

Public Abstract

First Name:Dawn

Middle Name:Lynn

Last Name:Gilley

Adviser's First Name:Ian

Adviser's Last Name:Worthington

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Plutarch's *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander the Great* is as much a revelation of Plutarch's philosophical thought as it is a display of his rhetorical skill. Writing during the Second Sophistic movement, he challenged basic conceptions of philosophy by asking whether theory or practice make a philosopher. He used the life and reign of Alexander the Great as his general framework for analysis. Also, by casting Alexander as a philosopher, an artificial paradox, Plutarch took advantage of events in the king's life, about which his audience would have been well aware, to play on common perceptions of the king causing some modern scholars to suggest that the work has no historical value. However, it was through this rhetorical exploitation that Plutarch denigrated the Macedonian king revealing him to be a megalomaniac who cares little for his own men or newly conquered subjects, but more for his own glory. Through this paradox of Alexander as a philosopher, Plutarch concluded that philosophy is both a theoretical and practical pursuit, but it should be practically applied to one's life. This dissertation then endeavors to not only shed light on not only Plutarch's rhetorical skill and view of Alexander, but it also is an attempt to elevate the work's standing as a source for the life and reign of the king.