

Scholars have always been impressed by Plutarch's insistence on Alexander's *enkrateia*, the ability to control sensual passions, as it appears in both *The Life of Alexander* and *De Alexandri fortuna aut virute*. At the beginning of the Twentieth century, for example, L. Eicke, noted: «at qua de causa Plutarchus ita scripserit, perspicui nullo modo potest» (Rostock 1909; cf. also, among many others, A. E. Wardmann, «CQ» 5, 1955). The author, as a matter of fact, seems to reply strongly to opposing voices not documented anymore.

Plutarch's comments about Alexander's sexual self-control can be better understood within the contemporary reflection about the *enkrateia* of the Macedonian king and, more generally, about *enkrateia* as a typical regal virtue. In addition to the writings of Plutarch, the theme of the King's continence is emphasized in the *Kingship Orations* by Dio of Prusa, particularly in the Fourth speech. Here Diogenes shows Alexander three *daimones*: the young man must match against them before becoming a true king. The last one - the *daimon philedonos* - deals with the *enkrateia*-theme but, once again, it appears quite problematic to scholars, because its connection with the Macedonian king seem to be weak, if compared with the other two entities (cf. e.g. J. Moles, «CIAnt» 2, 1983).

Moreover, in both authors, ethical considerations go together with references to the peculiar physical appearance of Alexander: in Plutarch they are direct, in Dio they are hidden in a cautious *logos eschematismenos*. In their approach, Plutarch and Dio show similarities and differences. Referring to the King's physical traits, they appear to reject the validity of a bare physiognomic approach (as, for example, in Polemo of Laodicea's treatise, where for the first time Alexander appears among the examples). On the contrary, they make a radically different use of Alexander's appearance. Dio/Diogenes shows the future king all the ethical risks connected with his physical characteristics: he can become a slave of *Hedoné*, incapable of governing, weak as women or with an apparent virility. Plutarch, who is substantially favorable to Alexander, rather focuses on the 'right' interpretation of his ambiguous traits, due to Lysippus - the only sculptor capable of portraying the King's *ethos*, as fully realized, virile hero, with the expected degree of self-control.

In conclusion, Plutarch and Dio keep track of a sophistic *topos* about Alexander's physical appearance interpreted as ethically ambiguous, not perfectly fitting with the moral profile required for a king. Both authors are playing with the same sophistic theme but they have different communicative intentions, due to the context of their works and to their possible audience. Plutarch doesn't omit to mention the ambiguity of the King's appearance, but he shows it as successfully worked out by Lysippus' genial interpretation. He uses this *topos* as very effective tool to show his audience the 'real' Alexander, i.e., in his opinion, Alexander as perfect king and perfect philosopher: exactly the goal that Dio, in the Fourth Oration, is afraid the Macedonian will never be able to reach.