία).

*On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander I–II*<sup>6</sup>

The portrait of Alexander in the treatises is positive *prima facie*. Plutarch presents Alexander as a man of action, who conquered territories, suffered a lot of wounds, founded many cities, and tried to spread Greek culture by uniting the races. Through the antithesis between ἔργον (event) and λόγος (speech), Alexander is idealized and presented as a philosopher in arms, who puts into practice what others have expressed simply by word (328a).<sup>7</sup>

Another distinction is being made between ἀρετή (virtue) and τύχη (fortune). Plutarch argues that Alexander's exploits derive from his vir-

<sup>3</sup>DUFF (1999: 1–2).

<sup>4</sup>Text edition: PERRIN (1919).

<sup>5</sup>WARDMAN (1955: 96–102).

<sup>6</sup>Text edition: BABBITT (1936).

<sup>7</sup>HAMILTON (1999: xxxvi–xxxvii).

tue, not from fortune. Fate is unpredictable. It can elevate anyone and then lead them to destruction. However, this is not the case for Alexander (326f). Alexander's wounds prove that fortune was always opposed to him (327a, 344c). Τύχη can be the personal fortune, like δαίμων, maybe a power that controls everything or τά ἐκτὸς ἀγαθὰ, namely the means someone has to achieve something.

### 3. Θυμός

Alexander is presented as a spirited man (θυμοειδής) both in positive and negative light. Particularly, on some occasions he tries not to be consumed by his anger and to act with composure and wisdom, and on others, θυμός is the driving force of his ambition (φιλοτιμία). However, there are also incidents where Alexander succumbs to his anger and acts impulsively.

#### *Life of Alexander*

Being still a fetus, Alexander is presented as a bold son with lion-like nature (2, 5: θυμοειδῆ καὶ λεοντώδη τὴν φύσιν). Also, in 4, 3–4, Plutarch describes the appearance of Alexander and his pleasant smell in order to draw a conclusion about his character, namely that he was prone to drink and choleric (ἢ θερμότης τοῦ σώματος ὡς ἔοικε καὶ ποτικὸν καὶ θυμοειδῆ παρείχεν). After the destruction of Thebes, Alexander's anger is satiated (13, 2: μεστὸς ὦν ἤδη τὸν θυμὸν) and after the murder of Cleitus, his anger subsides (51, 10: εὐθὺς ἀφῆκεν ὁ θυμός). Apart from Alexander, many Macedonians are affected by anger. Olympias appears as a jealous and hot-tempered woman (9, 5: δύσζηλος καὶ βαρύθυμος) and encourages Pausanias to oppose Philip (10, 5: ὡς θυμουμένῳ τῷ νεανίσκῳ προσεγγελευσαμένην). Philip, during his argument with Alexander about the succession, falls unconscious because of his anger and wine (9, 10: δ' ἐκατέρου διὰ τὸν θυμὸν καὶ τὸν οἶνον ἔπεσε σφαλείς). Anger,

in a good sense, strengthens Alexander's ambition (26, 14: τὸ θυμοειδὲς ἄχρι τῶν πραγμάτων ὑπεξέφερε τὴν φιλονικίαν ἀήττητον).<sup>8</sup>

*On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander I–II*

In 332d, it is mentioned that Alexander's temper was resilient (τὸ δὲ θυμικὸν εὐδιάλλακτον). Later in 335a, Alexander's soul was ignited by the melody (διεφλέχθη τὸν θυμόν), which describes the influence of music on martial eagerness. Afterwards, Plutarch asserts that for seven years, Alexander did not reveal his suspicions about Philotas' conspiracy, neither under the influence of alcohol nor because of his anger (339f: οὐκ ἐν οἴνῳ ποτὲ τὴν ὑπόνοιαν ταύτην ἐξέφηνεν ὁ μεθύων, οὐ δι' ὀργὴν ὁ θυμοειδής). The Macedonians, too, rush with courage and impetuosity (327b: θυμῷ καὶ βίᾳ Μακεδόνες) to protect Alexander in the Malli country.<sup>9</sup>

In the treatise *On the Control of Anger*, Plutarch argues that anger is neither noble nor manly, nor possessing any quality of pride or greatness. It is a mark not of energetic activity, confidence, boldness, high ideals, or any other virtue, but rather of asperity, weakness, and often toughness (456f):

ἡ φύσις τοῦ θυμοῦ is οὐκ εὐγενὴς οὐδ' ἀνδρώδης οὐδ' ἔχουσα φρόνημα καὶ μέγεθος ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ δοκεῖ τοῖς πολλοῖς τὸ ταρακτικὸν αὐτοῦ πρακτικὸν καὶ τὸ ἀπειλητικὸν εὐθαρσὲς εἶναι καὶ τὸ ἀπειθὲς ἰσχυρόν.

Genuine courage is sustained by reason (λόγον) and virtue does not need vice's guidance (458e). Additionally, the emotions are integral to virtue, which itself reflects a correct balance between the emotions and

<sup>8</sup>WARDMAN (1955: 101).

<sup>9</sup>WARDMAN (1955: 103).

reason –μετριοπάθεια (moderation) and not ἀπάθεια (apathy) (*On mor. virt.* 443c–444c).<sup>10</sup> Bearing these facts in mind, Alexander in the *Life* has completely failed, whereas in the treatises is pretty much ideal.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4. Philosophical παιδεία

As we will see below, philosophical education plays an important role in Alexander's presentation and his "double" portrait. Plutarch emphasizes Alexander's love of philosophy both in the *Life* and in the treatises. In the *Life*, the gradual decay of his philosophical education leads to the corruption of his character, while in the treatises there is a hidden message behind the praise.

##### *Life of Alexander*

Alexander is presented as a studious and avid reader (8, 2: ως φύσει φιλόλογος καὶ φιλομαθῆς καὶ φιλαναγνώστης), having philosophy rooted in his soul (8, 5: πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν ἐμπεφυκῶς καὶ συντεθραμμένος ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτῷ ζῆλος καὶ πόθος).

It is worth mentioning that there is an inverse ratio between the education of Bucephalus and that of Alexander.<sup>12</sup> Plutarch presents Bucephalus as a savage, untamed, and disobedient horse, which does not accept any riders (6, 1–2):

ἐδόκει τε χαλεπὸς εἶναι καὶ κομιδῇ δύσχρηστος, οὐτ' ἀναβάτην προσιέμενος οὔτε φωνὴν ὑπομένων τινὸς τῶν περὶ τὸν Φίλιππον, ἀλλ' ἀπάντων κατεξανιστάμενος, δυσχεραίνοντος δὲ τοῦ Φιλίππου καὶ κελεύοντος ἀπάγειν ὡς παντάπασιν ἄγριον καὶ ἀκόλαστον.

<sup>10</sup> TSOUNA (2011: 205–206).

<sup>11</sup> KARAMANOLIS (2009: 119–123).

<sup>12</sup> WHITMARSH (2002: 180–181).

Alexander, seeing the horse filled with anger and spirit (πληρούμενον θυμοῦ καὶ πνεύματος), quietly climbed onto its back and gently pulled the bridles (6, 7: περιλαβὼν ταῖς ἡνίαις τὸν χαλινόν, ἄνευ πληγῆς καὶ σπαραγμοῦ προσανέστειλεν). This reminds us of the chariot of the soul and the struggle of its parts with the charioteer in Plato's *Phaedrus* (244a–257b), where the θυμοειδὲς is ultimately being tamed through education.

Bucephalus is depicted as an intractable and angry horse, just as Alexander was a tough and spirited man (42, 4: θυμοειδής, χαλεπὸς καὶ ἀπαραίτητος). The adjective δύσχορηστος (intractable) refers to Philip's characterization of Alexander as δυσκίνητος (unwieldy) (7, 1). Furthermore, the adjective ἄγριος (wild) refers to uncivilized–tyrannical behavior (Plat. *Polit.* 571c), while ἄκολαστος is the uneducated. Finally, Alexander's education is characterized by Plutarch as a task πολλῶν χαλινῶν ἔργον οἰάκων θ' ἅμα (7, 2: for many bits and rudder–sweeps as well).

Bucephalus, once disobedient and wild, is finally tamed by Alexander, while the latter, although he has been tamed by philosophical discourse, became tyrannical. Plutarch characterizes Cleitus' death as ἀγριώτερα (50, 1), which indicates that Alexander's philosophical education began to decline. At this point, it is worth mentioning that Callisthenes, who resisted the prostration, is described walking around boasting of his deed as ὡς ἐπὶ καταλύσει τυραννίδος (55, 2: as if he had overthrown tyranny).

## Vocabulary

Bucephalus	Alexander
χαλεπὸς εἶναι (6, 1)	χαλεπὸς καὶ ἀπαραίτητος (42, 4)
δύσχορηστος (6, 1)	δυσκίνητος (7, 1)

πληρούμενον θυμοῦ (6, 6)	θυμοειδής (42, 4)
ἄγριον καὶ ἀκόλαστον (6, 2)	Cleitus' death: ἀγριώτερα (50, 1)
περιλαβὼν ταῖς ἡνίαῖς τὸν χαλινόν [...] προσανέστειλεν (6, 7)	πολλῶν χαλινῶν ἔργον οἰάκων θ' ἄμα (7, 2)

### *On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander I–II*

The λόγος – ἔργον antithesis appears already in Thucydides (1, 22) who explained his methods in terms of ἔργα (events) and λόγοι (speeches) and the study of this antithetic pair as well as its relation to philosophy seems to have been an old debate. There were those who considered philosophy to be a theoretical (λόγος) pursuit rather than a practical (ἔργον) one, and *vice versa*.<sup>13</sup>

Pythagoras, Socrates, Arcesilaus, and Carneades left no writings behind, and neither did Alexander (328A). Therefore, the Macedonian king is a philosopher. Plutarch, here, takes the literal meaning of λόγος rather than the abstract so that he can construct a persuasive argument.<sup>14</sup> He methodically omits the fact that the aforementioned philosophers practiced the virtue that they preached, so that the comparison between Alexander and these men was feasible.

In these treatises, Plutarch's interest seems to focus more on the nature of philosophy than on Alexander. Right from the beginning of the work (328a), he poses before his audience the issue he will examine: τούτοις γὰρ ὀρίζουσι φιλοσοφίαν οἱ λόγον αὐτὴν οὐκ ἔργον νομίζοντες (these are the definitions of philosophy used by those who think that it is a theoretical rather than a practical activity). Thus, the main subject of the treatises is to be the meaning of philosophy.

The students of Plato and Socrates betrayed their philosophical training, but Alexander's students did not (328c–d). More important-

<sup>13</sup> HADOT (2002: 55).

<sup>14</sup> WARDMAN (1955: 97).



ly, Plato and Socrates didn't persuade many people to follow them (πολλοὺς οὐκ ἔπεισαν), whereas Alexander supposedly convinced the Hyrcanians, Arachosians, Sogdians, Persians, Indians, and Scythians to adopt Greek customs (328c–d).

Moreover, Plato created a πολιτεία which no one followed, but Alexander founded more than seventy cities, which changed the barbarians' way of life (328d–e).<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Plato wrote the *Nόμους* that no one obeyed (328e). Yet Alexander implemented many laws, which thousands of people continued to use (χρῶνται). Plutarch then proceeds to justify Alexander's conquest by suggesting that those who were conquered by Alexander are more blessed (μακαριώτεροι) than they were before, supposedly because of the king's teachings (328e–f).

For Plutarch, even Alexander's sayings reveal his philosophical spirit. For instance, when Alexander remembered Diogenes, he said, 'If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes,'<sup>16</sup> which Plutarch interprets to mean that if Alexander didn't practice philosophy through actions, he would have done it through words (theoretically): ἡσυχολούμην ἂν περὶ λόγους, εἰ μὴ δι' ἔργων ἐφιλοσόφουν, 331f. Plutarch again uses the word λόγος strictly in its literal sense, as in 328a–b.<sup>17</sup>

## 5. Different portraits?

Considering all the facts above, one could deduce that Plutarch creates a negative portrait of Alexander in the *Life* and an ideal one in the treatises, but this is not the case. It has been argued that since the treatises are encomia,<sup>18</sup> their commendatory nature and Plutarch's silence on specific

<sup>15</sup> For the foundation of Alexander's cities, see FRASER (1996: 1–46; 188) and TARN (1948b: 232–248).

<sup>16</sup> εἰ μὴ Ἀλέξανδρος ἦμην, Διογένης ἂν ἦμην.

<sup>17</sup> GILLEY (2009: 81–82).

<sup>18</sup> GILLEY (2009: 57).

aspects of Alexander's kingship render the work inadequate as a historical source for his reign.

Similarly with the *Life*, the two treatises peruse Alexander's character, but Plutarch has chosen one specific aspect of it: his virtue and how it is revealed via philosophy. Through comparison with great philosophers such as Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, Alexander is legitimized as a man of action, or as Onesicritus put it, a philosopher in arms (*FGrH* 134 F 17). Plutarch uses Alexander as a vehicle to criticize common philosophical beliefs and tries to clarify whether philosophy consists of deeds or words. The answer to that question is that philosophy was as much a theoretical as a practical pursuit.

The laudatory nature of the two treatises does create problems of historical validity. However, if we consider that the work is a paradoxical encomium and a certain degree of historical accuracy is required to construct the argument, it should be treated seriously.

### Paradoxical encomium<sup>19</sup>

Rhetoric was distinguished into three subcategories by the ancient Greek scholars: forensic (δικανικόν), deliberative (συμβουλευτικόν), and epideictic (ἐπιδεικτικόν).<sup>20</sup> Forensic speeches enclosed any argumentation of past actions subject to a legal framework and were delivered in court.<sup>21</sup> Deliberative speeches concerned future actions and were delivered in

<sup>19</sup> Anaximenes outlined the features of encomia in his *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* (225,6): προοίμιον (introduction), γένος (genealogy), γένεσις (genesis), ἀνατροφή (growing up or youth), ἐπιτηδεύματα (deeds of choice), πράξεις (deeds), σύγκρισις (comparison), and ἐπίλογος (epilogue). It seems that these features are found in the treatises. GILLEY (2009: 67–71) divides the treatises based on the aforementioned categories. For the nature of encomia, see BURGESS (1987: 120–126).

<sup>20</sup> Arist. *Rhet.* 1358b and Men. *Rhet.* 331, 1–9.

<sup>21</sup> COOPER (2007: 203–219).

the Assembly.<sup>22</sup> Epideictic oratory, however, encompassed discussions about the present with no practical purpose. It was used for praise or blame.<sup>23</sup>

According to Menander Rhetor, ἐπίδειξις (demonstration or display) consisted of encomia (ἐγκωμιαστικούς) and criticism (ψεκτικούς).<sup>24</sup> Encomia are divided into four subcategories (346, 9–23). Ἐνδοξα deal with the gods while ἄδοξα with demons and evils. Ἀμφίδοξα enclose issues of praise and blame and παρόδοξα address paradoxical themes.<sup>25</sup>

Both as a rhetorical figure and as a genre, a paradox is:

- A statement contrary to popular belief (*contraque opinionem omnium*, Cic. *Para. Stoic.* 4).
- An argument with ironic–satirical but also serious moral content.<sup>26</sup>
- The commendation of qualities or people that did not often receive praise (Arist. *Rhet.* 160–165).
- The criticism of an absolute and consolidated judgment or opinion.

Thus, in *de Alexandri magna fortuna aut virtute*, Plutarch seems to be praising an individual who had previously been treated as an authoritarian despot (mainly by the Romans)<sup>27</sup> and was therefore considered

<sup>22</sup> USHER (2007: 220–235).

<sup>23</sup> CAREY (2007: 236–252).

<sup>24</sup> Men. *Rhet.* 331, 8–10.

<sup>25</sup> GILLEY (2009: 62).

<sup>26</sup> GIBBS and IZETT (2005: 146).

<sup>27</sup> For instance, Cicero's derogatory remarks against Alexander were written during Julius Caesar's dictatorship (*Att.* 13, 28: *posteaquam rex appellatus sit, superbum, crudelem, immoderatum fuisse*). Furthermore, Seneca's and Lucan's comments were an attack on Nero, who was also an imitator of Alexander. In particular, Seneca argued that Alexander was an insatiable tyrant (*Epist.* 94, 60–67; 113, 2; *Suas.* 1, 5–6). Lucan presented the Macedonian king as a corrupt general who razed everything in his path (*Phars.* 10, 20–52). Additionally, Livy presents Alexander as a drunkard and vicious man who degenerated from the eastern customs (9, 18).

unworthy.<sup>28</sup> Hence, Plutarch's purpose is to urge his audience to reassess the parameters that make one a philosopher. Alexander's lifestyle and behavior provide the best example that the traits that make someone a philosopher do not necessarily make him a virtuous person, and *vice versa*. So, he poses one more question to his audience: is philosophy a theoretical or a practical activity?<sup>29</sup>

In 328b, Plutarch sets three parameters by which Alexander will be judged, namely his words, his actions, and his teachings: Ἀπὸ τούτων κρινέσθω καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος· ὁφθήσεται γὰρ οἷς εἶπεν οἷς ἔπραξεν οἷς ἐπαίδευσε φιλόσοφος. He reverses his standards and begins with Alexander's teachings, which are introduced by the sentence καὶ πρῶτον τὸ παραδοξότατον, εἰ βούλει, σκόπει, with which he invites his reader to consider a matter entirely contrary to the general belief.

He does not wish to convince his audience that Alexander was a philosopher, hence the paradox. In fact, he also acknowledges the negative aspects of Alexander's character in 332c, when he asks whether the king's actions reveal the violence of war (βίαν πολεμικήν) and the might of conquest (χειροκρατίαν), and in 332d, when he states that Alexander's character is full of contradictory elements. Introducing Alexander as a philosopher, Plutarch suggests that philosophers should exhibit their principles in every aspect of their lives, so that there is a balance between theory and practice.

The question that arises is why Plutarch creates a covert negative portrait in the treatises. The answer may be found in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and in Plutarch's *Life of Cimon*. According to Aristotle, a well-structured and persuasive argument directs the reader to the truth on its own (*Rhet.* 1355a1–2). Thus, by incorporating several historical facts, Plutarch made his thesis appear credible. However, once the narrative begins

<sup>28</sup> SPENCER (2002: 198–201).

<sup>29</sup> GILLEY (2009: 66).

about Alexander's life, his behavior, and his teachings, the audience is left to compare its own knowledge to Plutarch's presentation. It is worth noting that there would be many educated people in the audience.<sup>30</sup> As a result, they would have been able to discern Plutarch's actual purpose: philosophy is both practical as well as theoretical.

Additionally, Plutarch doesn't follow other writers of the period, such as Seneca and Lucan, who described Alexander as a tyrant or as a depraved king.<sup>31</sup> Both in the treatises and in the *Life*, he depicts an image of a flawed man and as he states at the *Life of Cimon*, it is profitable to examine a great man's flaws without over emphasizing them (2, 5):

τὰς δ' ἐκ πάθους τινὸς ἢ πολιτικῆς ἀνάγκης ἐπιτρεχούσας ταῖς πράξεσιν ἀμαρτίας καὶ κῆρας ἐλλείμματα μᾶλλον ἀρετῆς τινος ἢ κακίας πονηρεύματα νομίζοντας οὐ δεῖ πάνυ προθύμως ἐναποσημαίνειν τῇ ἱστορίᾳ καὶ περιττῶς, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ αἰδουμένους ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως, εἰ καλὸν οὐδὲν εἰλικρινὲς οὐδ' ἀναμφισβήτητον εἰς ἀρετὴν ἦθος γεγονὸς ἀποδίδωσιν.

## 6. Conclusion

Plutarch saw Alexander as a successful warrior and king who was ultimately corrupted by his own success. In the *Life*, he is shown to be prone to drink (23, 7), rageful (49, 7; 50, 2; 51, 1; 51, 10; 70, 4; 74, 3), and cruel (42, 4; 57, 3). At the same time, however, he is praised for his frugality (5, 6; 22, 7; 23, 9–10), his military skills (20, 7; 40, 4), and for being

<sup>30</sup> MORGAN (2009: 309–311).

<sup>31</sup> We should keep in mind that Plutarch lived during the period of the Second Sophistic. The term first appears in Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*, to denote a group of orators who specialized in epideictic rhetoric and to distinguish them from the sophists of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. For more information about the period of the Second Sophistic, see WHITMARSH (2005: 3–22) and BOWIE (1970: 3–41).

sagacious (5, 1–3; 42, 10). Nevertheless, Alexander's character seems to deteriorate after *proskynesis* (prostration) in 327, showing a lack of self-restraint and pretensions to divinity.

Similarly, in the treatises, the surface argument is the depiction of Alexander as a philosopher, but the underlying meaning is the negative image of a king. Plutarch hints at Alexander's audacity and extremeness when he discusses the king's wounds (327a–b; 331c), the civilization of barbarians (328c–d; 328f–329a), his orientalism (329c–d; 329f–330a), the lavish wedding ceremonies at Susa (329e–f), and his pretensions to divinity (330f–331a). He even incorporates similes and metaphors such as hunter/prey (330b) and robber/robbed (330d), which undermine the argument that Alexander was a philosopher (330b, 330d). Furthermore, Alexander's excessive rage against Fortune, which tries to appropriate his successes (326a), demonstrates a lack of self-control (Arist. *Rhet.* 1378a30–32).

Thus, Plutarch is not inconsistent, and he doesn't construct two different portraits of the same man just to puzzle his audience or because his impression of Alexander was altered. We should keep in mind that the *Life* and the treatises belong to a different literary genre with disparate purposes, aimed at a different readership.

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